

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers continues to limit construction impact on native fishing
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Contact: Dick Devlin (206) 766-6447 or

Jeff Laufle (206) 764-6578

SEATTLE -- With the Chief Joseph Dam spillway deflector project now well underway, and with multiple concrete pours slated, the Seattle District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, continues to release updated schedules on a monthly basis to keep tribal fishers informed of activities associated with construction. These deflectors are in part the result of a request from the Colville Confederated Tribes and are being installed to minimize the impacts of total dissolved gas (TDG) super-saturation, a result of water plunging down the dam spillway. That condition may harm or kill fish below the dam in a manner similar to decompression sickness, or "the bends," in human divers.

The south (powerhouse) side of the river at the dam remains open and accessible to fishing, with intermittent restrictions related to specific construction activities. As each deflector is constructed, a set sequence of events provides relatively predictable conditions. Current schedules call for a concrete pour that will result in a partial closure during the week of Aug. 6; construction of a crane platform and installation of a crane near the spillway the same week; and two concrete pours during the period from Sept. 5 to 8.

Fishing will still be allowed in the evening and on Sunday, even during concrete pours.

The Corps and the Colville Confederated Tribes' Fish and Wildlife Department are requesting that tribal fishers continue their patience and consideration of the benefit to the tribe. Project manager Julie Allen expressed the Corps' intent that all needs be met with minimal disruption for the remainder of the project construction period. "We appreciate the understanding and cooperation we've seen from the Tribe's fishing community, and will do our best to maintain a productive working relationship as we complete this beneficial project," she stated.

Fishers should contact the dam's security staff at (509) 686-5501, ext.1670, for the latest status. They may also contact the Confederated Colville Tribes' Fisheries Department at (509) 634-2113.

For current general information about activities at Chief Joseph Dam, check the Corps of Engineers website at: <http://www.nws.usace.army.mil> and select "Dams and Locks" from the left-hand column, then click on "Chief Joseph Dam."