

Cascade Dam and Spillway

Ted Day: Well we went from a drought year situation where we were worried we would even be able to refill the reservoirs in the Payette, to literally a week later getting a record rain event come at us and not just one rain event, but really two of them back to back.

So we knew we had what was going to look like a pretty good flood on our hands downstream. And so the goal there at Cascade was to hold releases back as long as we could. And after we saw the peak flows downstream peak out and start to recede that was our cue to start increasing discharges out of Cascade. All the while keeping a close eye on the downstream conditions and making sure that those releases were not going to cause new problems anywhere.

Well, that is just a humbling sight, that is an awesome display of power. You know, you look down into that thing and to just see that water, it is so awesome to see that water flying up in the air. Well, it is a balancing act that we have to perform every spring runoff season, especially near the end. Refilling the reservoir and at the same time maintaining the ability to handle a late season rainstorm like this and when it is a record-type event that comes at us this late it can be quite challenging.

In this case the reservoir basically did its job, it stored inflows and we were able to hold back releases while the downstream channels were flooding from the tributaries.

We had a lot of tourists, it became a tourist attraction really and we had a lot of people stopping on the dam on the road with their cars and a lot of foot traffic on the access road just trying to get a closer view. In fact, we closed the road to motor vehicles just from a public safety standpoint, while that was occurring.