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Project Nearly Complete to Prevent Straying of Adult Sacramento River Salmon

Federal, State, Local Governments Make \$2.5 Million Fix to Knights Landing Outfall Gates

KNIGHTS LANDING, Calif. – Sacramento River salmon will face one less peril this winter, thanks to a joint effort to retrofit a 100-year-old structure in Yolo County.

On Thursday, local, state, and federal officials gathered to celebrate the coming completion of the \$2.5 million project, the first of several in the lower Sacramento Valley to ensure safe salmon passage. The project will keep salmon from straying into a channel that drains the entire western part of the Sacramento Valley.

This project is one of several planned to help salmon recover in the Sacramento River and its tributaries.

“This project is an example of our commitment to making life better for fish in California,” said California Department of Fish and Wildlife Director Charlton H. Bonham. “But it is just the beginning of a larger effort to get things done. Guided by science, we will continue to work closely with our state, local and federal partners to aggressively pursue fish passage and habitat restoration projects with clearly defined goals, measurable objectives and the financial resources to turn dirt and fix problems.”

In spring 2013, an estimated 600 endangered winter-run chinook salmon strayed into the Colusa Basin Drain. The salmon – a substantial portion of that year’s entire run – traveled as far as 70 miles up the canal-like drain, which does not reconnect with the Sacramento

River. Even though many of straying salmon were trapped and returned to the Sacramento River, the stress on the rescued fish prevented them from spawning.

Reclamation District 108 (RD 108) is the project lead and has funded the planning, permitting and design with construction costs paid by several agencies including the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife and the California Department of Water Resources.

Reclamation Deputy Regional Director Pablo Arroyave said, "Reclamation appreciates the opportunity to partner with other federal and state agencies and with water districts such as RD 108 on projects that protect native salmon while maintaining important water supply infrastructure."

The project involves installation of concrete wing walls and a metal picket weir to block salmon from getting through the Knights Landing Outfall Gates. The barrier will prevent adult fish from leaving the Sacramento River while allowing the natural and agricultural drainage flows to enter the Sacramento River.

"The Project has been a real joy to work on," said RD108 General Manager Lewis Bair. "The combined effort has led to an incredibly productive partnership, which provided an efficient use of public and private funds to benefit the environment, agricultural water users and public safety for the local community. It's a project and partnership that I am very proud of."

The gates are contained within a single dam-like structure that was built across the Colusa Basin Drain a century ago by RD 108. The gates sit across the drain a quarter-mile from where the channel empties into the Sacramento River at Knights Landing. The Colusa Basin Drain carries runoff from more than a million acres watershed including substantial farmland – much of it growing rice – in Glenn, Colusa, and Yolo counties.

Until the outfall gates were blocked by RD 108's construction project, adult salmon could leap through the gates, under certain flow conditions and become trapped in the Colusa Basin Drain. The Knights Landing Outfall Gates are not the only point at which Sacramento River salmon may stray, drawn by the flow of another water channel. The same team of agencies working to block salmon at the outfall gates also is planning to block salmon straying where the Knights Landing Ridge Cut Canal – another drainage channel – flows into the Yolo Bypass south of Knights Landing. The Yolo Bypass is a nearly 100-square-mile swath of farmland that serves as a safety valve for floodwaters that would otherwise threaten urban Sacramento. Adult salmon on their way to spawn often pass through the Yolo Bypass and some get stranded there.

In addition, RD 108 and its federal and state partners are working to modify agricultural culverts and road crossings that impede fish in the Yolo Bypass. And they plan to improve passage at the Fremont Weir, which lacks a functional fish ladder. Fixes to the Fremont Weir – a lowered section of a Sacramento River levee that allows floodflow to escape into the Yolo Bypass -- will help salmon get back to the river to resume their upstream journey.

A team of agencies contributed to the Knights Landing Outfall Gates project:

- RD 108, a 145-year-old district that delivers water and provides drainage to 75 square miles of farmland in Colusa and Yolo counties, provided \$400,000 in funding and managed the project.
- The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation manages the Central Valley Project and provided \$1.5 million from the CVP Improvement Act fund, which earmarked some revenues of the project for environmental purposes.
- The California Department of Fish and Wildlife, which manages the state's fish and wildlife resources and has in the past attempted to rescue salmon in the Colusa Basin Drain, provided \$300,000 to the project.
- The California Department of Water Resources, whose staff maintains the Knights Landing Outfall Gates, contributed \$300,000 to the project. The structure is owned by the Central Valley Flood Protection Board.

In addition, many other agencies were involved in the planning and permitting of the project, including the National Marine Fisheries Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

The project should be completed by November 30, 2015.

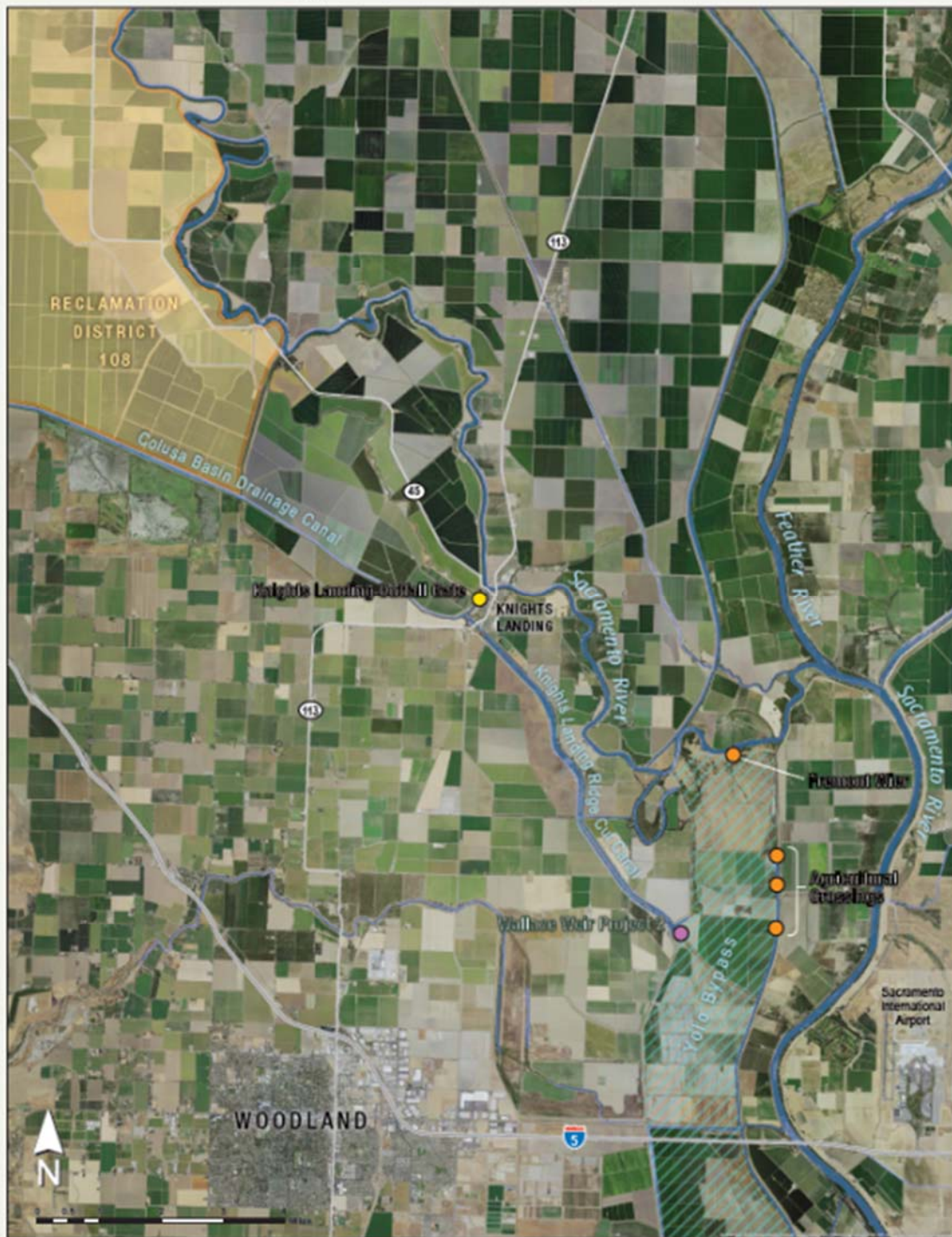
Compatibility with Other Efforts

This project is an integral part of the following:

- The state's California EcoRestore program, which was created in April when Governor Edmund G. Brown Jr. directed the California Department of Fish and Wildlife and other agencies to get underway within the next four years the restoration of 30,000 acres of habitat in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta. Fish passage projects in the Sacramento Valley will improve conditions for salmon and sturgeon that migrate through the Delta.
- Governor Brown's California Water Action Plan, a five-year blueprint of actions to restore California's major ecosystems and build reliability and resiliency in the state's complex water supply systems. One key element in the plan is elimination of barriers to fish migration.
- The Sacramento Valley Salmon Recovery Program, a comprehensive effort by the Northern California Water Association, Sacramento River Settlement Contractors, the Nature Conservancy, American Rivers, and California Trout to help recover salmon. This on-going, multi-decade effort seeks fish passage improvements, fish screens, re-managed flows, and habitat improvements in the Sacramento Valley for the sake of native fish.

"The Sacramento Valley Salmon Recovery Program is a significant on-going effort to improve passage, re-manage flows and provide habitat for the four runs of Chinook salmon that migrate in the Sacramento Valley," said David Guy, President of the Northern California Water Association. "This project is one strong example of the commitment by water suppliers throughout the region--working closely with our conservation partners--to advance and implement projects that will help salmon recovery in the Sacramento River and its tributaries."

Yolo Bypass Fish Passage Projects



This is the fourth year of California's drought. To learn about the actions the state has taken to manage our water systems and cope with the drought's impacts, visit Drought.CA.Gov. Every Californian should take steps to conserve water. Find out how at SaveOurWater.com.

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