

**"A River At Risk," a series in the Portland Oregonian.** (Reviewed by Aria DalMolin)

Brinckman, Jonathan. "Oregon's testing of tainted fish is catch as catch can." *The Oregonian* December 20, 2000.

Brinckman, Jonathan. "Portland's beauty and its beast symbolized by heron." *The Oregonian* December 20, 2000.

Brinckman, Jonathan. "Tests reveal low levels of several chemicals." *The Oregonian* December 19, 2000.

Hunsberger, Brent. "It wasn't a healthy place to work." *The Oregonian* December 19, 2000.

Monroe, Bill. "Bass pro hones his art on Willamette River." *The Oregonian* December 19, 2000.

Monroe, Bill. "Fishing study unfortunately requires fish." *The Oregonian* December 18, 2000.

"River at Risk." Oregon Live website April 5, 2004. <http://oregonlive.com/special/river/>

From December 18-20, 2000, the Portland *Oregonian* ran a series of articles on the Willamette River entitled "River at Risk." The series included a total of 13 articles. I chose to look at the six that pertained to the native and invasive species along the Willamette.

The article "Oregon's testing of tainted fish is catch as catch can" reported on the testing of fish for chemicals in the Willamette river basin. It told how Oregon is one of 15 states in the country that does monitor the fish in its rivers and lakes for chemicals. However a study by the U.S. Geological Survey in 1999 found the presence of 50 pesticides in Willamette Valley rivers, lakes, and streams, including PCBs and high levels of mercury in fish caught in the lower Willamette River.

The article "Portland's beauty and its beast symbolized by heron" reveals how species such as bald eagles, river otters, mink, and other wildlife that thrive on a fish-based diet are scarcely found around the lower Willamette River. It points out that although there is still an abundance of bass and other prey, these animals are no where to be found. The article points out that a study found high levels of PCBs and DDT in the eggshells of blue herons, and that this might be a reason for the disappearance of the other animals that eat fish from the Willamette River. The article states that the blue heron is a tolerant species and the other animals may not be as tolerant to the high levels of chemicals.

The article "Tests reveal low levels of several chemicals" from Dec. 19, 2000 stated that 11 toxic chemicals were found in low levels in fish from every part of the Willamette River; however, the levels fell below state and federal standards. The only pesticide that was found in levels above state standards

was the banned pesticide DDT. This pesticide was found in fish caught in the lower Willamette near Portland's harbor.

The article "It wasn't a healthy place to work" shows the history of pollution caused by the chemical plants along the river and the lasting effects of the chemicals on the fish and animals in the Willamette River. It states a study of 30 fish from the Willamette that showed high levels of DDT, DDE, and DDD and it inferred that worms, insects and other animals that live in the sediment pass the pollutants on to the fish.

"Bass pro hones his art on the Willamette River" stated how bass are not native to the Willamette River and are affecting the levels of wild trout and salmon. And the article "Fishing study unfortunately requires fish" also states that the Oregonian attempted a large fish study on the Willamette involving the black crappie, smallmouth bass, and carp; however, it was so difficult to acquire the correct amount of fish that the study was abandoned.

## Critique

I found this series of articles to be an interesting overview of what is happening to the Willamette River. It was a succinct overview of the history of the Willamette River, the sources of the pollutants, what the major pollutants are, who is being affected and what health risks are being presented. This information would be valuable for the general public. The sources and research seemed credible, such as reports from the U.S. Geological Survey and tests done by the Food Safety and Environmental Stewardship Program. However, sometimes the article would simply state, "Tests conducted by The Oregonian found..." (Brickman, Dec.20), and wouldn't exactly state who conducted the test and how the test was performed.

The credibility was mostly satisfactory; however, the articles seemed to be anthropocentric and seemed to relate mostly to the human health effects rather than talking about the native and non-native species in and along the Willamette River. Therefore I find this article a valuable starting-off point for research, but not a very valuable source of in-depth information.

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