

**COLUMBIA RIVER TOXICS REDUCTION WORKING GROUP**  
**STATEMENT OF PRIORITIES**  
**MARCH 2013**

The Columbia River Toxics Reduction Working Group is a coalition of federal agencies, states, tribes, and nonprofit partners. The Working Group was established to share information, coordinate activities, and develop strategies to identify and reduce toxics in the Columbia River Basin. **The Working Group believes action is needed to reduce and prevent contamination of the Columbia Basin (Basin) from toxics, including:**

- Passage of federal legislation authorizing Congress to appropriate funds through the EPA to implement its Columbia River Basin Toxics Reduction Plan and the Lower Columbia Estuary Partnership Management Plan.
- Passage of a strong and sensible bill to reform the Toxic Substances Control Act to provide real protections without sacrificing either private sector innovation or the ability of states and tribes to address issues of local concern.
- A focus on the Priority Initiatives for toxics reduction in the Columbia River Basin described below.

There is public and scientific concern about the health of the Basin ecosystem, especially with regard effects of toxic contaminants. The 2009 Columbia River Basin: State of the River Report for Toxics (<http://www.epa.gov/columbiariver/sorr.html>) established that contaminants like mercury, dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane (DDT) and its breakdown products, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), and polybrominated diphenyl ether (PBDE) flame retardants are present in the Basin at levels that could harm people, fish, and wildlife.

In September 2010, EPA and the Columbia River Basin Toxics Reduction Working Group released the Columbia River Basin Toxics Reduction Action Plan with 5 initiatives and 61 actions to reduce a wide array of toxics in the Columbia River Basin (<http://www.epa.gov/columbiariver/toxics.html>).

***FEDERAL ACTIONS NEEDED***

The Working Group strongly believes that additional federal resources and targeted federal reform are needed to reduce toxics in the Basin.

In February 2010, the Columbia River Restoration Act was introduced in Congress by U.S. Senator Jeff Merkley (D-OR) and Congressman Earl Blumenauer (D-OR). The legislation would elevate the stature of the Basin to that of other Large Aquatic Ecosystems and authorize Congress to appropriate funds through the Environmental Protection Agency to implement its

Columbia Basin Toxics Reduction Plan and the Estuary Partnership Management Plan. **The Working Group urges support for passage of the Columbia River Restoration Act** to enable tribal, state, and federal agencies, and NGOs to expand successful programs and initiate new ones to protect the Basin.

The Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA) was enacted in 1976 and was intended to protect the environment and consumers' health against risks posed by chemicals in commerce. Over the years, it became apparent that the law was not keeping pace with the marketplace, new products or the need for information about their health effects. In July 2012, the Safe Chemicals Act, which outlines reforms for TSCA was passed out of the Senate Committee on the Environment and Public Works for a full Senate vote. States, tribes and non-governmental organizations have worked hard to make sure that the Safe Chemicals Act provides real protections without sacrificing either private sector innovation or the ability of states and tribes to address issues of local concern. **The Working Group urges support for passage of the reforms outlined by the Safe Chemicals Act.**

#### ***PRIORITY INITIATIVES***

At its most recent executive meeting, the Working Group identified a number of priorities that are needed to address to reduce toxics in the Columbia Basin. The Working Group believes that a focus on enhancing programs in these areas will help advance the prevention and reduction of toxics in the Columbia River Basin:

- **Sustainable Purchasing:** Develop stronger guidelines for purchasing practices to reduce purchasing of products that are sources of toxics contamination in the Basin.
- **Green Chemistry:** Initiate a regional green chemistry center to advance the discussion on how to develop chemical and processes that produce less toxic materials.
- **Chemicals of Emerging Concern:** Develop monitoring programs and toxicity information to address chemicals of emerging concern that are currently unregulated.
- **Pesticide Stewardship Partnerships:** Enhance and expand the successful Pesticide Stewardship Partnership model used by the State of Oregon to encourage voluntary changes in pesticide use and practices that lead to measurable environmental improvements.
- **Stormwater:** Expand stormwater technical assistance programs to small and medium businesses, providing much-needed pollution prevention expertise at the local level.

The Working Group welcomes input on the best way to work together to reduce toxics in the Basin and ensure that it remains one of the world's great river basins.