4.0
Summary

There is increasing societal awareness and concern about toxics in our environment. EPA estimates that there are between 80,000 and 100,000 chemicals in use in commerce. Many of these chemicals are making their way into the magnificent Columbia River Basin and affecting the ecosystem and the fish that tribal people have consumed for 10,000 years or more. If we want to preserve the Columbia River Basin ecosystem for future generations, we must make important changes and take actions to reduce toxic contamination throughout the Basin.

This action plan represents a five year blueprint with over 60 actions (a complete list is found in Table 1) to reduce toxic contamination and restore the Columbia River Basin. As more information becomes available and partnerships develop, additional actions will likely be identified, especially if increased and sustained resources become available. The Columbia River Toxics Reduction Working Group, under EPA leadership, presents this action plan to the region, from decision makers to citizens, to serve as a catalyst for collaborative action and to recognize that the time is now to step forward and reduce toxics in the Columbia River Basin. As described in the action plan, coordination and leveraging existing resources can help accomplish some toxic reductions, however, accountable and measurable success will only happen with increased resources, political commitment and an engaged and informed public. We must all work together to increase toxic reduction actions, foster a better understanding of toxic contamination and increase public and political engagement and leadership in decisions that can affect the future human and ecosystem health of the Columbia River Basin.

We look forward to working together in the years ahead to aggressively restore this ecosystem and preserve its importance and culture for many generations to come.

Table 1
List of Columbia River Basin Toxics Reduction Actions

Initiative #1:
Increase understanding and political commitment to toxics reduction in the Columbia River Basin

Current Resources

1. Continue the Columbia River Toxics Reduction Working Group to coordinate work and collaborate on toxics monitoring and reduction actions
2. Publish quarterly Columbia River Toxics Reduction Newsletter
3. Work closer with Canada
4. Continue two watershed workshops a year
5. Provide recognition for toxics reduction activities (River Hero Award) and increase events to honor the River
6. Connect and communicate with public through EPA's Columbia River website and Twitter feed

Additional Resources Needed

7. Increase toxic reduction information to Basin
8. Engage and educate government and public on connection between toxics reduction and salmon recovery
9. Establish executive collaboration and decision making group and formalize working group
10. Increase Basin-wide watershed toxic reduction workshops
11. Share information on toxics and green chemistry curriculum to schools
12. Share success stories
13. Provide increased recognition for toxics reduction work – industries, municipalities, schools, etc.
14. Expand Columbia River Basin influence to affect national decision makers
15. Establish international liaison with Canada
16. Develop targeted outreach campaigns to special river users such as fishers, boaters, and surfers

Initiative #2:
Increase toxic reduction actions

Current Resources

17. Better use existing funding to increase toxic reduction actions.
18. EPA, local governments, state and tribes, should reduce discharge of toxics through more protective water quality standards, approval and implementation of TMDLs, increased stormwater controls, and increased inspections and enforcement
19. Continue Pesticide Stewardship Partnerships in OR, WA and ID
20. Coordinate with existing state and local programs to implement Integrated Pest Management on private and public lands throughout the Columbia River Basin.
21. Coordinate with Oregon Toxic Reduction Strategy: http://www.deq.state.or.us/toxics/
22. Coordinate with Washington Ecology's Toxics Threat Initiative: http://www.ecy.wa.gov/toxics/index.htm
23. Continue to work to identify new contaminated sites
24. Continue ongoing and future federal, state, and local activities to clean up contaminated sites
25. Reduce mercury through EPA Mercury Strategy Framework

Additional Resources Needed

26. Expand collaborative, watershed-based toxics reduction activities throughout the Basin linked directly to monitoring data, such as Pesticide Stewardship Partnerships to reduce pesticide loadings to streams
27. Expand collection and take back programs including mercury, pesticides, household hazardous waste, pharmaceuticals and electronics in Oregon, Washington, Idaho, and on tribal lands
28. Promote salmon and lamprey recovery efforts that reduce toxics
29. Promote industry leadership on green chemistry, transition to safer alternative products, and pollution prevention
30. Expand erosion prevention and sediment, stormwater and runoff controls, and clean-up programs in Oregon, Washington, Idaho, and on tribal lands
31. Increase enforcement to reduce toxics
32. Promote chemical safety reform
33. Increase education and technical assistance to the public on toxics reduction opportunities
34. Promote eco-certification programs for consumer products that do not contain priority toxics
35. Increase cross-media and cross-program coordination to develop and implement TMDLs that address and reduce discharges from air, land and water sources
36. Increase technical assistance to farmers and ranchers to increase best management practices, provide eco-certification, application technology training, drift reduction training and Spanish language training to decrease pesticide use
37. Increase opportunities throughout the Basin to exchange information on successful toxics reduction efforts

Initiative #3:
Conduct monitoring to identify sources and then reduce toxics

Current Resources

38. Identify the contaminants of concern to focus on in the Basin
39. Use the prioritization tool in one area of the River to assist in developing a monitoring plan and modify the tool based on the results of the pilot project
40. Assist other partners throughout Basin on using the prioritization tool to develop monitoring plans
41. Continue to seek and leverage resources to supplement existing monitoring by agencies, organizations, and Tribes in the Basin

Additional Resources Needed

42. Expand monitoring to the highest priority areas in the Basin as identified by the prioritization tool
43. Support watershed-based targeted monitoring efforts that link directly to reduction efforts, such as TMDLs, source assessments and Pesticide Stewardship Partnerships
44. Support localized monitoring efforts that will provide baseline data where habitat restoration is planned and/or ongoing; and targeted monitoring on species of concern, either ESA listed or for commercial or subsistence use
45. Assess sources of contamination and loadings for priority tracking and control
46. Establish toxic reduction efforts which include status and trends effectiveness monitoring
47. Identify opportunities to integrate water, land, air, sediment and biota monitoring
48. Develop public friendly reports to share monitoring information with the public

Initiative #4:
Develop a regional, multi-agency research and monitoring program

Current Resources

49. Identify and inventory in a database existing toxics research being conducted in the Basin
50. Using this research, convene scientists to assist in developing a Regional research plan for the Basin
51. Establish connections with researchers from other large aquatic ecosystems to better understand their research and its application to the Basin

Additional Resources Needed

52. Conduct research based on priorities identified in research plan
53. Develop indicators of ecosystem health
54. Develop new standards and criteria to protect fish, wildlife, and humans from toxics
55. Visit other regional centers to learn more about research programs
56. Conduct "Control Studies" to evaluate effectiveness of Best Management Practices, toxics reduction efforts, and emerging reduction strategies.

Initiative #5:
Develop a data management system that will allow us to share information on toxics in the Basin

Current Resources

57. Convene a group to discuss different options for managing toxics data in the Region
58. Evaluate how other large aquatic ecosystems manage data

Additional Resources Needed

59. Create a data stewardship program, hosted and managed by a single entity
60. Survey all relevant existing data management systems in the Region
61. Verify that all data has a spatial component (latitude, longitude). Include a spatial component to the data available in order to view and create maps, and conduct spatial analysis