

## Libby Dam outflows at minimum discharge

SEATTLE – Outflows from Libby Dam dropped to the minimum project discharge of 4,000 cubic feet per second Jan. 3 for normal flood control operation and will remain low until further notice. By the end of January, Lake Koocanusa is likely to be below the end-of-January VARQ (variable flow) flood control target of 2,427 feet. Currently, the April through August total inflow is forecasted to be 77.8 percent of average for Libby Dam – this forecast is used to determine the flood control targets and is updated each month.

The Army Corps of Engineers began implementing VARQ flood control operations on an interim basis Jan. 1. In years when the water supply forecast at Libby is not well above or well below average, VARQ flood control elevations are higher than standard flood control elevations during the winter drawdown period. So far this year, with the operation of Libby Dam on minimum flow, along with a low runoff forecast, Lake Koocanusa is expected to operate to the same elevations whether operating to meet the VARQ flood control targets or standard flood control targets.

Lower winter outflow helps assure sufficient water storage in the reservoir for spring and summer flows to benefit threatened and endangered fish species – including bull trout, sturgeon and salmon – as well as increasing the probability of refilling Lake Koocanusa. Low flows during the winter months also benefit winter-spawning burbot in the lower Kootenai River in Idaho and British Columbia by allowing the weak-swimming fish easier access to spawning areas not fully accessible during higher flows.

To find out more about VARQ, visit the Corps' [VARQ website](#). For more information on Libby Dam operations, please contact Mick Shea at 406-293-7751.