Columbia Slough Fish Advisory

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Columbia Slough Watersheds
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Community Engagement Liaisons

Sharing our public services, benefits, and burdens more equitably requires intentional engagement of underserved communities.

- Are English-fluent, City of Portland-trained civic activists
- Are respected elders or activists in their communities
- Provide effective and authentic public participation.
Columbia Slough

19 miles long of waterways + 12 miles of side channels
32,700 acres
Across multiple Jurisdictions
~100 years of industrial & agricultural activities
Columbia Slough – A Gem in the City
• City is working with DEQ to address widespread contamination throughout Slough sediments and fish tissue.

• General approach:
  ➢ City outfall basin characterization and prioritization
  ➢ Upland source investigations
  ➢ Source Investigation & Control
  ➢ Stormwater treatment in selected City-outfall basins for City owned rights-of-way
  ➢ Monitoring (sediment and fish tissue)
  ➢ Fish Advisory Outreach
Core messages:

- Pollutants bioaccumulate in fats
- Limit consumption of resident fish:
  - No more than 2 meals a month
  - Prepare fish in a way that eliminates most of the fat
Spring 2018 Project

- Trained 7 CELs for educational outreach and information gathering through questionnaires
- Provide education to their communities on how to reduce risks from eating fish from the Slough
What Scientists Can Do Better

- Avoid jargon and acronyms when engaging them
- Provide information in multiple languages (it's important to know verbatim translation will not work well, the translation needs to cater to the level of education of the population)
- Identify who is at risk
- Provide incentives for participation
- Understand importance of fishing in community
- Understand cultural use of entire fish
What We Learned From The CELs

New refugees/immigrants:

• Are under intense stress and are missing community activities and therefore are difficult to reach
• Have fear and a lack of knowledge about US laws and government which can prevent open communication
• Are resistant to messages that go against their cultural norms
• Resist recommended fish preparation method - using head, skin and fat are part of their culture (highest contaminant concentrations)
What We Learned From The CELs

Where fish comes from
• Catch shared with friends and families
• Fish bought in local parking lots

Fish preparation
• Some cultures eat the whole fish
• Fat drippings are reused
• Recommendations for discarding parts considered wasteful

Fishing behaviors
• Higher awareness for those in US longer

Fish education
• Most people were interested in changing behaviors when informed