

Chelan PUD Begins Local Dam License Implementation

By Richard Uhlhorn



The Chelan Dam will have a new gate installed to insure that the Chelan Bypass Reach becomes a year-round river

Chelan County PUD is beginning the process of implementing its license articles negotiated during the five year relicensing period for the Lake Chelan Hydroelectric Project. On January 24, 2007, the first meeting of the Lake Chelan Recreation Forum took place at PUD headquarters in Wenatchee.

"We are on a very tight schedule to get this plan to FERC," explained Michelle Smith, PUD manger of licensing and compliance. "We will be meeting four times this year and will be focused on our agendas." Issues that require further discussion outside each meeting will be placed on a "Parking Lot" to keep the sessions

moving forward. Smith explained that there is a dispute resolution process at higher levels, but they would like to resolve issues at the forum levels. "If you feel you've tried to resolve the issue here, but feel you aren't getting anywhere, it can go to the policy level."

There are a number of recreational items ordered by FERC in its license to the PUD. The Recreation Forum will help the PUD in its efforts to submit a final recreation plan to FERC by October 3, 2007.

Recreation items of interest to the Lake Chelan Valley include, but are not limited to:

Providing funding to the U.S. Forest Service and the National Park Service for dock improvements and other recreational enhancements. The PUD will also be required under the license to provide operation and maintenance funds to the Forest Service and NPS throughout the 50 year term of the license.

The PUD is being ordered to work with American Whitewater to conduct a three-year whitewater monitoring program to determine the feasibility of whitewater release in the Chelan River. These releases will be made on the second and fourth weekends in July and September. FERC has ordered a feasibility assessment for developing a micro park at Water Street (fondly referred to by locals as "Carla's Beach.") Within one year of the license, the PUD is required to design and construct a non-motorized, non-paved multi-use trail below the Lake Chelan Dam in Reach 1

of the Chelan River. This trail will connect to Riverwalk Loop Trail in Riverwalk Park. The relicensing team also negotiated an extension to the Riverwalk Loop Trail which would extend the trail further east, cross the dam, and loop back to its connection with the existing trail.

The meeting on January 24 touched on a number of items which will be discussed at length later in the process.

Perhaps the issue that generates the most concern for the public is whitewater boating (kayaking) in the Chelan River Gorge. The PUD is considering releasing water into the Chelan River Gorge this year for the start of its three year monitoring plan. "It is possible we will start this year," stated Kris Pomianek. "There are a lot of things to be figured out about the first release," she added.

In order to allow whitewater kayaking in the river, the PUD will require a minimum of six people reserve a spot prior to the release. The question that came up is how many do you allow to run the river. Tom O'Keefe, American Whitewater, agreed that the PUD needs to put a cap on the number of kayakers. "We had too many people show up for a release on the Nisqually River. We couldn't handle them all and we are committed to avoiding that kind of scenario."

Another issue of concern is how to handle spectators. Obviously the PUD is not excited about spectators hanging over the cliffs to watch the kayakers challenge the Class V water. On the other hand, it is an issue that will need to be addressed. Back during the relicensing effort the entire Chelan Gorge Road was closed down for the test runs, but that isn't feasible. Greg Jones remarked that to keep this safe, it needs to be made into a non-event.

The construction of a micro park at Water Street is also a concern. A number of residents are concerned that constructing an official park at Water Street will create parking problems and other issues.

Mayor Jay Witherbee remarked that regardless of a micro park being built at Water Street, the City does have the right-of-way to build or bring to a higher standard, the Lakeside Trail. "We fully intend to use that right-of-way," stated Witherbee.



Entrance Exam from the cliffs. The PUD and others are concerned about hordes of spectators trying to view kayakers running the Class V water in the Chelan River Gorge

Kris Pomianek said that the micro park could create a destination and that the homeowners are concerned. Witherbee replied that the trail and park would be a benefit to the homeowners because they would be better managed than they are now.

The Water Street public access is already used heavily during the summer months by residents who know it exists.

Another issue is whether or not FERC will allow the PUD to construct the Riverwalk Loop Trail extension to cross the Chelan Dam. That issue will be discussed at later meetings of the forum.

Planning for the Reach 1 trail will begin in the near future and will include discussions with adjacent landowners, Chelan County, the City of Chelan, the Lake Chelan Public Trails Committee, and other interested parties. This trail has a price tag not to exceed \$250,000.

Joe Kastenholz, USFS, Chelan Ranger District, said that it was important for the PUD to keep the group well informed. "Recreation in the community is changing. We set this direction back in 2001 and we need to steer it to the changes that are happening now."

The Recreation Forum group meets again on March 28, to discuss the first draft of the required Recreation Plan that needs to be submitted to FERC by October 3, 2007.

Posted by [Jerry Isenhardt](#) on Friday, February 02 @ 11:04:07 PST

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