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## **Trout season opening delayed at Swift Reservoir**

*Low water levels and safety concerns cause Washington game officials to delay opening from April 26 to May 24*

COUGAR, Wash. — The opening of trout season on Swift Reservoir in Skamania County is being delayed for a month due to the abnormally slow melting of the heavy snow pack in the basin. Spring inflows have yet to occur, resulting in unusually low water levels on the uppermost Lewis River reservoir.

“Current conditions make it really tough to provide a quality fishing opportunity for the public,” said John Weinheimer, district fish biologist for the Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife. “Access, whether from shore or a boat would be extremely limited and unsafe. It also makes it extremely difficult to plant the trout.”

PacifiCorp, the regional electric utility that manages Swift Reservoir, said that if the snow pack does melt as expected and the basin receives normal spring rainfall, the boat ramp should be usable by May 24, the start of Memorial Day weekend. Traditionally, PacifiCorp has legal-sized rainbow trout stocked in Swift Reservoir at the beginning of trout season. That won’t change, but this year, the 60,000 trout will be planted just before the May 24 opening instead.

“Stocking the fish a little later will give them an extra month at the hatchery, so the fish should be a little bigger,” said Weinheimer.

In late March, PacifiCorp, which has managed the reservoir for more than 50 years, saw that Swift would not fill in time for the traditional April 26 opening. The snow pack was 170 percent of normal and included an abundance of low elevation snow. The cold weather that hit the region in late March not only kept any snow from melting, but actually added to the snow pack.

“This prolonged period of cold weather in the region and delay of mountain snow melt is a very rare occurrence,” said Jennifer Kelly, an engineer in PacifiCorp’s Hydro Resources department. “Reservoir levels are 50 feet below our 15 year average for this time of year. This is close to the lowest April level we’ve experienced in 50 years.”

Long-term weather forecasts and snow pack analysis lead PacifiCorp to believe the reservoir will completely fill by mid June. The Swift campground will remain closed until the snow melts and crews have the opportunity to clean up downed trees and other winter damage.

“We know for many anglers, opening day at Swift is long-standing tradition,” said Weinheimer. “With this announcement, we hope to let anglers have time to plan an alternative outing and then plan to come to Swift in late May, a kind of second opening day.”

Boat ramps at Yale and Merwin reservoirs on the Lewis River are not affected and are available. Fishing is open year round on those reservoirs.

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**About Pacific Power**

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