

NEWS RELEASE

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Nanaimo River Pulse Release Planned to Encourage Chinook Migration

Partnership Between Nanaimo Fish Hatchery, Nanaimo Forest Products, City

Summary

During the week of September 29, Nanaimo Forest Products and the City of Nanaimo will be releasing water from the Fourth Lake and Jump Creek reservoirs to provide a temporary pulse flow to the Nanaimo River. A partnership between the Nanaimo Fish Hatchery and the two water licensees, in concert with Department of Fisheries and Oceans and the Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations has existed for a number of years. The parties come together annually to coordinate an early fall flush of fresh, cool water to encourage Chinook salmon waiting in the Nanaimo River estuary to move upstream to begin spawning.

The public may notice an increase in water levels in the Nanaimo River, as the flow will increase from its present rate of about 5 cubic metres per second to 16 cubic metres per second over the course of the week. Caution around increased water levels is advised for residents adjacent to the river and in-stream users such as boaters or fishers.

The pulse release will be noticeable starting Wednesday, October 1, and will taper off by the weekend of October 4-5.

Through careful management of the reservoirs, there is sufficient reserves available to be able to facilitate the pulse release, despite this year's drought.

Strategic Link: Taking responsibility to be an excellent municipal government

Key Points

- Nanaimo Forest Products operates Fourth Lake and will release about 10 cubic metres per second. This is significantly higher than the 3.5 cubic metres per second that they provide as base flow all summer long.
- The City of Nanaimo operates Jump Creek dam and will release about 6 cubic metres per second; normally the City releases about 1 cubic metre per second to augment base flow in the Nanaimo River.
- Mature Chinook salmon typically wait in the tidal portion of the Nanaimo River, until the first fall rains provide enough flow to move upstream. The pulse release provides that flow, and over the past several years has aided in recovery of this species.
- Nanaimo River Hatchery staff swim the river regularly to monitor the numbers of fish and determine readiness for migration.

Quotes

"The citizens of Nanaimo, through conservation of their drinking water and the City's careful management of its reservoir make this pulse release possible, even though we have had a long period of drought. Nanaimo Council's clear commitment to environmental sustainability is one of the guiding principles that govern how the City's most precious resource is managed."

Bill Sims
Manager, Water Resources
City of Nanaimo

"Nanaimo Forest Products, through its releases from Fourth Lake, are one of the main contributors to the health of the Nanaimo River. We are pleased to join with the City again this year to provide the additional pulse flow to encourage migration of salmon."

David Bramley
Technical Services Superintendent
Nanaimo Forest Products Ltd

"With the recent rain, flows have increased slightly, but not significantly enough to trigger the Chinook in the lower Nanaimo River to migrate upstream. A pulse release again this year will definitely be beneficial."

Brian Banks
Manager
Nanaimo River Hatchery

Quick Facts

- The pulse release starts just after BC Rivers Day - now a global event that celebrates rivers in BC and around the world.

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