

## **Press Release**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Radiation Peril in Columbia River Increasing**

A new study, "**Trouble in the Columbia Riverbed: increasing radioactivity under the Hanford Reach,**" posted at [www.radioactivist.org](http://www.radioactivist.org), reports that radioactive radium-225 contaminates the Columbia Riverbed. That radioactivity is steadily increasing and might account for recent reports of chromosomal damage to spawning salmon.

In 2002 - 2003, The RadioActivist Campaign (TRAC) analyzed water samples derived from sediments collected from the Hanford Reach riverbed. TRAC's analyses found artificial radium-225 at up to 40 picocuries per liter. Radium-225 is a byproduct of uranium-233, which Hanford produced during the Cold War for battlefield nuclear weapons. Radioactive radium-225 mimics calcium, a natural element that is essential for regulating bodily functions.

Eighty percent of the Columbia River salmon spawn in the Hanford Reach. TRAC's Director, Norm Buske, a physicist and oceanographer, says "These new results highlight the need for an independent, comprehensive study of Hanford's radioactivity in the Hanford Reach riverbed."

In 2000, university scientists reported pronounced chromosomal anomalies in four out of five female salmon that spawned in the Hanford Reach. The Spokesman-Review reported today that according to Washington State University geneticist, Gary Thorgaard, "It's still a mystery what's going on."

According to Buske, radium-225 in the riverbed is increasing 2 - 4% per year. That radioactivity will continue to increase unless remedial actions are taken.

The Washington State's Division of Radiation Protection and Hanford scientists dispute TRAC's findings. However the agencies plan to carefully examine the Hanford shoreline over the next decade.

TRAC, based in Belfair, Washington, studies radioactivity around nuclear facilities to promote public safety and site accountability. Buske has measured radioactivity around American and Russian nuclear facilities since 1983.

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