

TEHAMA COLUSA CANAL AUTHORITY

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TEHAMA COLUSA CANAL AUTHORITY COMMENDS PRESIDENT OBAMA AND HIS ADMINISTRATION FOR THEIR COMMITMENT TO THE ECONOMY AND ENVIRONMENT

Today, Department of the Interior Secretary Ken Salazar announced \$109,814,000 in American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funding for the Fish Passage Improvement Project at the Red Bluff Diversion Dam (RBDD) on California's Sacramento River. The funding will allow the Bureau of Reclamation to undertake the majority of the work necessary to build a pump and fish screen project that will eliminate the dam's negative impacts on the endangered salmon and sturgeon populations while also providing essential water deliveries for the regional farming economy.

Funding for the project resulted from a commitment by the Obama Administration to economic recovery and natural resources conservation according to Ken LaGrande, Chairman of the Tehama Colusa Canal Authority (TCCA) Board of Directors.

"This project will create and protect over ten thousand jobs while also ensuring healthy and sustainable fish populations for generations to come," said LaGrande. "We are ecstatic that President Obama and his administration recognized the imminent threat to our regional farming economy and the area's natural resources and acted swiftly and decisively in response. Through this action, the White House and the Department of the Interior have demonstrated their commitment to achieving the goals of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act."

LaGrande also thanked members of the California Congressional delegation, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger and a diverse coalition of project supporters for their efforts leading up to the project.

"Never before has such a diverse coalition of government entities, environmental, fisherman, and sportsmen's organizations, and water and power users been so strongly united behind a shared goal to conserve and protect vital natural resources while also stimulating a regional economy through the creation and protection of thousands of jobs. We are deeply grateful to Governor Schwarzenegger and his staff, Senators Feinstein and Boxer, and Representatives Herger, Thompson, George Miller, and Lungren for their dedication to this important project," LaGrande concluded.

Members of the environmental and fishing community shared LaGrande's sentiment:

"NRDC is pleased that the Bureau will use stimulus funds for this win-win project, which will allow for the complete removal of a dam that blocks salmon and other fish species from reaching their spawning grounds without affecting existing water deliveries," stated Kate Poole, Senior Attorney for the Natural Resources Defense Council.

“This is good news for farmers and fisherman alike,” said Pacific Coast Federation of Fisherman’s Association’ Zeke Grader. “Red Bluff Diversion Dam has been a problem for salmon migration since it was built. This project to be constructed with stimulus funds will allow safe passage for the fish while at the same time giving farms access to water. It’s a big win for California food production.”

Background:

The TCCA provides efficient irrigation to 150,000 acres of agricultural land, accounting for just over 300,000 acre-feet of water service contracts. These gravitational irrigation deliveries are made through operation of the Red Bluff Diversion Dam. Over half of the deliveries are for permanent crops, such as almonds, olives, walnuts, and grapes. Crops grown in the service area produce over \$250 million in crops and contribute over \$1 billion to the regional economy annually.

Since commencement of operations at the RBDD, concerns arose regarding the impact of the dam on the migration of endangered salmon and steelhead. Previous restrictions on dam operations have improved fish passage, most notably for winter-run Chinook salmon. However, concerns remain regarding the dam’s effect on spring-run Chinook salmon and green sturgeon.

Due to these concerns, the gates-in period at the RBDD has been significantly reduced to four months per year, with likely further reductions predicted for the near future. Further reduction of the gates-in period constitutes a significant threat to the well being of all of the region’s farmers who need a sustainable supply of water for irrigation. This threat is compounded for those farmers growing permanent crops who will be unable to recover from a single break in their water supply.

Since 1999, the TCCA, in partnership with the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, has been pursuing a project to reduce the conflict between water diversions and fish passage at the RBDD. This collaborative effort between the TCCA, the US Bureau of Reclamation and environmental, fisherman, urban water users and sportsmen’s organizations resulted in plans for a fish screen and pumping plant as the preferred alternative. Once completed, the new pumping plant will provide additional flexibility to deliver fish-friendly water without reliance on the RBDD. The project has completed engineering and design work for the initial construction components, which will start this spring.

More information on the Tehama-Colusa Canal Authority and Fish Passage Improvement Project can be found at www.tccanal.com