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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Safety, habitat concerns close Yale Reservoir's southeastern shore

Pacific Power, state officials close area to motor vehicles, overnight camping July 1

COUGAR, Wash. — Concerns for public safety and damage to wildlife habitat have led to a decision to close about 12 miles of the southeastern shoreline along Yale Reservoir to motor vehicle access and all shoreline camping at unimproved sites on the reservoir, beginning July 1.

The closure to overnight camping and motor vehicle access comes after a series of recent incidents in the area that raise safety concerns for recreationalists in the IP Road area, as well as for campers on the western shore of Yale Reservoir. The IP Road is a primitive, unmaintained road that hugs the reservoir's southeastern shore. Although not developed for camping, over the years, it has become an acknowledged location for "dispersed" primitive camping. However, the unregulated use of the area has damaged wildlife habitat and led to a growing number of illegal and unsafe activities. In recent months, incidents of fighting, arson, and illegal use of firearms have occurred.

"These incidents make closing the area to vehicle access and dispersed shoreline overnight camping prudent," said sergeant Rick Webb of the Washington Fish and Wildlife Department. "Long-term plans call for the IP Road area to be developed into a nonmotorized trail and managed for wildlife habitat. Current use is harming those plans and creating a public safety hazard for those in the area and families camping across the lake. With the active July 4 weekend coming up, now is an optimal time to take action. Illegal fireworks would only aggravate safety concerns, as well as be a fire hazard."

Working with state wildlife and resource management agencies, PacifiCorp, which manages the reservoir and owns the majority of land around it, is taking steps to restrict access that leads into the area. Signs will be posted at the closure points, as well as at Yale Reservoir boat ramps on the western shore because many boaters launch from these areas, intending to camp on the opposite side.

PacifiCorp is placing locked gates on roads leading to the area and will arrange for increased patrols from local law enforcement officials. Previous attempts to restrict access by blocking the road with natural materials, including boulders, have proven ineffective. Day use of the area by foot, boat or mountain bike will still be permitted, but overnight camping, camp fires, travel by motor vehicles and discharging firearms will not be allowed.

Anyone witnessing a violation of this closure should call 911.

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