

Conservation measures underway at Chittenden Locks in Ballard



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SEATTLE—The Army Corps of Engineers has started conservation measures at the Chittenden Locks in Ballard in anticipation of prolonged dry conditions. The Corps is curtailing saltwater drain operation from 24 hours a day to 12 hours on and 12 hours off, saving approximately 140 acre feet of water each day. The saltwater drain and fish ladder are the biggest water users at the locks—not the more obvious locks.

The Corps began raising Lake Washington from its winter level Feb. 5, two weeks earlier than normal, to capture as much spring rainfall and runoff as possible. The Corps regulates the level of Lake Washington with the Hiram M. Chittenden Locks and dam in Ballard.

Lower flows on the Cedar River and other reduced spring runoff diminish the amount of water available for filling Lake Washington. However, the Corps does not anticipate a problem raising the lake to its normal summer level of 22 feet above sea level (Corps of Engineers datum).

By initiating refill and conservation measures early, the Corps will have enough water to provide flows through the smolt passage flumes for salmon and steelhead smolt out-migration and flows through the fish ladder for adult in-migration.

The Corps may find it necessary to consolidate lockings later in the year, if the dry weather continues. Boaters should be aware of water issues and should use the locks prudently.