

Fish ladder mechanical problems repaired at Chittenden Locks in Ballard--fish found dead and alive

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SEATTLE--Repairs to fish ladder equipment at the Hiram M. Chittenden Locks in Ballard were completed yesterday evening, according to the Army Corps of Engineers, which operates the Locks. Dead and live salmon were found during the repair work.

The Corps' maintenance crew repaired the two gratings at weir 1 and 3 in the fish ladder while fisheries biologists with the Muckleshoot Tribe, Washington Dept. of Fish and Wildlife, NOAA and Corps recovered and removed trapped salmon. During repair work, workers and biologists found under the gratings 350 sockeye and 25 Chinook salmon that were dead. An additional 172 live sockeye, two live Chinook and one dead Chinook were removed from the diffuser well. When crews initially restarted the flow from the auxiliary water supply pipe, a 6-foot-diameter pipe that provides water to the fish ladder, the flow flushed out an additional 83 sockeye and 7 Chinook that were dead.

Tribal and agency fisheries biologists originally worked with maintenance crew in identifying the problem and in planning the fish ladder repair and salmon recovery. The Corps will work with the biologists to develop a plan to ensure that salmon and steelhead will not be trapped during the remainder of their migration.

The maintenance crew rewatered the fish ladder at 6 p.m. yesterday. They had drained the fish ladder and started work at 7:30 a.m.

On July 29, a grating dislodged and blocked fish from passing over one of the ladder weirs, diverting and trapping fish in the diffuser well, where nearly 100 fish became stressed and died. Corps, tribal and other agency biologists were on the scene with the Corps maintenance crew and fish migration was restored by 11 a.m. that day.

More than 380,000 sockeye and 1,200 Chinook have safely passed through the fish ladder so far this year.