

## **Wanapum Overview and Perspectives**

**Developed During Tribal Narrative Workshop (June 15-19, 2009)**

**Hanford, WA**

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### ***Wanapum Introduction***

Before the Columbia, there was Chiwana. Wanapum, which means the River People, are part of the river and the land through which it flows. They are a part of the people who lived there and those who continue to live along the river's shores. Coyote created the river in his efforts to care for the Wanapum. The Columbia is the river of life and myth. The Wanapum people have been supported by the river's bounty for thousands of years – honor the spirit of the river. Teachings of the Wanapum tell all who will listen to be responsible to the land, to the creatures that live within the water and on the land, to the ancestors that are buried in the land, and to those who have not yet been born. The Wanapum are the caretakers responsible for the land and passing on the teachings of the natural world to the next generation.

The Wanapum live on the Columbia River; it has been their home from time immemorial. As Indian people, they were put there to protect and preserve the land and river for themselves, their children, and those not yet born. As spiritual people the Wanapum continue to practice their religion. Friendly, understanding, and respectful of all people and things, the Wanapum only wish to live in peace. Through strenuous and prudent efforts the Wanapum have successfully built relationships with federal, state, and local agencies. The respect, trust, and mutual understanding that results from these relationships allow the Wanapum to actively participate in decision-making processes that affect their responsibilities to care for all things put here by the Creator.

### ***Wanapum Background***

The Wanapum made their homes along the Columbia River in an area known as the Columbia Plateau. They traditionally lived in small villages. The villages included mat lodges made from tules for housing and a longhouse for spiritual ceremonies.

Priest Rapids became a central location for the Wanapum because the location offered optimal fishing conditions. The Wanapum traveled regularly up and down the coast of the Columbia River for food and other resources. Their proximity to the river allowed the

Wanapum to catch plentiful salmon. The Wanapum learned the ways of the land and discovered hundreds of ways to create medicines and other remedies from plants.

In 1870, an outbreak of smallpox left the Wanapum with just 300 living members. Within 30 years many of the Wanapum people became members of nearby reservations because of health, family connections, or employment opportunities. In 1930, the Wanapum population reached an all-time low with just 30 to 50 members. The Wanapum managed to preserve their traditions throughout the 1940s.

In the decades that followed, the Wanapum experienced various impositions on their land. The construction of the Hanford Plutonium Plant and the U.S. Army Training Center took nearly 1,000 square miles of Wanapum land. The Priest Rapid Dam and the Wanapum Dam forever changed their fishing and living routines.

The self-sufficient Wanapum chose to remain an unrecognized tribe, meaning they do not have obligations to nor receive support from the U.S. government. The Wanapum frequently join forces with other recognized tribes to further common causes. They work within their own group to preserve their own culture and traditions. The survival of the Wanapum culture is evidence of the determination and strength of the people.

### ***Tribal Values***

In essence, tribal values are intent on protecting, preserving and perpetuating resources for the sake of traditional and cultural existence. Each resource had a time or a season on when to gather, store, and properly use. This harmony and connection to the land is our culture and is captured and passed down in our oral history. It is imperative that materials available for use in from Hanford for a substance lifestyle be uncontaminated. Once resources become contaminated or lost then part of our connection to the land and part of our culture is lost.

### ***General Comments***

1. We assume that all of Hanford will be eventually restored and protected<sup>1</sup>.
2. Any new proposals at Hanford should at a minimum utilize the “Hanford Site NEPA Guidance Document” as a primary reference for creating any NEPA document, especially the Affected Environment section.
3. We expect to be proactively engaged by DOE during the scoping and alternatives development for Hanford proposals. Tribes are part trustees of

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Hanford and should be informed and have opportunity to be engaged beyond the NEPA public involvement process.

4. NEPA documents at Hanford need to include sections describing Viewscapes and Soundscapes that are important to our tribal culture.
  5. Socioeconomic Section of a NEPA EIS should be separated into sections *Social* and *Economics*.
  6. A GTCC repository at Hanford is a conflicting mission with present DOE cleanup efforts.
  7. Salmon and water are important cultural resource that are intertwined with the subsistence lifestyle of affected tribes.
  8. Affected Tribes and the trust responsibilities of DOE and other federal agencies (NEPA 18, section 6) need to be clearly described in the GTCC EIA. It needs to include tribal aboriginal rights, treaty rights and Executive Orders 12898, 13007, and 13175.
- Climate is simply not a snapshot in time. Archeological evidence supports tribal oral history that speaks of a time when the region had extreme climate and weather changes. We have stories of volcanic activity, glacial periods, times of great floods, and what we know today. A GTCC repository should consider climate change and extreme weather changes expected over 10,000 year period.
  - We recommend that quiet zones and time periods should be identified for known Native American ceremonial locations on and near the Hanford Reservation.
  - Not all ceremonial sites at Hanford have been shared with DOE beyond Gable Mountain and Rattlesnake Mountain.
  - Hanford in general is composed of sandy soils that do not retain water very well and consideration must be made for the potential long-term moisture percolation affecting any underground structure.
  - Some soils have medicinal purposes for healing like the White Bluffs area. Care should be taken to recognize those with such properties.

- Proposal of any new risk of further contamination of the Columbia River system will receive high priority review.
- The affected environment needs to fully describe and graphically illustrate known groundwater plumes surrounding the Area of Potential Effect (APE). Contamination in the ground water is the greatest long-term threat at the Hanford site. The groundwater section needs to also identify where groundwater and its contaminant are not fully characterized. This uncertainty and limited technical ability to remediate the vadose zone and ground water puts the Columbia River at increased risk.
- Indian health is sustained through a balanced traditional lifestyle. Any contamination or restriction is a negative affect on tribal health. We are against adding any waste to the Hanford site that adds risk to tribal health.
- “Reference Indian” scenarios should be considered in any risk assessment development. These scenarios can also be considered inadvertent intruder scenarios, as required by DOE Order 435.1.
- Biodiversity within National Monument include rare plant and wildlife species.
- We expect DOE to comply with Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP).
- Columbia River Tribes have created a salmon recovery plan called the Wy-Kan-Ush-Mi Wa-Kish-Wit (Spirit of the Salmon). We expect that DOE’s potential placement of a repository to not conflict with elements of this Plan.
- A tribal subsistence economy needs to be described in terms of long-term “personal” enterprise. (“Personal enterprise” is the term for self and community reliance on the environment for existence as opposed to employment or modern economies.)

- The potential for large returning salmon runs should be considered part of potential changes to the economy. A goal of tribes, federal and state governments, is to dramatically improve salmon returns in the Columbia River.
- Tribal employment at Hanford and surrounding area should be part of the employment description.
- Environmental justice (EJ) in Indian country needs to be better defined to clarify sovereign nation-state status, federal trust responsibility to tribes, and include treaty and aboriginal rights.
- We maintain that aboriginal rights allow for the protection, access to, and use of open and unclaimed lands of the Hanford Reservation when human health and safety are not in jeopardy.
- There are sites or locations within the existing Hanford reservation boundary that should be considered for special protections or set aside for tribal ceremonial uses.
- We propose that ceremonial sites be placed in co-stewardship with DOE, USFWS and affected tribes for long-term management and protection.
- The Comprehensive Land Use Plan (CLUP) has institutional controls (ICs) that limit present and future use by Native Americans. These ICs should be described as part of the affected environment. Any new proposals that extend, expand, or create new IC should be considered cumulative impacts to native people.
- The 50-year management time horizon of the CLUP and its land use designations are often incorrectly assumed to be permanent designations. CLUP land use designations and their boundaries can be changed at the discretion of DOE with recommendations by Hanford stakeholders, including affected tribes.
- According to the *American Indian Religious Freedom Act*, tribal members have a protected right to conduct religious ceremonies at locations on public lands where they are known to have occurred.

- *Executive Order 13007* states that Tribal members have the right to access ceremonial sites.
- DOE and USFWS must maintain trails or roads that are presently providing access to known ceremonial sites.
- New culturally significant findings are required to be added to the list of sites and locations with special cultural protections that override any land use designation of the CLUP or other documents.
- Shipment routes need to be described for proposed Hanford site. Travel routes will cross many major rivers and salmon-bearing watersheds that are important to Tribes.
- All things of the natural environment we recognize as cultural resources. Nature provides for a subsistence live style, and thus, the daily interaction with the land is our culture, and our foundation of our religious beliefs.
- *Cultural Landscapes* have been defined by the [World Heritage Committee](#) as [distinct geographical areas](#) or properties uniquely representing the combined work of nature and of man.
- There are three overlapping cultural landscapes that overlie the natural landscape at Hanford. The first is the tribal archeological and ethnographic record spanning more than 10,000 years. The second was created by early settlers, and the third by the Manhattan Project. DOE is presently removing much of the Manhattan landscape to a more *natural* state (restoration and conservation).
- We recognize culturally significant viewsapes as described in the Hanford Cultural Resources Management Plan. Special protections and visit considerations should be given to tribal elders and youth to maintain and accommodate educational opportunities of tribal cultural and ceremonial activities.
- A proposed Repository must consider local DOE strategies of Hanford recovery, including the 200 Area 7<sup>th</sup> ROD and the 2015 Vision for the River Corridor. These long-term recovery strategies must be part of the NEPA evaluation for a repository.

- The APE for the cultural landscape should include areas across the lower Columbia Plateau from the Wallula Gap to the Sentinel Gap.
- There are many cemeteries, ceremonial sites, and areas of spiritual significance within the Hanford Boundary. Not all sites are known to DOE.