



Backgrounder: The Leaburg-Waltermville Hydroelectric Project

History

The Leaburg-Waltermville Hydroelectric Project consists of two power plants on the lower McKenzie River. The project is a “run-of-the-river” generating facility, meaning that the natural flow and elevation drop of the river are used to generate electricity. Water is diverted from the river and run through off-river turbines to generate electricity.

The Leaburg development, completed in 1930, is the hydroelectric project’s upstream facility and consists of a dam, headworks, fish screen, canal, forebay, power plant, substation tailrace and tailrace fish barrier. Leaburg Dam diverts water into a power canal for use in generating electricity farther downstream at the Leaburg Power Plant. The dam is equipped with fish ladders and a bridge located on top of the dam that provides access to a state fish hatchery, Lloyd Knox Water Board Park, and several private residences on the river’s left bank.

Completed in 1911, the Waltermville development includes a headworks with a fish screen, power canal, pumped storage pond, forebay, penstock, power plant, substation, tailrace, fish barrier, and fish return channel but does not include a dam. A portion of the water from the McKenzie River is diverted into a power canal that originates on the McKenzie River’s right bank.

Relicensing



EWEB initiated the relicensing of the Leaburg-Waltermville Hydroelectric Project in 1988. The authorizing agency, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, granted a new 40-year operating license in 2000. Prior to relicensing, EWEB conducted an extensive public outreach effort that included creation of a citizen involvement committee to foster communication among concerned citizens, interested organizations and EWEB by bringing them together for open discussion of topics of mutual interest.

The relicensing effort also included extensive consultation with federal and state natural resource agencies. However, a number of issues were not resolved through the consultation effort, resulting in a 1999 federal appeals court ruling that resolved all outstanding issues.

In 2002, EWEB began a \$40 million effort relicensing effort that included numerous environmental enhancements, recreational improvements and upgrades to the power-generating facilities.

Recent improvements

One of the major focuses of the relicensing was on recreational improvements. In 2003, EWEB established a Citizen Advisory Committee to study the various elements of the previously filed recreation plan and make recommendations to the utility. Since then, implementation of the Recreation Plan has been undertaken in phases.

All of the Waltherville-related projects, with the exception of interpretive sign installation at Waltherville Pond, were completed in 2006. These projects included improvements to the Waltherville Pond and Power Canal trails, construction of viewing benches and picnic areas, parking expansion, and improvements and improved bank angling access above the Leaburg Power House.

Lloyd Knox Park



For many years, EWEB has operated and maintained a park at Leaburg Lake. Initially called Water Board Park, it was renamed “Lloyd Knox Water Board Park” in 2000 to honor the park’s long-time caretaker. EWEB is in the process of renaming the park again, to Lloyd Knox Park.

The 40-acre park provides a wide variety of activities and undergone a recent and significant renovation to enhance visitor recreation opportunities.

One of the biggest improvements to the Leaburg development was the construction of the new visitor’s shelter that overlooks Leaburg Lake. The visitor shelter features space for gatherings and a plasma television with an interactive video that provides insight into the history of the park, recreation opportunities and environmental protection of the surrounding areas.

Additional improvements throughout Lloyd Knox Park include the construction of a new bathroom facility, a new floating fishing dock for the disabled, the ongoing installation of interpretive signage and park benches, the improvement of a fish viewing station and the removal of invasive plant species replaced by new native landscaping. EWEB hopes that the park will become a premier McKenzie River destination for years to come.

Other area recreational improvements

The relicensing effort included other recreational improvements in and around the Leaburg-Waltherville project area.

Trails alongside the Waltherville and Leaburg Power canals now offer hiking, running and equestrian opportunities for every ability level. An overlook on the north side of Highway 126

above the Leaburg Power Plant was also added to provide a bird's eye view of the Leaburg development.

Bird gardens have been installed near the Leaburg-Waltonville hydroelectric facility to compliment the excellent birding opportunities throughout the lower McKenzie River Valley. The stone masonry planter beds are filled with native vegetation to attract local birds and other wildlife. The plants require minimal irrigation, and no fertilizers or pesticides are needed, adding to the overall health of the watershed.

The Goodpasture Boat Landing is a planned new facility located at the upstream end of Leaburg Lake, just below Goodpasture Bridge. Construction is scheduled to begin later this year. The site would improve fishing opportunities as well as easy boat access to the lake.