



US Army Corps  
of Engineers®  
Walla Walla District

# Mill Creek Dam and Bennington Lake

**Location:** This project is located on Mill Creek, River Mile 11.5, east of the City of Walla Walla, Washington

**In-Service Date:** January 1942

**Reservoir Storage Capacity:** 8,300 acre-feet, at 1,265 MSL

**Authorization:** The project was authorized by the Flood Control Act of 1938. Recreation was added to the project purposes through the Federal Water Project Recreation Act of 1965.

**Progress:** Construction of the dam and its associated works was completed in 1942. An auxiliary outlet channel from the dam to Russell Creek and the construction of additional drainage facilities at the toe of the dam were completed in 1944. The sealing of the lake bottom, additional work on the drainage system in the foundation and the installation of an upstream outlet gate were completed in 1950. The paving of Mill Creek Channel through the city of Walla Walla was completed in 1948. Modifications to the division structures allowed some mechanical regulation instead of totally manual regulation with needle boards.



**Project:** The project consists of two main units: the Mill Creek Channel and Bennington Lake, and the off-channel reservoir and associated federal lands. The dam and reservoir portions of the channel and lands are operated and maintained by the Corps. The project provides for flood damage reduction, recreation, wildlife habitat and irrigation. Since 1942, more than \$57.1 million in potential flood damages have been prevented by Mill Creek Project's combined storage and channel operations.

**Mill Creek Dam:** The dam is an earthfill structure with a heavy gravel face, located in a drainage off of Mill Creek. The dam is 800 feet wide at the base and 125 feet high; and 20 feet wide at the top and 3,200 feet long at the crest. A concrete cutoff wall, 2260 feet long, extends 2 feet into bedrock.



**Bennington Lake:** This off-stream reservoir has a maximum storage capacity of 8,300 acre-feet at elevation 1265, with a 5-foot freeboard. The reservoir is the only public lake within 45 miles of the city of Walla Walla.

**Mill Creek Channel:** About 5,000 feet of the Mill Creek channel is federally operated and maintained. The locally operated portion of the channel begins at the Mill Creek-Bennington Lake unit and extends six miles through the city of Walla Walla.

**Diversion Facilities:** The diversion facilities consist of a diversion levee, diversion dam, debris facilities and intake canal facilities. The levee is a rolled earthfill dam, 1,700 feet long and 20 feet high. The diversion dam contains an Ambursen Ogee-Crest type spillway and outlet. It is 250 feet long and 14 feet high.



**Division Works:** The division works allow water to be divided between Mill Creek, Yellowhawk and Garrison Creeks.

**Return Facilities:** The return facilities consist of the outlet works and two outlet canals.

**Fish Passage:** There are two fish ladders that provide fish passage in the Mill Creek Channel. Large boulders were placed in the channel to provide resting places for migratory fish. In 2001, fish screens were installed at the intake on the diversion structure to prevent trapping fish in Bennington Lake.

**Lands:** There are about 611.5 acres of fee-owned lands and 87.3 acres of easement lands. This is the largest public open space in the Walla Walla Valley. These lands provide flood control, project operation, and recreation and wildlife benefits. There are recreational facilities at Rooks Park, the Mill Creek Trail and the Bennington Lake Recreation Area. There are more than 20 miles of recreation trails throughout Mill Creek Project lands. Wildlife habitat has been developed by the Corps, the State of Washington and local volunteers. Visitation during fiscal year 2007 was 264,461.

**People:** Less than 10 full-time Walla Walla District employees work at the Mill Creek Project. They serve as park rangers, natural resource specialists, administrative staff and maintenance workers. Temporary employees augment the staff during high-visitation months. Together, they ensure the safe and continuous operation of the project. The staff also manages a robust volunteer program to help maintain and make improvements to Mill Creek Project's numerous public recreation facilities.

**Budget:** Fiscal year 2007 total expenditures were about \$1,200,339 for the Mill Creek Project.

**References:** Annual Report of the Chief of Engineers on Civil Works Activities, Fiscal Year 2007, Department of the Army Corps of Engineers, Extract Report of the Walla Walla District.



**For more information contact:**

Public Affairs Office, Walla Walla District  
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers  
201 N. 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue, Walla Walla, WA 99362  
(509) 527-7020  
cenww-pa@usace.army.mil  
www.nww.usace.army.mil