

Project Background

The diversion dam, constructed by a private entity in the early 1900's, was originally used to divert water into Lake Tapps for the White River Hydroelectric Project. When Mud Mountain Dam (MMD) was built, in the WWII era, the fish collection facility was built at the Diversion Dam. The Corps entered into an agreement in 1948 with PSE and Washington State Fish & Wildlife Services to utilize the Diversion Dam in the operations of the fish collection facility. Since then, the Diversion Dam has operated to provide water to the Hydroelectric Project, direct upstream-migrating fish into the fish collection facility, and the Muckleshoot Hatchery has been built. In the late 1980's, the White River Hydroelectric Project wanted to make modifications to and expand the hydroelectric project, and so was subject to licensing by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC). As part of the FERC licensing process, NOAA Fisheries stipulated that PSE replace the diversion dam in order to get the project licensed. In response to the possibility that the hydroelectric project might be shut down, which would eliminate the diversion into Lake Tapps and cause the Lake to dry up, the Lake Tapps Task Force was formed in 1999. The Task Force consists of community members, Pierce County officials, several agency representatives, and other stakeholders, and obtained a stay for the hydroelectric project from FERC, in order to have time to research different ways to save Lake Tapps. The Task Force also appealed to Congress to have money allocated to the Corps to preserve and maintain the diversion dam, on the premise that if the hydro project (and hence the Diversion Dam) was retired, the Corps would have to build a new fish collection facility in order to continue to provide fish passage around MMD. Since the Diversion Dam has surpassed its economic life and is at risk of failure, a long-term fish passage solution is necessary, and Congress gave the Corps funding for design and construction of a new fish passage facility. However, the scope of the project is limited to work that is necessary for the fish passage, and federal funds will not be used for any additional work.

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