

Red Bluff Diversion Dam replacement nearly done

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RED BLUFF — This week the Tehama-Colusa Canal Authority could be delivering water into the canal from the Sacramento River through the massive fish screen structures of the Red Bluff Diversion Dam Fish Passage Improvement Project.

Bill Vanderwaal, the project manager for the Bureau of Reclamation, said the contractor is scheduled to finish the whole project, coming in under \$190 million, in September.

The original budget estimate was \$230 million.

The joint project between the Bureau of Reclamation and the Canal Authority began more than three years ago after a federal judge's decision ordered the end of lowering the diversion dam gates and the end of Lake Red Bluff.

The new pumping facility is meant to screen the water pumped into the canal, while allowing threatened and endangered salmon, steelhead, green sturgeon and other fish species to pass through without disruption.

Nine Florida-made pumps will be able to pump at 2,000 cubic-feet of water per second and can be expanded up to 2,500 cubic-feet per second.

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In all, 63 fish screens, 10-by-15 feet, span some 1,200 feet along the river's edge.

Sacramento River Discovery Center executive director Bobie Hughes said a mitigation segment of the project will occur on the east side of the river in the sand slough.

Some 23 acres, currently sectioned off by orange plastic fencing, will be set up to fill with water and planted with native vegetation to make up for vegetation uprooted and displaced for the new construction.

The effort is in place of having to pay an environmental mitigation bank for credits to relocate native plants and such, Vanderwaal said.

After it is created, the area will be evaluated regularly through 2017 to monitor its effectiveness and how many species survive each year.