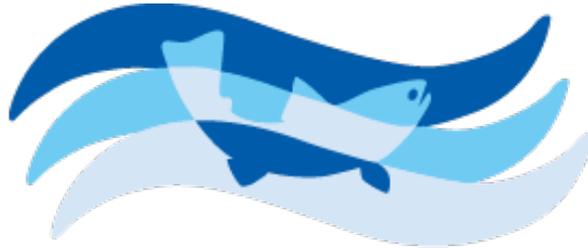




The Merganser

News and Information from the Spokane Riverkeeper



SPOKANE
RIVERKEEPER®

It's Your River, We Protect It.

Spring/Summer 2019 edition: Citizen Science, Water Quality Standards, Climate Change, Plastic Monster Unveiled, A Beaver Tale

Visit our Website

A Word from the Spokane Riverkeeper



At the Spokane Riverkeeper we work every day to protect your river from multiple threats. These include toxic pollution such as polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) that are dumped into our river every day. These pollutants accumulate in the ecosystem, the fish and anyone who eats fish. There are very stringent requirements around the amounts of PCB toxins that can be legally dumped into your waters, and these limits are called Water Quality Standards (WQS)

Recently, the Trump EPA decided to roll back our state's water quality standards to a less restrictive set of standards. This was triggered in part by an effort on the part of the pulp and paper industry and Greater Spokane Incorporated. This rollback would increase the legally allowable amount of PCBs and other toxic chemicals industry and municipalities are allowed to dump in our river and Washington State's waters.

There is absolutely no logical reason to change the water quality standard for PCBs. This rescind appears to come solely in response to industry pressure and sends the message that perceived economic profit is more important than the health of our state's citizens, our fish, and their waters. As [has already been noted](#) in [prior coverage](#), ([latest coverage](#)) some of this rescind pressure has come directly from Spokane's own city governance, Congressional representatives, and regional industry players. Spokane Riverkeeper stands ready to challenge this development in full force. We will

continue to educate citizens about these issues and we are exploring all legal and policy options available open to us in protecting your river.

Wild and Scenic Film Festival 2019

If you couldn't make it to the 5th Annual Wild and Scenic Film Festival, we understand. But you missed out on amazing films about river protection, the newest incarnation of [Riverkeeper IPA](#), and a host of great raffle prizes. More importantly, you missed the premiere of "Past and Present" by Cutboard Studio. But you're in luck, because we have it right here for your viewing pleasure. This film uses a 77-year-old voiceover from the Department of Agriculture with current footage from our local landscape. It's amazing. Thank you so much, [CutBoard Studio](#)! Check it out below.



Litter



Sometimes river cleanups take on a personality of their own. This definitely happened when we worked with 6th grade teacher Ben Jones at Summit School in the Spokane Valley. After a fall river cleanup, his students created the "Plastic Monster" suit from the litter they collected. We showed up at their end of year assembly and, *voila!* Captain Cleanup's alter ego was born!

We've had over 220 folks volunteer for our river cleanups in 2019, with 4,000 pounds of litter cleanup from the banks of the Spokane River! These cleanups are a great opportunity for

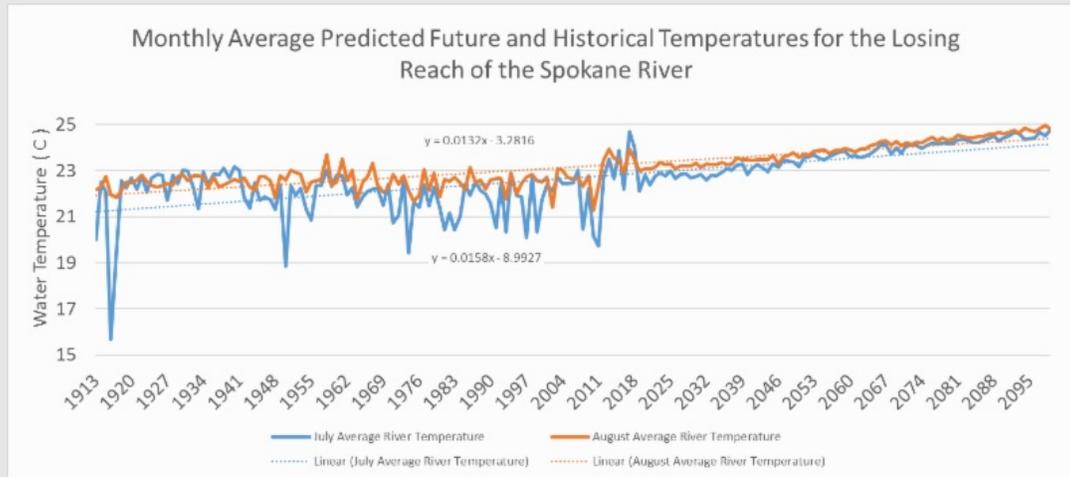
us to teach about the importance of a clean river. Thank you to all the groups that helped us (Apple Store, GEI Insurance, Electrical Apprentices Union #40, Spokane Indians, King Beverage, and others). Our next cleanup is [June 8th, at People's Park](#).

Climate Change and the Spokane River

This winter we worked with our Climate Impacts Research Consortium (CIRC), led by scientists at Oregon State University, to study and communicate the effects of climate change on our river. Data shows that due to climate change, river flows will change dramatically over the next 50 years, with an earlier spring runoff and lower summertime flows. This will have profound implications for the people and animals that depend on the river. For one, our native redband trout will lack the necessary spawning gravels found at higher river levels, leading to lower populations of this already imperiled fish.

For a separate project, our intern Brad Morin looked at July and August river water temperature from 11 years of the 2001-2018 time period and compared that with river flow and air temperature data. We found that air temperature, and to a lesser degree, river flow, influenced water temperature in the losing reach of the Spokane River. We used this basic model to predict past and future water temperatures, based on predicted future and actual historic flows and air temperatures. We predict, based on the most extreme climate scenario (RCP 8.5) average river temperatures in July and August

will rise 2 C (3.6 F) over the next 80 years. For the full report, keep an eye on our blog in the coming weeks.



Outreach

Thanks to a big grant from the Washington Department of Ecology, we've been able to spread the word about toxics in the Spokane River to youth groups, church and sports clubs, attendees at our river cleanups, as well as some large events. The goal of this project was to inform the public about challenges facing the Spokane River watershed. We've met some amazing people, and we hope that after reaching almost 5,000 (!!) people with our information about toxics, is that most of these people are starting to take steps that will protect water quality in the Spokane area. We also coordinated two well-attended public meetings about [toxic PFAS](#) and the [Midnite Mine Cleanup](#).



Pictured right: kids from Spokane Public Montessori have formed a "Plastics Group." They are very educated and inspired to spread the word about avoiding the use of single-use plastics. We reached out to 260 young people during the first months of 2019.

Thank you to our amazing interns!

A huge thank you to our spring interns, CeeCee Chen and Ethan Hoffman (pictured) for their work on the 5th Annual Wild and Scenic Film Festival. And thank you to Brad Morin and Isaac Santos for their work on climate change analysis and water conservation, respectively.



Citizen Science



Our partnership with Spokane Falls Trout Unlimited to support a citizen-science turbidity study continues to document the effect of a very dirty Hangman Creek on the Spokane River. We've had about 15 citizen scientists take nearly 120 water transparency samples with accompanying photos. These photos and data show the extent of Hangman Creek's sediment plume on the Spokane River (photo from March 21st, 2019 at left).

A Beaver Tale....



Kids, Beavers, and Hangman Creek

What does a bunch of kids running up a wheat field in the Palouse have to do with beavers and Hangman Creek? Here's what.

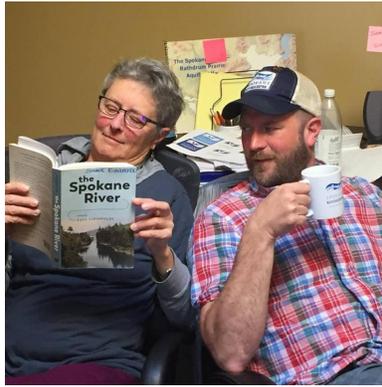
[Read more](#)

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Drips and Drops

- Save the date! Our annual fundraiser event **Spoken River** will be Thursday, October 24th this year. Mark your calendars and more details to follow.
- Please join Auntie's Bookstore, 350Spokane, and The Spokane Riverkeeper [for a talk with Dahr Jamail](#), author of the *End of Ice*, on June 12th from 7-8:30.
- Join the Spokane Riverkeeper and River City Brewing on June 8th at People's Park (corner of Clark and Riverside Ave) for our spring [litter cleanup](#). Food, entertainment, and drinks to follow at River City Brewing.
- Although the statewide [plastic bag ban did not pass](#) the state legislature, we very much support the effort, in part due to the vast amounts of plastic bags found in our river.
- If you missed it, KREM did a nice [piece on us](#) over the winter.
- Gonzaga student and Spokane Riverkeeper intern Paul Hurst is doing some [nice work on microplastic](#) in the Spokane River. Spoiler alert, plastic is *everywhere*.

• Our editorial in December 2018 in the Spokesman-Review laid out our case for setting and defending high water quality standards for PCBs and other pollutants



Support your River, Support our Work - Become a Member Today!

A donation at our web page helps:

1. By giving the river a voice in court
2. Giving you a crack at cool raffle prizes
3. Supporting our programs so that we can keep your river clean and healthy!

[Become a Member here!](#)



A huge shoutout and thank you to our newest business partner Voltric Electric and Spokane Solar. We could not do our job if green businesses like these folks were not supporting us! Look them up and they will hook you up... with solar power! Visit them [here](#).



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The Spokane Riverkeeper is a member of the Waterkeeper Alliance and a program of the Center for Justice.



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