

Final Phase on Fish Screen Project to Start in June

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The Contra Costa Water District has awarded a contract to Flatiron, an international construction firm with operations in Benicia, to begin installing fish screens at a delta intake in Rock Slough in order to protect the Delta smelt and other migratory and resident fish species.

The \$12 million contract will be the final phase of the Contra Costa Canal Fish Screen project and will be funded by the 2009 American Reinvestment and Recovery Act. There are four intakes in the district, which divert the natural flow of the Delta into the Canal; Rock Slough, which is located four miles southeast of Oakley, is the final intake without fish screens.

The screens are designed to prevent fish from entering the Canal through the Rock Slough intake. The project could begin in June and is likely to be completed by November of 2011. The initial completion date was for 2010, but design and

funding issues stalled the project.

In order to move forward with the project, the CCWD has installed a temporary bypass pumping system to begin work on the fish screens. The "pump-around" has already been completed and is in the final stages of testing. The project will allow the District to comply with the "U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Los Vaqueros Biological Opinion for the threatened Delta smelt and the Central Valley Project Improvement Act, Section 3406(b)(5), Fish, Wildlife, Improved Water Management & Conservation," according to the CCWD.

The Canal is 48 miles in length and diverts water from the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta at Rock Slough. The flow terminates at the Martinez Reservoir and is a major supplier for the CCWD, bringing in 130,000 acre-feet of water per year for irrigation and municipal and industrial uses. The water is lifted 127 feet by a series of four pumping plants and delivers water to 550,000 customers in central and eastern Contra Costa

County.

The fish screen project is closely related with the Canal Encasement project, which initiates at Rock Slough. "When the Canal was built, it used to be in the middle of farmland," Information Specialist for the CCWD Jennifer Allen said. "Now there are homes nearby, and we want to protect the water from contamination and the nearby homes from potential flooding."

The first phase of encasing the canal entrance has already been completed, and the subsequent stages will be undertaken as funding arrives.

The CCWD hopes that the project could have the multipronged benefit of securing endangered fish, increasing flows and creating jobs regionally. The Contra Costa Canal Fish Screen project was the first "shovel ready" job commissioned by the ARRA in California.

"This whole project has been well supported by local legislators," Allen said, "including George Miller and Ellen Tauscher."

