



Media Availability **May 13, 2009**

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Media Given Look at Non-Physical “Bubble Curtain” Barrier *Designed to Protect Migrating Salmon, Preliminary Results Show Promise*

Sacramento – Preliminary results show that an experimental, non-physical fish barrier is working to help keep young Chinook salmon and steelhead in a more direct path to the ocean and away from agricultural diversion and the state and federal pumping plants. Media is invited to view the barrier project and interview participants from the agencies involved May 15 near Lathrop.

The Department of Water Resources (DWR) is piloting the “bubble curtain” barrier project that combines acoustics and a strobe-lit sheet of bubbles to create an underwater wall of light and sound at frequencies that repel juvenile Chinook salmon.

Results from three of seven planned releases of hatchery juvenile Chinook salmon implanted with acoustic tags indicate that the barrier has increased the number of fish staying in the San Joaquin River to continue their out-migration to San Francisco Bay and the ocean. Past studies have shown that salmon kept in the main stem of the San Joaquin River have better survival than those that move into the central Delta through Old River.

The four remaining releases are scheduled through late May. Receivers are stationed along the salmon out-migration path at sites along the San Joaquin River and Old River near the barrier. DWR leased the non-physical barrier equipment from EIMCO Water Technologies, LLC for the experimental project.

When: Friday, May 15, 2009
11 a.m. –noon

Who: Jerry Johns, DWR Deputy Director
Mark Holderman, DWR Project Manager
Dr. Mark Bowen, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation biologist
Trent Gathright and Guy Beauchesne, EIMCO Water Technologies, LLC

Location: The divergence of Old River at the San Joaquin River, near the city of Lathrop

Directions from Bay Bridge:

<http://www.water.ca.gov/news/newsreleases/2009/051309mapsfo.pdf>

Directions from Sacramento:

<http://www.water.ca.gov/news/newsreleases/2009/051309mapsac.pdf>

Background:

The bubble-curtain is being tested for use instead of a rock barrier that has been installed each spring in previous years to help keep juvenile salmon from straying into Old River as they out-migrate from the San Joaquin River through the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta. The installation of a fish barrier at the head of Old River, at the divergence from the San Joaquin River, has been a part of the Vernalis Adaptive Management Plan (VAMP), a federal and State multi-agency experimental program initiated in 2000 to protect migrating Chinook salmon.

However, the rock barrier was not installed this year because of the recent Biological Opinion on Delta Smelt issued in December 2008. Instead, VAMP participants decided to test a non-physical barrier -- the strobe-lit, sound-generating bubble curtain -- in an effort to investigate an alternative to the rock barrier that can have adverse hydrodynamic impacts on Delta smelt.

Video and photos available for media:

B-roll footage of the assembly, installation and operation can be downloaded here:

ftp://ftp.water.ca.gov/PAO_video_downloads/Test_Barrier_B_Roll/

Photos of the assembly, installation and operation can be found here:

<http://www.water.ca.gov/newsroom/photo/nonbarrier.cfm>