



## **Cowlitz River Flows Update – June 2023**

Due to weather conditions and operational constraints, Tacoma Power will lower Cowlitz River flows below Mayfield Dam from approximately 5,000 cfs to 2,360 cfs starting July 1. We will likely remain at this level until Sept. 30 (depending on the weather).

### **Impact on river navigation**

Our Barrier Dam and Blue Creek boat launches will remain usable, but some boaters will find it more difficult to navigate the river at 2,360 cfs. Please remain vigilant for any potential exposed hazards.

### **Preservation of Riffe Lake levels and recreational opportunities**

By lowering the flows, we will help preserve the elevation of Riffe Lake. Our goal is to keep the Riffe Lake boat launches usable for as long as possible this summer, while also balancing our other responsibilities as a steward of this resource (e.g., public safety, environmental impacts, downstream flows for fish, power production, and other recreational opportunities).

### **Weather conditions and water supply**

Weather conditions have been tough. Our region experienced an extremely dry 2022 and early 2023. Looking at the past 20 years, we had one of the driest first quarter inflows and within the top three driest May inflows. Despite promising snowpack levels, conditions remained dry, and the basin got less runoff than the snowpack levels indicated. Precipitation was below average between January and March, and May/June had the lowest combined precipitation of the last 20 years. These conditions adversely affect the summer reservoir elevations. Additionally, flows on the Toutle River, a tributary of the Cowlitz River below Mayfield Dam, have been running well below normal since late May.

### **Operational history**

Our federal license allows us to lower our flows below Mayfield Dam to 2,000 cfs between July 1 and Sept. 30. We have endeavored to operate the flows below Mayfield Dam at around 2,500 cfs during the summer. The last time we went to 2,360 cfs was the summer of 2018.

### **For more information:**

- We will post updates at [MyTPU.org/Cowlitz](https://www.tacoma.org/MyTPU.org/Cowlitz) under “Latest News.”
- Get river flow and lake level information at [MyTPU.org/LakeLevels](https://www.tacoma.org/MyTPU.org/LakeLevels), or by calling the Fishing and Recreation Line at (888) 502-8690.
- Check out the Department of Ecology’s Statewide Conditions website: <https://ecology.wa.gov/Water-Shorelines/Water-supply/Water-availability/Statewide-conditions>
- Visit the USGS WaterWatch website: <https://waterwatch.usgs.gov/?m=real&r=wa>
- Questions? Please email [cowlitz@cityoftacoma.org](mailto:cowlitz@cityoftacoma.org).