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Albeni Falls Dam officials modifying spillway operations

SEATTLE – To ensure continued safe operations at Albeni Falls Dam in Oldtown, Idaho, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' officials are modifying spillway operations after metal defects were discovered on a single gate undergoing routine inspection and rehabilitation.

"Public safety is our top priority," said Amanda Smith, Albeni Falls Dam operating project manager. "Though only one gate showed signs of defect during inspection, we are taking a conservative approach and are modifying operations until we have fully assessed the integrity of all gates."

Since the dam's spillway gates were fabricated at the same time, with the same steel type, when the dam was constructed in 1955, USACE is inspecting the remaining 10 gates to determine if similar defects exist. Modified spillway operations will continue until further investigation and analysis is completed.

"We need to understand the risk we are facing," Smith continued. "We do not want to find ourselves in a place where a gate is compromised, which would impact our ability to manage lake levels and could increase flows downstream by approximately 15,000 cubic feet per second."

Lake Pend Oreille will be held near current elevations for approximately the next week as refill options are evaluated. Refill will likely be delayed to later than normal due to spill gate movement restrictions and the need to maximize benefits from available storage.

"We understand the importance of Lake Pend Oreille to the community and lake users," Smith added. "But we must take these steps today to ensure we are operating in a safe and reliable manner."

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