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Walla Walla District

News Release

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Contact: Public Affairs Office

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Phone: (509) 527-7020

Dworshak scheduled releases increase to assist outmigrating salmon; Holiday weekend recreation opportunities still abound at reservoir

AHSANKA, Idaho – Water releases will further increase at Dworshak Dam and Reservoir today to help cool water temperatures for ESA-listed outmigrating juvenile salmon in the lower Snake River, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers officials announced today.

Corps officials announced that continued high temperatures have made necessary an increase beyond the scheduled releases previously announced on July 2.

Water flows from Dworshak Dam shall increase to 12,000 cubic feet per second effective 2:00 p.m. on Thursday, July 5, and shall remain at 12,000 cubic feet per second until at least 2:00 p.m. on Monday, July 9.

Evaluation of current water temperatures and increases in air temperatures prompted the decision by the Fish Passage Advisory Committee to increase cool-water flows from Dworshak. The FPAC is a regional group composed of biologists and fish managers from NOAA-Fisheries; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; Idaho, Washington and Oregon states' fish and wildlife agencies, Native American tribes and the Fish Passage Center which evaluates in-river conditions for ESA-listed fish and makes recommendations to regional water managers to adjust operations as necessary.

With air temperatures at or above 100 degrees during recent days and near-record and record high temperatures for this time of year, between 99-110 degrees, the cold mountain run-off water from Dworshak Reservoir is crucial to maintain water temperatures in the lower Snake River. Biologists advise that water temperatures exceeding 68 degrees can have an adverse impact to outmigrating juvenile salmon and steelhead. Dworshak Reservoir's 44-45 degree waters which flow into the Clearwater River can have a significant cooling effect on lower Snake River temperatures past the confluence.

Flows from Dworshak Reservoir began increasing at 10 a.m. on July 2 from 4,300 cubic feet per second (cfs) to 7,400 cfs. At 7,400 cfs, the reservoir level will drop 6 inches in 24 hours. At 6 a.m. July 3 flows were further increased to 9,500 cfs, or 8.5 inches in 24 hours. Today's increase to 12,000 cubic feet per second means an estimated drop of Dworshak Reservoir water level of about 1.1 feet per 24 hour interval.

Outdoor recreation opportunities shouldn't be affected by the increase in flows through the weekend, said Corps recreation officials. All campgrounds and boat ramps are open for use.

Boat operators should be sure to keep the fluctuating reservoir levels in mind when anchoring near the shoreline. It is recommended boaters anchor off a bit further from shore than usual to avoid beaching their vessel as the reservoir level lowers several inches during overnight hours.

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Corps recreation officials hope visitors will recognize and appreciate that safety is everybody's responsibility.

In addition, the reserving of mini-camp sites along the Dworshak Reservoir shoreline is prohibited. Early placement of camping equipment at mini-camp sites in an attempt to save a spot can result in the removal of the camping equipment or a citation if personal gear is left unattended for an extended period.

Please enjoy the reservoir safely this weekend, by taking the following precautions:

- Changing weather conditions can create unsafe situations on open water. Know the weather and have a float plan.
- Keep life jackets on children while on or around the water.
- Don't let small children out of your sight.
- Check the serviceability of your boat.
- Ensure proper fitting, accessible and serviceable life vests are available for each occupant on your boat. Better yet, wear them.

- Before proceeding at higher speeds, familiarize yourself with the area you will be boating as there may be floating woody debris or rocks, stumps and shallow areas not visible from the surface.
- When boating on the reservoir, please use caution because lake levels can change quickly – anchor your boat in water deep enough to avoid beaching and leave enough slack in your anchorline to avoid sinking should lake levels fluctuate up or down.

The Dworshak Dam Visitor Center is open from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. daily. The Visitor Center offers a variety of interpretive displays and movies about Dworshak and the history of the area. For more information, visitors are welcome to call the Corps of Engineers at (800) 321-3198, the Visitor's Center at (208) 476-1255. Reservations for Dent Acres can be made at (877) 444-6777 or at www.recreation.gov. Information about Dworshak and other Corps recreation opportunities is available on Walla Walla District's Web site at www.nww.usace.army.mil.

For more information about regional water-management activities, go online to the Corps' Columbia Basin Water Management Division Web site at www.nwd-wc.usace.army.mil.

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