

District to close both locks at Chittenden Locks in Ballard for salmon project

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SEATTLE -- Both the large and small locks at the Hiram M. Chittenden Locks in Ballard will be closed to all marine traffic beginning at 7 a.m. on Tuesday, June 10. The closure will allow construction crews and dive teams to install an interim Adult Salmon Exclusion Structure at the entrance to the salt water return system located on the floor of the ship canal, adjacent to the large lock wall.

Emplacing this interim structure will prevent salmon access to the return system and improve the viability of the various salmon runs which use the fish ladder to return upstream to their spawning grounds.

Since 2004 some returning salmon, including the threatened Chinook, have become trapped, or entrained, in the system responsible for returning salt water to the Puget Sound side of the dam. The mortality rate of passing salmon due to entrainment has been increasing, though the reasons for this are unknown. Last August, for example, 120 adult Chinook were found entrained in the diffuser well of which half had died or were injured.

The Corps has consulted and partnered with the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Muckleshoot Indian Tribe to ensure the screening device is in place in time to meet this year's salmon returns. The structure is expected to be in place for three to five years, allowing for selection and design of a permanent solution to the entrainment.

The Seattle District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, which operates the locks, expects to have both locks back in normal service by 7 p.m. Tuesday evening after providing a 12-hour construction window. Construction crews and dive teams will make maximum efforts to complete the work as soon and as safely as possible. Normally, the small lock can accommodate vessels up to 25 feet wide and 100 feet long while the large lock can be configured to be handle vessels as large as 760 feet by 80 feet.

For current information about activities at the Locks, check the Corps of Engineers website at: <http://www.nws.usace.army.mil> and select Dams and Locks then Lake Washington Ship Canal from the left column. The Chittenden Locks, often referred to as the Ballard or Government Locks, safely transit about 60,000 vessels each year.