

SIERRA CLUB TO HONOR BISHOP WILLIAM SKYLSTAD

Columbia River Pastoral Letter Promotes Ethical Decisions For Rivers

John Osborn MD

On March 4 at the Patsy Clark Mansion, Sierra Club will honor Bishop William Skylstad with our Watershed Hero Award. Over the years we have recognized citizen activists, scientists, economists, political leaders, and the Colville Confederated Tribes. This honor recognizes those who have made an outstanding contribution to protect our region's rivers and aquifers.

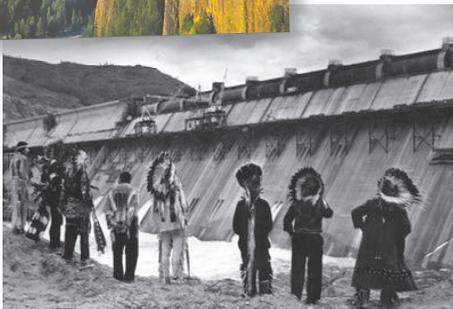
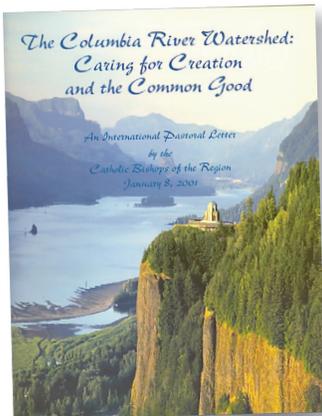
We have selected Bishop Skylstad for this honor for his leadership in advancing ethical decision-making for rivers through the *Columbia River Pastoral Letter*. While the Columbia River is the *Pastoral Letter's*

focus, the document has direct relevance to rivers and aquifers globally. Just as Judeo-Christian principles have contributed

to medical ethics, so too does the *Columbia River Pastoral Letter* promote and inform moral decision-making about water, and life that depends on water. When combined with Pope Francis' Encyclical on the environment, *Laudato Si: On Care for Our Common Home*, the *Pastoral Letter* provides a moral foundation for addressing water conflicts in a time of climate change.

One way in which the *Columbia River Pastoral Letter* is being implemented is through our work to modernize the Columbia River Treaty. This treaty governs water and dam management on the Columbia River. The United States and Canada may update and modernize the Treaty as early as 2024, representing a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to change how the Columbia River is managed. Specific goals are to restore ecological balance to the river, return salmon and other native fish species to ancestral habitats currently blocked by dams, and remedy historic injustices to the Columbia Basin Tribes and First Nations caused by dam-building.

Based on the *Columbia River Pastoral Letter*, the Ethics & Treaty Project (a joint project of Sierra Club and the Center for Environmental Law & Policy) is coordinating a series of conferences throughout the Basin to explore the ethical dimensions of the dam-building era, especially the consequences for indigenous people and life that depends on the river. These conferences provided a forum for religious and indigenous leaders, scientists, and others to discuss the impact of dams, acknowledging their benefits while focusing on the wrenching damage they have caused and the remedies possible through modernizing the Columbia River Treaty.



Traditional Chiefs of the Colville Indian Reservation in 1941 gather to witness the completion of Grand Coulee Dam. The Columbia River Pastoral Letter is a foundation for efforts to right historic wrongs of the dam-building era, including restoring fish passage at Grand Coulee Dam. (U.S. Bureau of Reclamation photo)

WINTER WATERS 2016

Advancing Ethics for Rivers
join us at the fabulous
Patsy Clark Mansion

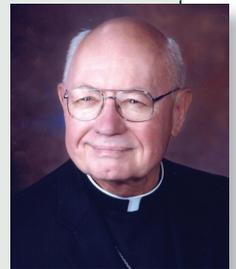
March 4, 2016
6:30 p.m.

Honoring Bishop
William Skylstad

2208 W. 2nd Ave.
Spokane (Browne's
Addition)

RSVP with John Osborn
john@waterplanet.ws or 509.939.1290

TICKETS \$35 per person



The *Columbia River Pastoral Letter* is a transformative document for all people who depend on the Columbia River and rivers everywhere. As stated in the *Pastoral Letter*,

WE INVITE PEOPLE TO EXPLORE WITH US THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE CHRISTIAN IDEA OF HUMAN STEWARDSHIP OF CREATION, AND TO EFFECT A SPIRITUAL, SOCIAL AND ECOLOGICAL TRANSFORMATION OF THE WATERSHED.

Bishop Skylstad chaired the Project Steering Committee for the *Pastoral Letter*. By honoring Bishop Skylstad we also honor the team of people who made possible the *Columbia River Pastoral Letter*. Please join us for **Winter Waters 2016: Advancing Ethics for Rivers.**

FIGHTING THE PRIVATIZATION OF NATIONAL FORESTS

Jeff Juel, UCRG National Forest Chair

Privatizing our national forests doesn't mean ownership necessarily changes hands. It does, however, mean control is handed over to private interests. This is one of the reasons why, last August, the Upper Columbia River Group of the Sierra Club and others objected to a major timber sale in the Mill Creek watershed northeast of Colville: the A-to-Z Timber Sale on the Colville National Forest. In response, in October the U.S. Forest Service withdrew the timber sale.

Like a lot of our watersheds, Mill Creek was logged unsustainably years ago. So, should further logging occur? The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires thorough, unbiased analysis to answer. It mandates an objective process for every decision affecting federal lands and resources. Various alternatives are to be explored, environmental impacts disclosed, and scientific controversies and public concerns fully aired. And it's the agency's job to prepare the environmental analysis on our behalf.

But that's not what happened. Instead, the Forest Service contracted a private company, Vaagen Brothers Lumber, to run the NEPA process from start to finish, or from "A to Z" as the project is titled. Vaagen says they've already spent a million dollars running the process.

In a document found on the project website, a contract expert expressed concern about the objectivity of this process, asking how the Forest Service rationalizes the contractor investing upfront without any guarantee of compensation and "without artificially deflating the stumpage value or artificially inflating the costs of other service work." A Colville National Forest official replied that it was presented that way by Vaagen "and supported by the collaborative group... Contractor would recoup its costs by not having to competitively bid on the timber."

Can we really expect a logging company's analysis of environmental risks to be objective and thorough, or provide a balanced exploration of the scientific

controversies say, over whether logging truly restores forests — when the company already has a \$1 million bias?

More recently, the Forest Service even refused to provide, under the Freedom of Information Act, contract details that would allow the public to judge if the agency has indeed "artificially inflated the costs of service work" Vaagen would trade for public timber.

Having private, local collaborators cheer on the process is not comforting. To make ethical decisions, actual or potential conflicts of interest must be disclosed.

Decisions must be made by professionals, subject to strict codes of conduct, after the analysis is completed — not as a vaguely implied condition of a contract granting rights to perform the NEPA. This A-to-Z sale of the NEPA process to the highest bidder represents an ominous step towards privatizing our national forests. We must restore ethical integrity in our government's decision-making process in order to restore ecological integrity in our forests, and oppose any such attempts wherever they arise.

Adapted from "Juel: A-to-Z Timber Sale a bad idea, and a bad model" published by the Spokesman-Review, January 10, 2016.



Carolyn Leon, UCRG Co-Chair and Outings Chair

As we usher in 2016, we are busily researching new places to explore and new trails to hike with the nearly 400 members of our Meetup group. One such place is Trautman Ranch at Riverside State Park, purchased with funds from Conservation Futures and help from the Inland NW Land Conservancy. Called the "missing link" this area had previously separated two large sections of the park. Plans are currently being developed for new hiking trails. Another place for exploration is a new trail at Liberty Lake Regional Park called the "Split Creek" trail. Spokane County Parks hopes to have trail maps updated and signage installed later this Spring. This new trail is on the left before you cross over Liberty Creek. It then connects back with the Liberty Creek trail just before the Cedar Grove.

Soon we will start to plan Spring outings – and if you want to keep up to date – sign up for our Meetup Group "Exploring the Inland NW with the Sierra Club" (<http://www.meetup.com/Exploring-the-Inland-Northwest-with-Sierra-Club/>). Feel free to contact us with suggestions for places to explore. And as always, Happy Hiking!

UPPER COLUMBIA RIVER GROUP

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Spokane River Project

Paula Whitson
Treasurer

Washington State Chapter



Upper Columbia
River Group
Coal Free Spokane

UCRG: ANNUAL ELECTION

All Sierra Club members in our group are eligible to vote in this election. Vote for 3 positions on the Group Executive Committee (ExCom). Ballots must be received by March 1, 2016 by 5 p.m.

NOTE: Each member of a joint membership may vote, each using one of the two columns. Please tear off and mail this entire page to: Sierra Club, P.O. Box 413, Spokane, WA 99210.

	FOR EXCOM (vote for 3)	VOTER 1	VOTER 2
	Kathy Dixon	/_/_	/_/_
	Lydell Gorski	/_/_	/_/_
	Evita Krislock	/_/_	/_/_
(write in)	_____	/_/_	/_/_
(write in)	_____	/_/_	/_/_
(write in)	_____	/_/_	/_/_

KATHY DIXON currently serves as Secretary to the UCRG ExCom. She was born in the Tri-Cities and raised in Spokane near the banks of the Spokane River. She has explored various spots in the immensely diverse habitat of the State of Washington, from desert to rainforest, ocean beach to mountain ridge.

LYDELL GORSKI is an environmental advocate with a background in biology (UC Berkeley) and water resources (SCC). He currently serves the Sierra Club as a member of the UCRG ExCom. His recent service to nature has included work with local environmental non-profits and agencies, including hundreds of hours of volunteer service over the last five years.

EVITA KRISLOCK is actively involved in the Beyond Coal/Oil campaign serving as liaison to the UCRG ExCom. She also serves on the board for Earth Ministry and is a master composter and gardener, striving daily to live a lifestyle that supports all of Creation.

CLEANING UP SPOKANE RIVER PCB POLLUTION: STATUS REPORT

We are entering our fifth year of legal challenges to clean up Spokane River's PCB pollution. Here is a brief update.

First, Spokane River is one of Washington State's most contaminated rivers for PCBs and other toxics. Exposure to PCBs through ingestion of Spokane River fish represents a public health hazard. (Washington State Department of Health, ATSDR) In 2008, the Washington State Department of Health issued fish consumption advisories, recommending limited or no consumption of fish from Lake Roosevelt and the Spokane River. (See: "Health Advisories for Spokane River Fish Consumption" posted along the river.)

In 2011 Washington Department of Ecology issued permits to Spokane County and other dischargers that contained no limits on PCB discharges. Also in that year, the Department of Ecology abandoned efforts to complete a PCB cleanup plan for the Spokane River (called a TMDL or "Total Maximum Daily Load") required by the federal Clean Water Act.

In 2011, Sierra Club's Upper Columbia River Group and the Center for Environmental Law & Policy (CELP) filed companion lawsuits in state and federal court to compel Washington State and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to uphold water quality laws for the Spokane River.

On July 19, 2013, the three-judge panel for the state's pollution court (the PCHB or Pollution Control Hearings Board) ruled that the Spokane County NPDES pollution discharge permit had "reasonable potential to violate Washington state water quality standards" because it would discharge PCBs into the Spokane River, which is listed under the Clean Water Act as impaired for PCBs and other toxic pollutants. This was a key win, because the Board enforced water quality standards that require rivers to be fishable. PCB pollution affects both public and the Spokane

Tribe's ability to harvest and eat fish from the river. The Board directed Ecology to calculate PCB effluent limits and issue a new permit to the County.

Spokane County and Department of Ecology appealed.

On October 24, 2014, Thurston County Superior Court rejected the County and State appeals. The result? Spokane County and Department of Ecology appealed again, now to the Court of Appeals. We expect the decision from the State Court of Appeals later in 2016. The history of failing to cleanup the Spokane River's PCB pollution is best summarized by two words: delay, pollute.

In a related case, Sierra Club and CELP challenged the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for failure to step in and complete a PCB TMDL (clean-up plan) for the Spokane River.

The Washington Dept. of Ecology, Spokane County, and Kaiser Corp. (another Spokane River PCB discharger) intervened as respondents and the Spokane Tribe intervened to support Sierra Club and CELP. In March 2015, U.S. District Judge Barbara Rothstein ruled in our favor, finding that EPA's lack of action was an abuse of discretion. The judge ordered EPA to come up with a schedule and plan by July. EPA filed a document with the court, but it is not adequate. Sierra Club is now challenging this inadequate plan.

Sierra Club and CELP will continue to press agencies responsible for enforcing our water pollution laws to clean up PCBs polluting our Spokane River.

Sierra Club and CELP are represented by Richard Smith of Smith & Lowney, a Seattle firm specializing in Clean Water Act litigation.



Spokane River redband trout. PCBs accumulate in the food chain, including fish and humans. Health advisories about PCBs contaminating fish are posted along the Spokane River. (Jeff Holmes photo)



UPPER COLUMBIA RIVER GROUP

P.O. Box 413
Spokane, WA 99210

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Explore, Enjoy, and Protect the Planet.

Member Meet and Greet

We hope you can drop in for some time with the Upper Columbia River Group Executive Committee, the Beyond Coal and Oil Campaigns, and other local Sierra Club members to get acquainted, get an update on your group's activities, and learn how you can be involved. Light food and drinks will be provided. At 6 p.m. we will take some time to provide reports on work and projects concerning rivers, forests, outings, clean energy, and our stand against current proposals for coal and oil trains and terminals. Come anytime between 5 and 8 p.m. and stay for as long as you can. For questions or more information contact Tom at 509.838.4632.

WHEN: 5-8 P.M., TUESDAY
MARCH 22, 2016

WHERE: COMMUNITY
BUILDING LOBBY
35 WEST MAIN AVENUE
SPOKANE

LET'S MOVE OUR REGION BEYOND FOSSIL FUELS

COAL IS AN OUTDATED, BACKWARD, AND DIRTY 19TH-CENTURY TECHNOLOGY. WE NEED YOUR HELP TO MOVE OUR REGION BEYOND COAL!



Not only is coal burning responsible for one third of US carbon emissions — the main contributor to climate disruption — but it is also making us sick, leading to as many as 13,000 premature deaths every year and more than \$100 billion in annual health costs.

The Beyond Coal campaign's main objective is to replace dirty coal with clean energy by mobilizing grassroots activists in local communities to advocate for the retirement of old and outdated coal plants and to prevent new coal plants from being built. Our main focus in the Inland Northwest is to prevent coal from being exported to Asia on our rail lines, and to move Avista Utilities from over 20% coal power toward clean energy.



On January 14th, over 500 people gathered in Spokane Valley to stand up to what would be the largest oil terminal on the continent in Vancouver, WA. With the help of the Sierra Club, 276,296 comments were delivered in opposition to this project. If built, 360,000 barrels of explosive oil would be shipped through our communities every day!

We can't do this alone! For volunteer opportunities, contact Jace Bylenga, Spokane based Beyond Coal organizer at 509.209.2395 or jace.bylenga@sierraclub.org