Chittenden Locks Water Conservation team puts data on the web

Contact: Patricia Graesser (206) 764-3760
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SEATTLE--An Army Corps of Engineers team, which is studying ways to help restore salmon runs in the Lake Washington basin, has put its information on the Internet. The study team is looking for water-saving opportunities at the Chittenden Locks to allow more water to be used for fish passage throughout the system. The team is also identifying possible habitat improvement projects in the basin.

Information about the study is now available on the web at:
Locks GI Study

The team is evaluating water saving improvement options at the Hiram M. Chittenden Locks--modifying saltwater management, reducing leaks at the Locks, reducing lockages, and constructing a new saltwater drain. They are also evaluating restoration actions--shoreline habitat restoration on the Cedar and Sammamish rivers, the Ship Canal, Lake Union, Lake Washington, and Shilshole Bay.

The federal government, Army Corps of Engineers, is funding 50 percent of the study. Together the City of Seattle and King County are funding 50 percent of basin restoration studies, and Seattle is funding water conservation studies through its Habitat Conservation Plan.

Water in the Lake Washington basin 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.

The Chittenden Locks is now implementing its conservation plan. This spring 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. The Corps has also curtailed saltwater drain operation to save water. If the year continues to be dry, additional water conservation measures include:

-Further curtailing saltwater drain use
-Minimizing large lock use
-Closing the smolt flumes

In extreme conditions, the Corps can close fish flumes, cut large lock lockages to 6 per day, close the fish ladder, and further reduce saltwater drain use.

Lockages on a typical June day use 100 cubic feet per second of water averaged over the day. By comparison, fish attraction uses 160 cfs, the saltwater drain at the locks uses 140 cubic feet per second in a day of operation, and the fish flumes pass 55 to 405 cfs (depending on how many are operating). If drought conditions worsen, the Corps will reduce the frequency of lockages as well as other uses.