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Chum salmon spawning below Bonneville dam

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Bonneville Power Administration

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PORTLAND, Ore. – Federal Agencies are providing additional flows in the Columbia River below Bonneville Dam, beginning today, to support spawning of threatened chum salmon in streams there. A strong return of chum is expected and salmon are clearly visible in the area as they nest and prepare to lay and fertilize eggs. Good photo and taping opportunities are available.

For interviews, contact: BPA biologist Scott Bettin. He will be at the Beacon Rock boat ramp today, Tuesday, 11/20, at 1pm to meet photographers and reporters. Please call him on cell phone (503) 703-0738 after noon if you plan to visit the site. A crew from the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife will also be on the site. Bettin's office phone is (503) 230-4573.

Beacon Rock boat ramp is at Beacon Rock State Park off Washington state route 14 approximately 1 hour east of Vancouver, Washington. When approaching the park, look for the boat ramp sign and follow the road to its end.

Background information

This year's operations to help threatened chum salmon below Bonneville Dam begin Nov. 20. Chum operations provide increased flows below Bonneville Dam to encourage the fish to return to Hamilton and Hardy creeks, three miles downstream from the dam. The creeks are two of their spawning streams. The river will be held at 11.5 feet above sea level during the operations. River levels above Bonneville Dam were kept low until Sunday, Nov. 18 to help chinook salmon spawning in the Vernita Bar area in the Hanford Reach upstream. Vernita Bar operations require steady, low flows in the mid-Columbia to encourage chinook to spawn in spots that can be kept submerged through winter. Reports from Vernita Bar indicate "thousands" of fish egg nests (redds) were found and spawning results were termed very successful. Below Bonneville Dam, chum, chinook and coho started spawning in the Columbia River and the nearby creeks even before the official start of the operations. Recent rain and runoff have swollen Hamilton and Hardy creeks and the higher flows have encouraged the fish to head upstream. The chum operation will last through the end of December.

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