

CHELAN RIVER GORGE – REACH TWO Fact Sheet

Location:

About three miles down the Chelan River from the Chelan Dam, Site A is approximately 750' from the Chelan River Gorge road and Site B is approximately 450' from the road. The sites are about 150' above the river primarily on Chelan PUD property, with a portion of the northern edge of the area of interest on private property. A total length of 1200' is under active monitoring by the PUD

Natural Phenomena

There is a mixture of loose dirt, sand and small rocks along with large boulders found on this bluff. The area is prone to settling and sloughing due to periods of drought and heavy rains, along with occasional earthquake movement. The slopes drop off somewhat steeply about 150' to the river.

Sites A and B

The area between Site A and Site B, approximately 1200', is the area of instability.

Site A has been monitored for more than 25 years. It is a known area of slight ground movement, with no known releases into the river gorge.

Site B is more recent and more active within the past year. There has been a rockfall release just below the Site B location.

Typography of the area

There are no structures either on or below the identified unstable area. Likewise, this is an area without human access to the Chelan River, so it is not a risk to human health and safety if precaution is used.

Habitat

Reach 2 of the Chelan River Gorge is not an area where protected species are found. There are resident fish in the general area.

Likelihood of a slide

Chelan PUD engineers and biologists have actively monitored the Site A area for years. Site B is new. A geotechnical consulting company will join PUD staff to do a full assessment of the entire area to determine the possibility of a rockslide/rockslides into the Gorge. It is expected that there will continue to be moderate rockfall similar to what has occurred during the past year.

What if there is a large rock release into the Gorge

Depending on the amount of the release, the rock composition (i.e. large or small rocks) and the location, the likely response would be to increase the river flow from the Chelan Dam to begin a natural “flushing” to move material downstream toward the Columbia River, similar to what would occur naturally.

If an earthen dam were to occur and it collapsed, the greatest risk would be the release of a large volume of water and sediment further down into the Gorge and into Reach 4, similar to what occurred in the 1990s.

The PUD will watch the situation carefully in order to protect fish habitat in Reach 4 as well as minimizing water quality impacts.

Next steps

All interested and affected stakeholders, state and federal agencies and tribes have been notified and concur with the PUD’s approach.

The PUD will bring on a geotechnical consultant, as well as continue monitoring the sties.

The PUD is preparing an incident specific Emergency Action Plan (EAP) that identifies all agencies and stakeholders who will need to be notified in the event of significant slope action. The EAP describes the planned response depending on the ground activity.

Immediately, The PUD will put signage in the area to warn the public to stay out due to ground instability concerns.

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