

## Lake Washington slowly lowering, conservation underway at the Locks



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June 25, 2001

SEATTLE--The level of Lake Washington has fallen about two inches from its seasonal high, to 21.9 feet above sea level, as inflows have dropped off and evaporation has increased, according to the Army Corps of Engineers. The Corps regulates the level of Lakes Washington and Union through its operation of the Chittenden Locks and Dam in Ballard.

The lake is raised beginning in February to elevation 22 feet by June. This water is used throughout the summer to meet flow needs for fish passage, navigation and salinity control. The lake ordinarily begins slowly falling in elevation after the end of June, with a target elevation of 20 feet by December.

The Corps' conservation actions are underway at the Locks. The Corps filled Lake Washington two weeks earlier than normal, to its highest allowable level, to provide a more certain supply of water for fish passage. Current conservation measures include operating two out of four smolt passage flumes, plugging leaks around the flumes, and reducing flow through the saltwater drain, with daily monitoring and adjustments.

The Corps' goal is to operate two fish passage flumes at least 10 hours a day through the month of July, but this depends on lake level. The flumes pass hundreds of thousands of baby salmon safely from fresh water to Puget Sound each year.

To prevent damage to property and structures, the Corps attempts to keep the level of Lake Washington from dropping below 20 feet. If forecasts predict that the lake elevation will fall below 20 feet as measured at the Locks, the Corps changes operation, reducing water use at the Locks incrementally to maintain needed elevation.

Water in the Lake Washington watershed is used for the region's municipal and industrial water supply, for fish passage, to prevent saltwater from entering Lake Washington, and to lock boats through the Chittenden Locks in Ballard.

To find out more about conservation measures and studies at the Locks see: [Conservation Study](#)