

Coho salmon numbers surge on the Columbia River

By Scott Learn, The Oregonian

December 30, 2009, 11:43AM

Coho salmon, once close to extinction in the Columbia River's upper tributaries, are returning at post-dam record numbers in the middle and upper Columbia this year, the Bonneville Power Administration **reports**.

Ten years ago, 12 adult coho returned past Rock Island Dam near Wenatchee, Wash. This year, 19,805 passed the dam. Returns past McNary Dam near Hermiston climbed from 4,736 coho a decade ago to 33,385 this year -- the most since counting began at the dam in 1954.

BPA, which markets power generated at Columbia River dams and helps fund salmon restoration, credited Yakama Nation coho reintroduction programs for the increase, along with restored habitat, better dam passage and improved ocean conditions.

Most of the returning fish came from hatcheries, though natural spawning is increasing, BPA said.

-- **Scott Learn**