

# Lake Levels and River Flows

The Cushman Project license guides water elevation levels in lakes Cushman and Kokanee and flow releases into the North Fork Skokomish River.

## Lake levels

The water levels of Lake Cushman and Lake Kokanee are managed as follows:

### Lake Cushman

The water elevation of Lake Cushman is kept:

- between 735 feet and 738 feet between Memorial Day and Labor Day weekends
- at least 690 feet between November 1 and March 31

### Lake Kokanee

The water level of Lake Kokanee is kept between 474 feet and 480 feet of elevation, except when maintenance is required at the intake or spillway of Dam No. 2.

Short-term changes to the water levels are allowed during operating emergencies or by approval of the Fisheries and Habitat Committee.

## Flows released into the North Fork Skokomish River

The flow regime for the North Fork is designed to mimic the timing, duration and frequency of natural flow events to enhance healthy conditions in the river system. There are four categories of flow in the new flow regime:

- **Base flows** – the standard amount of water that must be released into the North Fork. Additional water is released for fish, channel formation and sediment transport.
- **Flows for fish** – additional flows to improve conditions for fish
- **North Fork channel formation flows** – predetermined flows designed to establish and maintain habitat in the lower North Fork. Triggered by upstream USGS Staircase gauge measurements.
- **Mainstem sediment transport flows** – flows designed to flush sediment in the mainstem downstream after storm events. Triggered by downstream USGS Potlatch gauge measurements.

## Skokomish River Research

Tacoma Power is working with Mason County, the Skokomish Tribe and Army Corps of Engineers to complete an extensive study of the Lower Mainstem Skokomish River and has designated funding for North Fork Skokomish River restoration projects.

## Reservoir level and flow monitoring

A reservoir level and flow monitoring plan was developed by Tacoma Power and other agencies, with involvement from a representative from Save the Lakes Coalition.

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# Q & A

## **How have river flows in the North Fork Skokomish changed?**

Flow releases into the North Fork more closely reflect the amount of rain and melting snow entering the river than former flow releases. When rainstorms occur, more water is released. As rainfall and snowmelt subside, the amount of water released into the North Fork is reduced, but not below base flows.

The quantity of flow released each year is determined by a water budget, which is evaluated annually by a committee of federal and state agencies, the Skokomish Tribe, and Tacoma Power.