



News Release

Puget Sound Energy to reinforce dikes around Lake Tapps reservoir

Project designed to protect Pierce County reservoir from major earthquake

BELLEVUE – Several dikes surrounding the Lake Tapps reservoir will be reinforced in coming months by the reservoir's owner, Puget Sound Energy, to safeguard them against possible damage from a catastrophic earthquake. The dike work was directed earlier this month by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. The commission licenses the country's hydropower-generation facilities, including those at Lake Tapps.

The utility said the rock and earthen dikes built 90 years ago to create the reservoir show no sign of weakness. Federal regulators inspect the dikes annually. In addition, PSE conducts an aggressive dike-maintenance program and continuously monitors the dikes' subsurface water table.

"The dikes are sound," said Ed Schild, PSE's director of energy production and storage. "They've withstood several major earthquakes over the years, with no change in their structural integrity. This is simply a prudent, precautionary step to further buttress the dikes."

Aided by new technologies, researchers now believe earthquakes in the Pacific Northwest may reach greater magnitude than earlier thought. Consequently, seismic upgrades are being mandated on hydroelectric facilities to increase their ability to withstand severe quakes.

The utility plans to build berms of rock and compacted earth along portions of its dikes' outer shoulders. The berms will be placed at locations deemed most susceptible to soil liquefaction from a shallow, high-intensity earthquake. Schild said the work will begin once PSE obtains all the necessary permits. "Ideally, we'd like to start moving dirt in February or March. Our hope is to complete a good portion of the project, if possible, by late spring so the reservoir can be refilled to its full, recreational level by Memorial Day."

The reservoir's water level, Schild noted, currently is down around the base of the five dikes identified for seismic remediation. The water level typically is low during winter months because PSE draws more water from the reservoir in winter for increased power generation. Until the dike project is finished, he added, the reservoir's water level will remain low.

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