

Condit Dam Completely Removed from the White Salmon River

A year after a final dynamite blast punched a hole through the Condit Dam, and almost a century after the dam was ranked the 12th largest in the West, the last pieces of the structure were removed on September 14, 2012.

White Salmon River looking downstream near dam site in 1912.



White Salmon River looking downstream near former dam site in September 2012.

Decommissioning – The Results

Although a new operating license which included fish passage may have achieved a similar result for fisheries, the cost to install fish passage would have been approximately three times as much as decommissioning. Therefore, PacifiCorp deemed the decommissioning alternative as best for its customers. As a result, recreation use has changed from flatwater to riverine and formerly inundated river habitat under the reservoir opened for salmon spawning. With the conclusion of demolition, the river through the former project area is open. The former reservoir area is being re-vegetated and salmon are spawning in the project area.

What Others are Saying

“The restoration of a free-flowing river is an exciting event for the whitewater boating community. Paddling the restored reach will be a treasured, yet challenging, experience for many. Downstream from the stretch of river near Northwestern Park, the river enters the White Salmon narrows, a dramatic canyon guarded by a rapid with powerful hydraulics that only expert paddlers should attempt to navigate.”

Thomas O’Keefe

Pacific NW Stewardship Director of American Whitewater

“We’re seeing the ESA-listed tule fall Chinook spawning in locations they used prior to dam removal and into the newly opened habitat upstream of the former dam site. The fact that habitat downstream of the dam site is being used for spawning is a good sign this early after dam removal and shows the river is in an active recovery state.”

Rod Engle

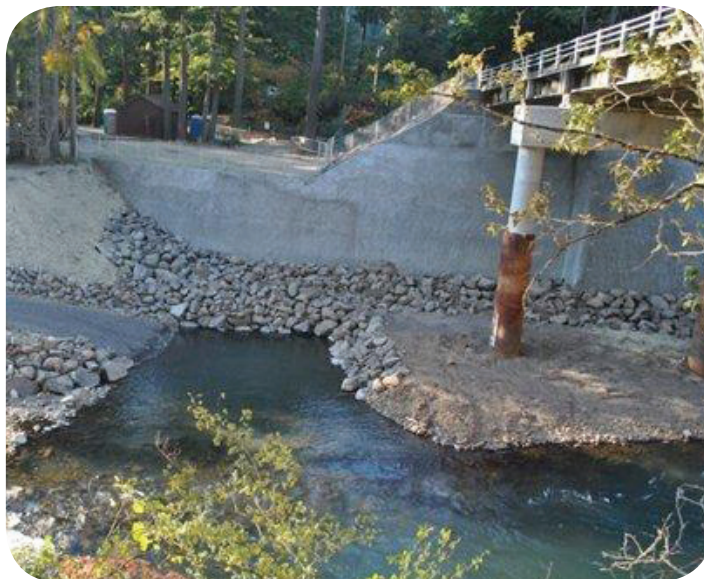
Hatchery Assessment Team, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service



Steelhead jumping BZ falls upstream of the former dam site.
Photo courtesy of Jeanette Burkhardt – Yakama Nation

Focus on Safety Pays Off

Safety has been PacifiCorp’s top priority since the inception of the Condit Dam Decommissioning Project. PacifiCorp would like to thank members of the surrounding community, especially those residing near the project area, for taking all safety warnings seriously and abiding by the access restrictions in the area. As a result, no one from the public has been injured during the removal process. PacifiCorp’s contractors, particularly Vancouver-based J.R. Merit, should also be commended for their focus on safety. To date, there has been no lost-time injuries among our contractors during more than 64,000 hours worked on the project. Public access into the former dam site area was opened as of November 26, 2012. PacifiCorp cautions that there are areas along the river that are steep and dangerous and should be avoided. Restoration, cabin/residential and powerhouse areas remain closed.



Repaired abutment and soil “nail wall” on the Northwestern Lake Road Bridge near Northwestern Park.



A pair of kayakers recently utilizing the new take-out boat ramp at Northwestern Park.

Navigating the White Salmon River

When the dam was removed in mid-September, J.R. Merit also removed most of a large logjam that would have blocked boats drifting the river. To protect the migration of fall Chinook, work on removing the logjam was suspended for about a month and the logjam was not completely removed until late October. Experienced guides from the local rafting community have inspected the river from the Northwestern Lake Road Bridge to the White Salmon's confluence with the Columbia River and confirmed that major obstacles are no longer present. Recreational boaters with the appropriate skills and experience can now float the river's final three miles downstream of Northwestern Park. PacifiCorp asks that the boating community respect the privacy and property of cabin owners in the area. Please do not park on cabin access roads or traverse through cabin areas. River access should be only at the public access point at Northwestern Park. The public can also use the new boat take-out facility at Northwestern Park.

In the Columbia River, PacifiCorp will continue to monitor the sediment delta at the mouth of the White Salmon River and coordinate public safety efforts with the U.S. Coast Guard regarding the federal channel in the Columbia River. Currently, a navigation buoy alerts boaters of the sand bar that has been created in the Columbia River. The Underwood area near the mouth of the White Salmon River, north of Highway 14, is also a tribal in-lieu fishing site administered by the U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs. As expected, the sediment that had built up behind the dam over the years has accumulated in this area and made the boat ramp unstable. The Settlement Agreement required PacifiCorp to make a contribution to a mitigation fund administered by the tribes. Per the agreement, these funds are to be used for the enhancement, maintenance or other use of the Underwood in-lieu site.

Restoring the Landscape

Throughout the summer and early fall, work was performed to restore the landscape in and around the former reservoir and along the banks of the river. Some of the work included grading the slopes for stability, public safety and erosion prevention. Recently, hydroseeding and mulching work has taken place to further restore the landscape. Native seeds, shrubs, trees and grasses are being planted in the area and PacifiCorp will monitor the plantings as the vegetation establishes itself. PacifiCorp will work to control invasive plants to ensure a successful reclamation of the riverside areas.

PacifiCorp is also partnering with the Yakama Nation on a restoration project in the physical area of the former reservoir. The tribe plans to restore a 2.8 acre site near Northwestern Park in 2013 by installing native and culturally significant plant species. Over the coming years, PacifiCorp will continue to monitor water quality, slope stability and sediment movement. Restoration and bridge stabilization work in the vicinity of the Northwestern Lake Road Bridge was successfully completed this summer. A soil "nail wall" was added to reinforce and stabilize the soil surrounding the west bridge abutment. PacifiCorp will continue to monitor these areas into the future.



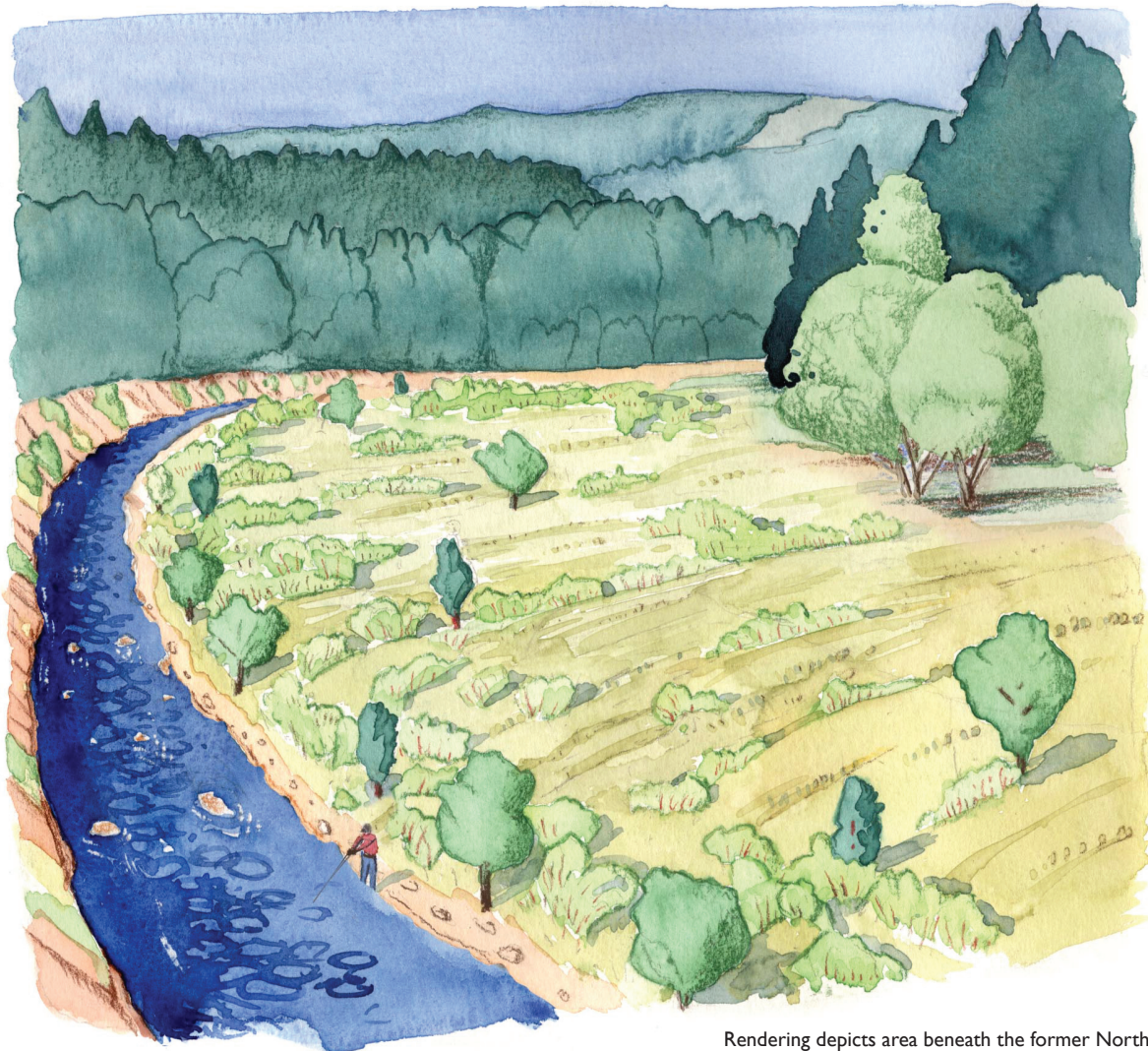
Recently, hydroseeding and mulching work has taken place to further restore the landscape along the river.

Condit Dam Decommissioning

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Rendering depicts area beneath the former Northwestern Lake five years after removal of the Condit Dam.

PacifiCorp Partnering with the Community into the Future

Moving forward, PacifiCorp will continue to reflect the public's interest as it continues its partnership with the local community. Since the draining of Northwestern Lake, PacifiCorp has been working with cabin owners to remediate the impacts to wells and structures in the area. PacifiCorp has assisted cabin owners in establishing new wells or connecting their residences to the City of White Salmon water supply. In the months and years to come, PacifiCorp will continue monitoring activities surrounding the restoration of the former reservoir area. PacifiCorp is committed to a long-term partnership with the local community. This includes advising and involving affected stakeholder groups of our long-term plans for the former project land.

About PacifiCorp

PacifiCorp is one of the lowest-cost electricity producers in the United States, providing approximately 1.7 million customers in the West with reliable, efficient energy. PacifiCorp operates as Pacific Power in Oregon, Washington and California, and as Rocky Mountain Power in Utah, Wyoming and Idaho. PacifiCorp's electric generation, commercial and energy trading, and mining functions are operated as PacifiCorp Energy.

If you have comments or questions please call 1-503-331-4361, email us at condit.decommissioning@pacificorp.com or visit our website at pacificorp.com/condit

