Condit Dam Decommissioning

Newsletter | Spring/Summer 2012

PacifiCorp Energy
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A Busy Winter at Condit Dam Site

The winter of 2012 was a busy one at the Condit Dam site. A century after the initial construction began on the dam, its removal has begun in earnest. Winter and spring rains moved sediment downstream toward the Columbia River and slope stabilization work began to reshape the banks of the White Salmon River where Northwestern Lake once resided. For safety, signs are posted along unstable banks and near construction sites to warn the public to steer clear of these areas.

Structural Removal of the Dam and Facilities Moves Forward

Removal of the dam structure and associated facilities began in January. The wooden flow line was dismantled and crews operating heavy machinery, such as hydraulic hammers, began breaking up the face of the concrete dam. The treated-wood remains of the flow line are being transported to the Klickitat County waste facility and concrete rubble from the dam, estimated at 34,000 cubic yards, will be spread onto the area where the flow line once was. Eventually, the area will be capped with 18 inches of soil cover and planted with native vegetation. The project is on track to have the dam completely removed by the end of August 2012.

Demolition of the dam and facilities will continue through the summer months.

Decommissioning work continued throughout the winter at Condit Dam.

What others are saying

"Right about now, juvenile fall Chinook salmon are likely outmigrating from the White Salmon River. These juveniles are the progeny of the adults we transported upstream of the dam and were not impacted by the sediment released by the dam deconstruction. I think 2012 has a lot of promise for the river continuing to re-shape, restore and re-design itself. For this summer, I plan on getting a good look at the White Salmon River from the mouth up through what was Northwestern Reservoir to see what the returning fall Chinook salmon adults might do when they arrive in September. We are busily working with partners and co-managers on the data that they'd like to collect on salmon spawning this first year post-Condit Dam deconstruction as well as developing some longer-term plans. In general, I'm just excited about what the river is going to look like... I want to go through my memories of locations in the lower river from years past and see what they look like now."

Rod Engle
Hatchery Assessment Team, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Columbia River Fisheries Program Office, Vancouver, Wash.

"We are pleased to see Condit Dam removal on track and thrilled to have access to Northwestern Park restored. It has been exciting to watch the river reclaim its former channel and we wait in anxious anticipation for the opportunity to see the rest of the river later this year."

Thomas O'Keefe
Pacific NW Stewardship Director
American Whitewater

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Public safety is PacifiCorp's top priority and we ask the public to obey all signs in the construction areas.

Public Safety a Top Priority

The White Salmon River banks continue to be an evolving landscape both upstream and downstream of the dam. PacifiCorp, local law enforcement and river experts are reminding the public to obey posted signs in the area. As deconstruction work continues through the spring and summer, PacifiCorp will maintain public access closures for the dam site, the reservoir area and the canyon reach downstream of the dam during the spring and summer months of 2012. As the spring and early summer rains and snowmelt further sculpt the riverbed and river banks, PacifiCorp and state and federal authorities will regularly monitor the river as it continues its transformation to its natural state. The area from the Northwestern Lake Bridge downstream to the powerhouse remains an active construction site and an unsafe area for the public. The river downstream of the powerhouse has been reopened for fishing and is accessible except via routes posted as private property.

Repair Work at Northwestern Lake Bridge and Bank Stabilization Work Continues

Public safety also will be a high priority in the vicinity of Northwestern Lake Bridge, where additional bridge stabilization work is expected to continue through the summer. Following approval from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, PacifiCorp placed riprap in late December 2011 to stem the erosion of the river banks under the bridge and additional riprap was placed in late March 2012. The next phase of this work is to construct a soil nail wall at the west abutment of the Northwestern Lake Bridge to ensure its long-term stability. Soil nailing stabilizes and reinforces existing soil by grouting threaded steel bars into slopes or cuts as wall construction proceeds from the top down. The total treatment length will be approximately 220 feet centered on the bridge. The result will be a wall with a height of 37 feet at its center. Temporary access and work areas will be constructed and protected from the river by riprap. Upon completion of the soil nail wall, the riprap will be reconfigured to provide additional protection against scour at the base of the wall. PacifiCorp continues to evaluate whether additional stabilization measures are necessary for the east side of the Northwestern Lake Bridge.

Grading operations are also underway in several locations along the former reservoir to address slope stability for public safety, to prevent future erosion and prepare for hydro seeding and mulching this fall.

The grading of the riverbanks was done in the spring in preparation for fall hydro seeding.

Access to Northwestern Park

Northwestern Park remains open, but barricade fencing and signs are posted to warn the public to stay out of the former reservoir area. There also are signs posted at various points around the White Salmon River to warn boaters to take out at Northwestern Park; boater safety warning posters are located at the common boat launch locations upstream. As restoration work continues and the final riverbank contours are formed, a new whitewater boat take-out and other improvements will be completed. The access road used for construction at the Northwestern Lake Bridge also will be adapted to provide a boat take-out. During the construction work at the bridge, boaters will continue to use a boat access ramp recently established approximately 300 feet downstream of the bridge. Once the construction work is completed, the permanent boat take-out location will be available just downstream of the bridge.

Boater safety is a top priority for PacifiCorp. Please obey all signs in the river and along the banks.

Demolition of the Original Cofferdam

The decommissioning plans included demolition of the original cofferdam and diversion structures that were built just upstream of the dam during the initial construction. The cofferdam was left in place when the reservoir was filled in 1913 and remained well preserved underwater. To complete the demolition, an access road was built from the location of the former boat ramp on the east bank near the dam.

The cofferdam was tied to a rock outcrop and about 250 cubic yards of rock were removed from the top to provide a work platform for the demolition. The river level in the area upstream of the cofferdam dropped approximately 10 feet upon its removal in late April.

The old cofferdam was removed ahead of schedule on April 24, 2012 and the White Salmon River is flowing unobstructed for the first time in 100 years.

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New spawning and rearing grounds are now open for steelhead and salmon in the White Salmon basin.

An Active Watercourse

The White Salmon River, corralled by the Condit Dam for 100 years, is returning to its natural course after the breaching event last October and is clearly responding by re-establishing its form and function within the formally submerged canyon. One of the major questions surrounding the decommissioning of the Condit Dam was the uncertainty of how the surrounding land and banks of the former reservoir would reshape themselves once the sediment moved downstream. Erosion and slope instability are causing PacifiCorp to work closely with a few cabin owners on safety matters. PacifiCorp also has been working with cabin and well owners in the area regarding well issues that have surfaced since the reservoir draining. The sediment that has moved downriver to the confluence of the Columbia River to date constitutes about two-thirds of what had built up in the reservoir during Condit Dam's lifetime. A significant amount of sediment remains at the boat ramp located at the Underwood In-Lieu site, owned by the Bureau of Indian Affairs, near the confluence of the river. This sediment has made the former boat ramp unusable; restoration of the site is under development.

PacifiCorp continues to work with the U.S. Coast Guard to regularly monitor activity at the mouth of the river.

PacifiCorp is also maintaining a buoy to warn boaters of the delta at the mouth of the White Salmon River and communicating with the U.S. Coast Guard and the Army Corps of Engineers regarding the conditions at the delta. As the spring and early summer runoff flows begin on the Columbia River, the delta has started to erode.

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

Date	Key Decommissioning Activities
January 2012 – Present	Demolition of Condit Dam and facilities continues
April 24, 2012	Cofferdam removed from White Salmon River
Spring/Summer 2012	Regrading of river banks
August 2012	Repairs at Northwestern Lake Bridge completed
August 2012	Boat launch modifications completed at Northwestern Park
End of August 2012	Condit Dam completely removed from White Salmon River
September 2012	White Salmon River within former project area open to boaters
September 2012	Hydro seeding of river banks
October 2012	Project completion