

SUMMIT LAKE WATER LEVELS A BRIEF HISTORY

Have you ever wondered why and how Summit Lake water levels are maintained throughout the year? Here is a brief history of how water levels were established and how they are maintained to this day.

In a letter dated July 27, 1954 the law firm Brodie and Fristoe notified the Summit Lake property owners that the Washington State Department of Fisheries had suggested to the Summit Lake Community Club that they be a part of a lake rehabilitation program to install an outlet structure which would eliminate the drastic fluctuations in the lake levels which had been experienced in the past years, the cost of which would be bore by the Washington Department of Game (now the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife).

Prior to construction of the outlet structure it was decided that the level of the lake must be decided, that this level must be instructed by a court order and that a lake level gauge be installed. Subsequently, at a special meeting of the Summit Lake Community Club, **the level of the lake on June 28, 1954 was selected** as that which best served the interests of all property owners.

Then, on November 29, 1954 a Thurston County Superior Court Judgement and Decree (No. 28006) was filed titled In the matter of the fixing of the level of Lake Summit, Situate in Thurston County, State of Washington. This judgement and decree stipulated that:

In accordance with Chapter 90.24 of the Revised Code of Washington it is hereby:

ORDERED, ADJUDGED AND DECREED that the proper and certain water level of Lake Summit is the level reaching 1.5 feet on the stadia gauge located on the piling forming a portion of the pier abutting on Government Lot 3, Section 13, Township 18 North, Range 4 West of the Willamette Meridian, which said Government Lot 3 is now owned by the Tumwater Council, Boy Scouts of America. It is further

ORDERED, ADJUDGED AND DECREED that the State of Washington, Department of Game, is hereby authorized to construct a dam, spillway and fish screens at the outlet to Lake Summit in accordance with its present proposed plans. It is further

ORDERED, ADJUDGED AND DECREED that the Supervisor of Water Resources of the Department of Conservation and Development of the State of Washington is hereby authorized and directed to regulate and control the outflow of Lake Summit to maintain the herein determined proper and certain level of said lake after the dam, spillway and fish screen to which reference has been made have been constructed.

DONE IN OPEN COURT this 29th day of November, 1954

Signed: Judge Charles T. Wright
Superior Court Judge of Thurston and Mason counties

In more recent times, in a March 12, 1976 letter from Mr. Bruce Cameron, Assistant Director, Office of Operations, Washington State Department of Ecology to the Summit Lake resident who volunteered to act as watermaster for the lake and who would be responsible for operating the water control outlet structure Mr. Cameron states that:

“the proper and certain water level is the level reaching 1.5 feet on a stadia gage located on the piling forming a portion of a certain described pier. This pier and the attached stadia gage have been destroyed. However, the 1.5 feet elevation referred to in the decree is the elevation of the top of the concrete center pier at the outlet structure. Therefore, the elevation to be maintained is the top of the center pier of the outlet structure, which constitutes a depth of water of 3 feet through the flashboard section of said structure.”

Mr. Cameron goes on to say that:

“The order establishing the desired level is interpreted to mean that during the winter months this level is not to be exceeded and during the summer months the level is to be maintained, as much as practicable. Therefore, you are directed to gradually remove all flash-boards from the outlet structure once fall rains have begun and the outlet discharge has materially increased. The flash-boards are to be restored to the structure such that the decreed level will be reached and maintained by April 1. The flash-boards shall remain in place throughout the summer months.”

Since then a member of the Summit Lake Community Association (SLCA) has been appointed by the SLCA Board to operate the water control structure (adding and removing boards), which is located at the West end of the lake on Boy Scouts of America (BSA) property, in accordance with the 1954 court order and the 1976 letter from the Department of Ecology. The SLCA is also tasked with maintaining the outlet structure and a permit from WDFW is required to clear obstacles such as beaver dams which may restrict flow and affect water levels in the lake. The WDFW permit requires periodic renewal. Our current HPA Permit Number: 2022-6-462+01 is effective through 2027. The Association and BSA look forward to working in cooperation with the WDFW, Department of Ecology and other state agencies on lake water levels and other issues that affect our beautiful lake.

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