

## Rainbow Dam project nearly finished

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Replacement of two rubber bladders at Rainbow Dam that help control the reservoir level is nearing completion, a PPL Montana official said Friday, and the company hopes to raise the river back to normal levels by early next week.

“The water drawdown and bladder replacement work has gone really well,” said Jeremy Butcher, north end hydro supervisor for PPL. “We have one of the rubber bladders in place and did a successful stress test Thursday night. The second bladder is nearly installed, and we will do a stress tonight.”

Butcher said officials expect the replacement project to be completed Sunday or Monday, with the reservoir behind the dam raised to normal levels by Monday or Tuesday.

PPL hired Pacific Pile & Marine LP of Seattle in August to build a barge to house equipment on the south side of the river just upstream of the dam and used it to float a crane and other equipment to the staging area.

Under PPL supervision, Pacific Pile workers in early September to replace two rubber bladders that make up a rubber dam that is raised and lowered to control the reservoir level. The inflatable rubber bladders are 20 years old and nearing the end of their useful lifespan, officials said. They’re on the spillway section of Rainbow Dam on the north side of the river.

PPL drew down the Missouri River about 13 feet to allow work on the project, which cost about \$2 million.

Meanwhile Great Falls resident Pat Douglas observed about 10 odd impact craters or indentations on the north shore near the boat launch while walking there with his son. He wondered whether they might be signs of people fishing with explosives.

Matt Marcinek, regional parks manager for the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks, speculated that existing depressions within the muddy bottom might be worn away gradually by rock flakes swirling around in the current when the reservoir is filled.