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Ecology inspecting dam breach, will recommend repairs to protect property from further flooding in Cosmopolis

COSMOPOLIS – Department of Ecology (Ecology) engineers were inspecting a breach of the Mill Creek Dam this afternoon to ensure temporary repairs are made to prevent further flooding of residences.

Trees toppling in heavy rains damaged the concrete and earthen structure when the dislodged root balls collapsed a 3- by-6 foot section of the dam. Ecology is monitoring to make sure the public is cordoned off from the breach area and to make sure the dam is inspected by city staff every few hours.

No homes were evacuated and no injuries reported, but city officials said as many as 12 residences in Cosmopolis may have sustained at least some flooding in a 3-by-9-block area where water was “above the sidewalk,” said Police Chief Casey Stratton. It was not immediately known how much of the flooding was caused by the heavy rains or in combination with the breach of the city-owned dam.

The reservoir behind the dam is about 3 to 4 acres in size and holds about 6.5 million gallons of water. The lake is used for recreation but collects stormwater run-off from surrounding hills.

Cosmopolis Public Works Manager Darrin Raines said water overtopped the earthen portion of the dam about 7:45 a.m. today but the reservoir no longer poses a flood threat. A local contractor has been called in to address the potential for further erosion of the breach.

Ecology Dam Safety Engineer Jerald Lavassar said Ecology’s priority is to make sure that the dam isn’t at risk for a larger break.

The Mill Creek Dam is one of more than 1,000 dams that Ecology inspects and regulates in Washington state.

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For more information: <http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wr/dams/dss.html>

Ecology’s Web site: <http://www.ecy.wa.gov>