



3628 South 35<sup>th</sup> Street  
Tacoma, Washington 98409-3192

TACOMA PUBLIC UTILITIES

April 7, 2025

**ELECTRONIC FILING**

Debbie-Anne Reese, Secretary  
Federal Energy Regulatory Commission  
888 First Street NE  
Washington, DC 20426

**SUBJECT: 2024 Annual Report: Cowlitz River Hydroelectric Project, FERC No. 2016 Settlement Agreement License Article 24 (Appendix A of the Order Approving Settlement and Issuing New License for the Cowlitz River Project), and Order Modifying and Approving Final Wildlife Management Plan Dated January 26, 1999**

Dear Secretary Reese:

On January 26, 1999, the City of Tacoma, Department of Public Utilities, Light Division (Tacoma Power) was ordered by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) to file a report annually by May 1 describing its implementation of the *Final Wildlife Management Plan* for the Cowlitz River Hydroelectric Project. In addition, this report is required by Settlement Agreement License Article 24 in the License issued and effective July 18, 2003. The Cowlitz Wildlife Area Annual Report for 2024 (January 1 to December 31, 2024) is attached. The report is authored by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) and is reviewed by Tacoma Power as described in Settlement Agreement Article 24.

The 1999 order requires that Tacoma Power submit any significant changes to the management plan for the Commission's approval. No significant changes were proposed to the plan in the past year. Activities for 2024 that meet the requirements of the current plan are detailed in the report. It should be noted that WDFW is currently developing a new management plan for the Cowlitz Wildlife Area; Tacoma expects to provide a draft of this plan to FERC in the later portion of 2025.

On March 4, 2025, a draft copy of the Annual Report was sent to the Lewis County Commissioners and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for a 30-day review and comment. No comments were received by the April 4, 2025 due date. The transmittal letter is included in the enclosed report as Appendix 5, Record of Consultation.

If you have any questions or require further information, please contact Eric Russell, Resource Lands Coordinator at (253) 502-8137 or Teresa Loo, Wildlife and Lands Manager at (253) 392-5136.

Sincerely,

*Andrew Ollenburg* for Matt Bleich

Matt Bleich  
Natural Resources Manager

Enclosure

cc: Chad Chalmers, Tacoma Power (e-report)  
Erich Gaedeke, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, Portland Office  
Jeffery Garnett, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (e-report)  
Sandra Jonker, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (e-report)  
Lewis County Commissioners (e-report)  
Teresa Loo, Tacoma Power (e-report)  
Richard Vanderlip, Cowlitz Wildlife Area (e-report)

# 2024 Annual Report



## COWLITZ WILDLIFE AREA

Submitted by May 1, 2025 in accordance with the  
Settlement Agreement Relating to Wildlife for the  
Cowlitz River Hydroelectric Project FERC No. 2016

By

Richard Vanderlip  
Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife  
Cowlitz Wildlife Area Manager

Nicholas Steveson  
Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife  
Cowlitz Wildlife Area Assistant Manager

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## INTRODUCTION

The Cowlitz Wildlife Area (“CWA” or “Wildlife Area”) consists of 14,217 acres of lands owned by Tacoma Power and managed by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) as wildlife mitigation for the Cowlitz River Hydroelectric Project (Cowlitz Project or Project), identified as Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC or Commission) Project No. 2016. An additional 1,859 acres of wildlife habitat is protected from development through a conservation easement. Almost all mitigation lands are adjacent to Mayfield and Riffe Lakes, the reservoirs formed by Mayfield and Mossyrock dams, respectively. The only exceptions are the 319 acre Davis Lake Unit east of Morton, the 308 acre Cowlitz Trout Hatchery Unit adjacent to the Cowlitz River, the 434 acre Spears Unit south of Randle, and the 411 acre Kiona Creek Unit west of Randle off Savio Road. All the fee title lands are within the Project Boundary of the Cowlitz Project.

Partial legal description: T11N, R4E, Sec 1-4 & 11-12; T11N, R5E, Sec 1-7 & 11-12; T12N, R1E, Sec 24 & 29-32; T12N, R2E, Sec 1-2, 9-11, 16, 19-21 & 28-30; T12N, R3E, Sec 6-16, 22-24 & 26-27; T12N, R4E, Sec 7-8, 10, 12-16, 18-20, 22-30 & 32-36; T12N, R5E, Sec 7, 19-22 & 27-34; T12N, R6E, Sec 13; T12N, R7E, Sec 18, 20-21.

Partial legal description (Conservation Easement): T12 N, R4E, Sec 17 – 21 & 28.

The area has a maritime climate characterized by cool, dry summers and mild, wet winters. The area receives approximately 70 inches of annual precipitation, the majority of which comes as rain from November through March. Summers are usually cool and dry, with less than 5% of the annual precipitation falling between the months of June and August. Annual snowfall on the Wildlife Area generally does not exceed 4 to 8 inches, while at higher elevations in the Cascades snowfall often exceeds 10 feet. During the summer months average daytime temperatures are in the 70s (Fahrenheit) with nights cooling to the 40s. Winter temperatures range from the 20s to low 50s.

Commercial timberlands, private farms, residential areas, and developed recreational parks surround the CWA. The economies of the nearby communities are heavily dependent on the timber industry and, increasingly, tourism. The majority of the forested lands on the CWA were logged prior to dam construction. Most of these lands were reforested or allowed to re-vegetate naturally and now support hardwood and coniferous forests.

## **FERC REPORTING REQUIREMENTS**

In the Order dated January 26, 1999, FERC modified and approved the final Wildlife Management Plan for the Cowlitz Wildlife Area (Plan). As a requirement of that order, Tacoma Power is directed to prepare an annual report by May 1 of each calendar year. FERC directed that the annual report include a description of the implementation of the Plan and contain any significant changes to the Plan that will be submitted for FERC approval.

The WDFW is responsible for implementing the Plan on Project lands under the terms and conditions of the *Settlement Agreement Relating to Wildlife for the Cowlitz Hydroelectric Project FERC No. 2016* (Wildlife Settlement Agreement). This annual report provided by WDFW to Tacoma Power fulfills the reporting requirement under the Wildlife Settlement Agreement.

This annual report describes lands acquired, summarizes the mitigation and enhancement habitat projects performed annually, the expected benefits to fish, wildlife and/or the public, and the status of those projects at the end of the reporting year. Also included is an accounting of revenues and expenditures in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles, along with a listing of funds currently held in accounts where Tacoma Power funds are deposited. This report fulfills the WDFW reporting requirement for 2024.

## **MITIGATION HISTORY**

FERC issued a 50-year license for the Cowlitz Project on December 28, 1951. The Project includes Mossyrock and Mayfield dams on the Cowlitz River, at river miles 65 and 52, respectively. The two reservoirs formed as a result of this Project inundate approximately 14,080 acres.

On November 17, 1964, FERC issued an Order Further Amending License (Major) for the Cowlitz Project, at which time Article 37 was incorporated into the Project license. Article 37 of the license authorized the Commission to require Tacoma Power to make changes to Project facilities and operation for the conservation and development of fish and wildlife resources. Article 37 was regarded by the state and federal wildlife resource agencies as a mandate for Tacoma Power to mitigate Project related wildlife impacts.

Beginning as early as 1966, the WDFW and the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), in conjunction with Tacoma Power, studied the Project's impacts to wildlife habitat. Over the years, a number of wildlife enhancement measures were mutually implemented on Project lands under the direction of the resource agencies.

In the early 1980s, Tacoma Power began funding full-time WDFW employees to help plan additional and more intensive wildlife habitat enhancement programs. A series of intensively managed on-Project sites were developed on approximately 1,475 acres. These sites, in conjunction with other less intensively managed Project lands that were set aside for wildlife, totaled approximately 4,555 acres. Tacoma Power funded the personnel, equipment, and supplies necessary to operate and maintain this program.

In 1985, at the request of the WDFW and USFWS, Tacoma Power conducted a Habitat Evaluation Procedure (HEP) study on the Project lands to further assess the impact of the Cowlitz Project on wildlife. When Phase I of the HEP study was completed in 1986, a ledger of losses and gains in habitat units attributable to the Cowlitz Project was developed.

In the following years, alternative wildlife mitigation packages were discussed. On January 5, 1993 a mutual agreement was reached on a package of activities Tacoma Power would undertake to mitigate for wildlife impacts. The resulting *Settlement Agreement Relating to Wildlife for the Cowlitz Hydroelectric Project* (Wildlife Settlement Agreement) identifies and credits existing wildlife mitigation undertaken by Tacoma Power and identifies new and additional projects Tacoma Power will undertake to meet requirements of the Wildlife Settlement Agreement. The Wildlife Settlement Agreement was approved and made part of the operating license by FERC on July 17, 1998. A wildlife management plan for the CWA was prepared for Tacoma Power by WDFW and approved by FERC on January 26, 1999. A new license for the Cowlitz Project was made effective July 18, 2003 and Settlement Agreement License Article 24 continues the Wildlife Settlement Agreement obligations for the term of the new license, ending July 18, 2037.

## **WASHINGTON DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE MISSION STATEMENT**

*“Preserve, protect and perpetuate fish, wildlife and ecosystems while providing sustainable fish and wildlife recreational and commercial opportunities”.*

## **MANAGEMENT PLANNING, GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

Management planning on WDFW-owned or managed land, including the CWA, is an ongoing, multifaceted, adaptive process that addresses emerging issues and allows for the annual planning of projects to meet Wildlife Area objectives. Annual planning is guided by the Cowlitz Wildlife Area Management Plan which identifies WDFW and Tacoma Power goals and objectives specific to the Wildlife Area. The Management Plan is updated on a regular basis as projects are completed, new ones are developed, and emerging issues arise. In addition, the planning process includes a review of the purpose for purchasing the area, a review of existing habitat conditions and species present, and public participation. Public involvement is by way of a Wildlife Area Advisory Committee (WAAC) made up of



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