

Utility district investigates Priest Rapids Dam leak

By DAN WHEAT
Capital Press

DESERT AIRE, Wash. — Priest Rapids Dam on the Columbia River is leaking, and its reservoir will be lowered to normal operating minimums while inspections continue.

The hydroelectric dam is owned by the same utility district that owns the Wanapum Dam, which was found to be cracked in 2014. It has since been repaired.

Priest Rapids Dam, built from 1956 to 1961 four miles south of Desert Aire, Wash., is 19 miles downriver from the Wanapum Dam. Both are owned and operated by Grant County Public Utility District, headquartered in Ephrata, Wash.

Inspection drilling at Priest Rapids revealed greater than normal leaking in one spillway monolith the morning of March 28, said Chuck Allen, the PUD spokesman.

There are 22 monoliths — large masses of concrete — below each of the dam's 22 spill gates.

While greater than normal, the leaking is not occurring



Grant County PUD

Priest Rapids Dam near Desert Aire, Wash., was found to be leaking at greater than normal levels on March 28. There is no imminent danger, a Grant County PUD spokesman says.

at an alarming rate nor does it pose any imminent danger, Allen said. There is no threat to life or property, he said.

"There always is a bit of leaking with concrete dams. Concrete is porous. We mon-

itor how much by observing drain holes but this drilling inspection was precautionary and due diligence after what happened at Wanapum Dam," Allen said.

Continuing inspection

drilling, crews will drill holes downward from an internal passageway called "the grout gallery" that runs the length of the spillway. The PUD will plan repairs, if necessary, once the

analysis is complete.

Each spill gate is 40 by 50 feet. Collectively, they span 1,142 feet of the dam's 10,103-foot length. The concrete gravity dam is 178 feet tall and it has 10 turbines that can generate up to 955.6 megawatts of electricity. The dam cost \$91.8 million to build.

The dam's 19-mile-long reservoir can hold up to 237,100 acre-feet of water. It will be held at 481.5 feet to 484.5 feet above sea level during the remaining inspection. The maximum reservoir surface elevation is 488.0 feet.

Normal operations will continue and the dam will continue to generate electricity.

It was Feb. 27, 2014, that the 1,092-megawatt Wanapum Dam was discovered to have a 65-foot-long crack that was 2 inches wide at its widest point. It was caused by the concrete dam's inability to withstand five decades of water pressure due to a design miscalculation, the PUD said.

The reservoir was lowered 26 to 30 feet for more than a

year while \$69 million worth of repairs were completed. The next reservoir upriver, behind Rock Island Dam, also had to be lowered. Orchardists had to extend irrigation intakes along both reservoirs to get water for spring and summer.

Irrigation should not be affected by the minimal lowering of the Priest Rapids Reservoir, Allen said. Users will notice that the reservoir will be about 2 to 3 feet lower than normal, he said. No further lowering is planned, he said.

The dams were built by different contractors, the PUD has reviewed Priest Rapids design calculations and does not believe there is a design flaw, Allen said.

"At Wanapum the issue was there was not enough concrete to counter water pressure. We don't believe that's the same case here," he said. "At Wanapum, there was a 2-inch crack and a whole monolith moved 2 inches at the top. There's been no movement here so the structure is stable."

Priest Rapids Dam is 200 miles downriver from Grand Coulee Dam and 47 miles northwest of Richland.

WSU creamery increasing production capacity

By MATTHEW WEAVER
Capital Press

Washington State University's creamery is expanding.

"Pretty much every year for the last number of years, we've been running out of cheese before we get to Christmas," said John Haugen, creamery manager. "That's kind of been creeping earlier and earlier into December."

Currently, the university can make 1,500 pounds

of cheese per batch from 15,000 pounds of milk. With the changes, the capacity per batch would double to 3,000 pounds of cheese from 30,000 pounds of milk.

Demand for the cheese increases each year, Haugen said. Popular cheeses such as Cougar Gold, cheddar and smoky cheddar are aged for a year. Others are aged for two to four months, depending on the cheese.

The creamery has adjusted its schedule and current equip-

ment to increase production, Haugen said, but needs to add capacity to accommodate the larger increase.

Last fall, the creamery expanded the building, including a new raw milk receiving bay. The university is now bringing in raw milk silos and pipes to move the milk into the plant, which would more than double the capacity to receive and hold milk, Haugen said.

The university has two 20,000-pound milk silos, which hold about 2,000 gallons, and will add two larger silos, he said. He expects to put out a request for proposals in April.

Haugen expects to have



WSU

A rendering of the creamery expansion at Washington State University.

the silos operational by the end of the year.

That project will cost roughly \$500,000.

Haugen also hopes to get approval for a bigger pasteur-

izer in the old receiving bay and increase floor space for a cheese vat and finishing table in the next two years. That would cost about \$3 million, he said.

The creamery produces 240,000 cans of cheese per year. The proposed new equipment would provide an 80 percent increase, or about 192,000 cans, Haugen said.

The creamery is a self-funding unit of the School of Food Science within WSU's College of Agricultural, Human and Natural Resource Sciences. The creamery puts aside roughly \$2 per can of cheese sold in a building fund and to buy new equipment.

The creamery has a total of 70 employees, including 13 full-time, in the production, over-the-counter sales and direct marketing departments.

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Department of Labor fines orchard for rats, wasps

CHELAN, Wash. — A Chelan orchard has paid \$19,297 in penalties after rats and a live wasp nest were found in its migrant housing, the U.S. Department of Labor says.

DOL Wage and Hour Division investigators found rats and the wasp nest in migrant farmworker housing at Rivera Orchards Inc., 72 Howard Flats Road, Chelan, during a 2017 harvest inspection, DOL said in a news release. Fifteen workers were living in the facility.

Investigators also found Rivera failed to disclose work and housing conditions



The Frances Perkins Building, headquarters of the U.S. Department of Labor.

Wikipedia.org

to employees, as the law requires, and violated record keeping requirements, DOL said.

Rivera Orchards immediately cleaned the facilities and paid the penalty to resolve its violations of the Migrant and

Seasonal Agricultural Worker Protection Act, DOL said.

Jose and Rosa Rivera are governing officers, according to Secretary of State records. They could not be reached for comment.

"Employers must under-

stand their obligations and responsibilities under the law," said Jeanette Aranda, Wage and Hour Division director in Seattle. "Employees' health and safety is of utmost importance."

— Dan Wheat



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