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Oroville Spillways Work Continues, Dam Safety Questions Addressed

SACRAMENTO – The following is a regular update from the Department of Water Resources (DWR) on Oroville Spillway Recovery project activities. DWR is also addressing concerns raised at recent public meetings about the safety of Oroville Dam.

Gated flood control spillway flow release update

- DWR this week started ramping down releases from the gated flood control spillway, also known as the main spillway, with flows reducing to zero on May 1.
- As releases from the main spillway were reduced to zero flow, outflows from the Hyatt Powerplant were increased to approximately 8,000 cubic feet per second (cfs). This coordination manages river flows and maintains safe lake elevations.
- The current lake elevation is 838 feet. DWR is prepared to manage snowmelt inflows to the reservoir while the main spillway is not in use.
- The main spillway will be used for another controlled release in mid-May.
- DWR will continue to manage the reservoir throughout the year to ensure public safety, while making repairs to allow for the safe operation of the main spillway through next winter.

Continued Recovery Work

- DWR will use controlled blasting methods on May 5 and 6 to break up intact rock on the slopes along the main spillway so that it can be safely excavated.
- The firm that was awarded the contract to repair the spillways, Kiewit Construction, is continuing to mobilize equipment to the construction site.
- Dredging operations have resumed in the Diversion Pool.
- Testing of the River Valve Outlet System (RVOS) began on Wednesday, May 3. The RVOS is available should DWR need to use it.

Questions about “green spots” on Oroville Dam

- The green stripes, or vegetation, pose no threat to dam safety. Oroville Dam is sound and safe.
- DWR has determined that these green stripes are caused by rainwater falling on the face of the dam and seeping into soil layers, causing grasses and weeds to grow in rainy spring seasons.

- This has been the conclusion of numerous independent consulting boards convened at five-year intervals over several decades. This vegetation was first noticed on the dam prior to the reservoir being filled in the mid-1960s.

Forensics Team to present initial findings to DWR, BOC

- The Forensics Team is assigned to prepare an independent report on the actual contributing factors that led to the failure of the main spillway at Lake Oroville.
- The team will present preliminary information about potential causes of the initial failure mechanisms at the main spillway to DWR and the independent Board of Consultants (BOC) on May 4. After the Forensics Team makes its presentation, it will gather and incorporate feedback from DWR, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) and the BOC and release a memo outlining the initial findings.
- This preliminary information will be used by the design team to ensure the new design avoids all potential causes.
- DWR will post this Forensics Team memo to its Oroville Spillways webpage when it is complete, likely sometime next week. This memo will outline the preliminary, potential causes of the initial failure.

Board of Consultants (BOC) Memo 4

- The fourth BOC memo was transmitted to FERC on the afternoon of Friday, April 28.
- DWR has reviewed the memo and redacted Critical Energy Infrastructure Information (CEII).
- The redacted report was posted on Wednesday, May 3 at <http://www.water.ca.gov/oroville-spillway/bocreports2.cfm>

DWR is committed to informing the surrounding communities and the general public about the work being done to repair the spillways at Lake Oroville and related impacts to roads, recreation, public access and surrounding infrastructure and ecosystems. These updates will continue through the summer and fall.

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