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Abstract

“Ghost River”: The Columbia

Don Gayton

This perspective piece examines the history and geography of the Columbia River and some current ecosystem management issues related to hydroelectric development on the river. Once the greatest salmon producer in the world, the Columbia has, according to the author, become a ghost river, with its salmon runs reduced to remnants, and its ecological integrity hanging in the balance. The author suggests that British Columbians have much to lose, both biologically and culturally should this river ecosystem collapse. While the river will probably never flow freely again, the author maintains that it will be a test of our commitment to energy conservation and of our biological ingenuity, to bring the Columbia back from its current ghost status.

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