The 2009 Hanson Dam Seepage Scare: What Actually Happened and the 26-Mile Valley Sandbag Record

Pillar: The Valley | **Basis:** Historical Event (Corrected) | **Primary Source:** USACE Seattle District / King County Flood Control District | **As Of:** 2026-11-16 (2011–2012 Remediation Complete)

After a record January 2009 pool revealed right-abutment seepage and sinkholes at Howard A. Hanson Dam, USACE built a grout curtain and drainage system (2009–2012) while King County Flood Control District funded 26 miles of temporary sandbag barriers.

Operational Continuity & Corridor Facts

• Following a record-high pool in January 2009, USACE engineers discovered two sinkholes/depressions and sediment-laden water entering the right-abutment drainage tunnel at Howard A. Hanson Dam.

• While USACE restricted storage and built a subsurface grout curtain (late 2009) plus filtered drains (completed October 2011) and spillway/log-boom upgrades (2012), the valley faced elevated flood odds.

• Primary-source check vs. frame-research shorthand: King County Flood Control District funded 26 miles of temporary industrial sandbag/super-sack barriers across Kent, Auburn, and Tukwila—far exceeding '12 miles / $1.5M in Kent'—with removal alone costing several million dollars.

2009 Hanson Dam Seepage: Frame Shorthand vs. Primary-Source Record

Item	Frame Note	Primary-Source Record	Authority
Abutment Seepage	2009 seepage scare	Jan 2009 pool; 2 sinkholes, muddy tunnel flow	USACE Seattle District
Temporary Barriers	Kent $1.5M / 12 miles	26 miles funded valley-wide; multi-$M removal	KCFCD / Local Press
Permanent Dam Fix	Not stated in shorthand	2009 grout curtain; Oct 2011 drains; 2012 upgrades	USACE Seattle District
Current Dam Status	1-in-4 odds (2009 season)	Max pool capacity safely restored post-2012	USACE Final Safety Studies

Corridor Exposure, Triggers & Facility Actions

• The 2009 episode proves that even before a levee breaches, a dam storage restriction forces valley-wide emergency barriers and multi-year disruption.

• USACE final dam-safety studies confirmed the 2009–2012 abutment remediation reduced risk by an order of magnitude and restored full pool capacity.

• Facilities teams should preserve institutional memory of 2009 staging footprints—knowing which access roads hosted super-sacks prevents dock blockages.

Cross-Cluster Links & Primary Sources

• **WA Space Cluster Hub (#1382):** https://bcesg.org/washington-space-cluster-census/

• **Kent WA Space Cluster Profile:** https://bcesg.org/kent-wa-space-cluster-profile/

• **Auburn WA Space Cluster Profile:** https://bcesg.org/auburn-wa-space-cluster-profile/

• **Tukwila WA Space Cluster Profile:** https://bcesg.org/tukwila-wa-space-cluster-profile/

• **Facilities / EHS Desk Brief:** https://bcesg.org/wa-space-role-facilities-ehs-desk-brief/

• **King County Floodplain & Levee Rule:** https://bcesg.org/wa-space-rule-king-county-floodplain-levee-live/

• **USACE Seattle District (DVIDS):** https://www.dvidshub.net/unit/USACE-SD

• **King County Flood Services:**
https://kingcounty.gov/en/dept/dnrp/nature-recreation/environment-ecology-conservation/flood-services

Provenance Note: Primary-source correction: KCFCD funded 26 miles of temporary barriers valley-wide (multi-million-dollar effort including removal), superseding informal '$1.5M / 12 miles in Kent' shorthand.