

# The life and times of the White River Hydroelectric Project and Lake Tapps, 1911-2005

Contributed by Mike Saunders, Regional Archivist, Puget Sound Regional Branch

In August of 2014 the Puget Sound Branch Archives accessioned records from the Cascade Water Alliance documenting the development, operation and decommissioning of Puget Sound Energy's White River Hydroelectric Project. Development of the project began in 1910. A diversion dam, flumes and a series of dikes were constructed to divert water from the White River and create a reservoir on the ridge overlooking the east side of the White River Valley. This process merged Church, Crawford and Kirtley Lakes into Lake Tapps to form a much larger body of water 7 miles in length with 47 miles of shoreline.



Upon its completion in 1911 the White River Project became the central control and distribution point for Puget Sound Power and Light's Western Washington electric power system. In 1954 Puget Power sold the islands and land surrounding Lake Tapps to the Lake Tapps Development Company for \$190,000.00. Over the next 30 years the Development Company platted and sold this land for recreational and residential use, while Puget Power maintained control of the lake and retained the right to fill and draw down the reservoir according to its needs.

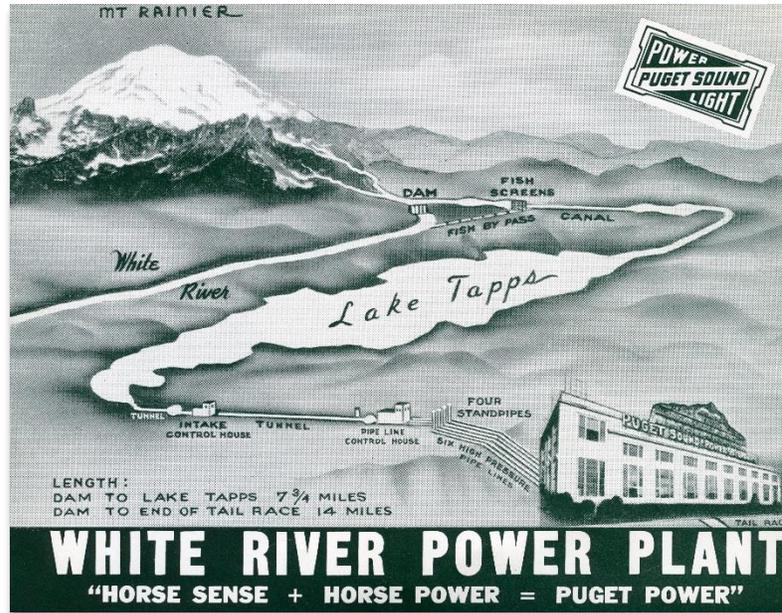


EAST WATER FLOWING THROUGH LAKE TAPPS  
OUTLET INTO CANAL LEADING TO COVERED  
FLUME, LOOKING EAST. 2-8-37. NS-205, 3-74

With the development of the Bonneville Power Administration, Puget Sound Power and Light, later Puget Sound Energy, became more of an electric power retailer than an electric power producer. This shift, along with ongoing disputes over licensing jurisdiction and corollary environmental and fisheries issues led the company to decline and relicense the project, decommissioning it in 2005. The Cascade Water Alliance acquired the water rights to the reservoir and physical plant of the White River Project in 2008.

The Alliance is a consortium that includes the Cities of Bellevue, Issaquah, Kirkland, Redmond and Tukwila, and the Sammamish Plateau and Skyway Water and Sewer Districts. It uses the reservoir as a backup for its members' water distribution systems.

This collection spans the time from 1903 when the Project was proposed until 2010. It includes water rights grants, deeds, reference files documenting production, licensing profitability, recreation, fisheries, facilities construction and renovation, and the transfer of the Project from Puget Sound Energy to the Cascade Water Alliance. In addition to paper files the collection includes photography and video recordings.



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