

ASSOCIATION OF NATIONAL ESTUARY PROGRAMS



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LOWER COLUMBIA RIVER ESTUARY

The Columbia River is an interstate and international river, originating in Canada and flowing south 1,214 miles to the Pacific Ocean. The Lower Columbia River Estuary Program works in the lower 146 miles of the river where the river divides Oregon and Washington. The estuary provides great historical significance to the region and the nation: Native Americans lived in great numbers on the lands that were later a focus of the Lewis and Clark Expedition. Today, the diversity of the estuary's habitat and living resources and its primary significance to the economic stability of a vast population make its protection paramount.

FACTS ABOUT THE ESTUARY

- Over 2.5 million people live and work in the area.
- Over 175 species of birds alone use the lower Columbia River estuary for food and habitat.
- Commercial fishing was once the engine of local economies: as early as 1880, there were 40 canneries on the lower Columbia River.
- Annually, 30 million metric tons of waterborne cargo worth \$13 billion is imported and exported through lower Columbia River ports.
- The Columbia River Basin constitutes the world's largest hydroelectric power system and 43 percent of the nation's aluminum comes from Columbia River plants.
- Over 9,000 acres planted with specialized trees used for woodchip and paper making help supply the six pulp and paper facilities located along the river.
- Recreation activities include: fishing, boating, canoeing and kayaking, windsurfing, birding, and more to hundreds of thousands of residents and visitors annually.

HEALTH OF THE ESTUARY

- Twelve species of salmon and steelhead for which the lower Columbia River estuary is key habitat are listed as threatened or endangered, including Lower Columbia River Steelhead, Lower Columbia River Chinook Salmon, and Columbia River Chum Salmon.
- Studies conducted in the early 90s by the Bi-State Water Quality Program and the Lower Columbia River Estuary Program found PCBs, metals, pesticides, and other pollutants present in suckers, carp, and sturgeon.
- Elevated concentrations of dioxins and some types of pesticides have been detected in suckers. These pollutants have also appeared in otter livers and the eggshells of bald eagles.
- Increases in nonpoint source pollution resulting from large increases in impervious surface area, injurious land use practices, and increases in vehicles and the number of miles driven is removing habitat and impairing water quality.
- Since 1890, over 70 percent of the wetlands in the lower Columbia River have been lost, fifty percent of those within the last 50 years.
- Other problems exist due to changes in water temperature and levels of dissolved gas and fecal coliform bacteria.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE ESTUARY PROGRAM

- Took more than 600 children on four-hour educational boat trips in 2000.
- Surveyed 46 river miles, using satellite imagery and hyper spectral photography, and identified critical habitat.
- Awarded over 24 grants worth more than \$250,000 since 1996.
- Launched the Kids for the Columbia Club in 2000 to provide information to children and teachers.
- Implementation agreement signed by Governors of Oregon and Washington and USEPA committing parties to implement Management Plan, first joint Oregon-Washington framework for estuary ecosystem restoration and protection.
- Coordinating Endangered Species Act salmon recovery efforts on mainstem lower Columbia River.
- Completed a School of Discovery pilot program with a school district that involved all grade levels in Columbia River studies.
- Provided funds and assistance to two municipalities developing stormwater management programs, connecting land use and water quality.

Chili-Crusted Salmon with Mango-Lime Salsa

For each person:

The fish

1/3 to 1/2 pound fresh salmon filet covered entirely in red chili powder (preferably mexican)

fresh cilantro to taste

The salsa

1 mango, peeled and cut in bite-size pieces

1/4 jalapeno, finely chopped

2 or 3 green onions, minced

the juice of 2 limes

Combine all salsa ingredients, marinate for at least 2 hours.

Grill the fish on a hot skillet or barbeque or under the broiler, until just done inside and crisply crusted outside.

Arrange on a platter or individual plates with the salsa.