



Update No. 1 Caples Lake drawdown and slide gate replacement project



For immediate release
July 24, 2008

Caples Lake drawdown affects recreational pursuits

Placerville, CA . . . Drawdown of the water level at Caples Lake along Highway 88 in Alpine County is beginning to affect recreation in the area and will continue to have impacts on activities such as camping, hiking, fishing, boating, and scenic viewing throughout the summer and fall seasons. El Dorado Irrigation District (District) began the drawdown last week to provide a safe environment for workers who, in mid-September, will begin to replace the two slide gates at the lake's main dam and complete other needed repairs.

"The last thing we want to do is drawdown the lake during the recreation season," said Tom Gallier, the District's general manager. "But we are responsible for safe operation of the two dams at the lake, and the badly deteriorated slide gates at the main dam must be replaced for us to do that. We need to start lowering the lake level now to complete the necessary repairs this fall and return to normal conditions."

The drawdown is causing higher-than-usual water flows for this time of year in Caples Creek and the Silver Fork American River, located on Eldorado National Forest. The District is working with the Forest Service to post signs warning of the water conditions and cautioning campers and hikers to stay back from the stream edges and not cross the streams on logs that are close to being overtopped by the water.

Boating and angling on the lake will be affected, and travelers along the highway will see much more shore and much less water.

"We are doing our best to balance and lessen impacts to the many resources that will be affected," said the District's environmental review manager Dan Corcoran. "As an example, for fisheries we are examining a number of alternatives, including construction of a temporary 'bladder' dam to hold water to sustain the lake and downstream fisheries during construction and throughout the winter. At this time, we don't know if that can be done."

It is possible that the Twin Lakes—submerged when the main and auxiliary Caples Lake dams were built in the early 1900's—will be visible when the drawdown is complete.

"We are also doing everything we can to ensure that water from the lake is not wasted during this dry year," said Steve Setoodeh, the District's department head for facilities management. "We're diverting some of the water to our powerhouse to generate state-certified 'clean' hydroelectric power, and we hope to divert another portion to Jenkinson Lake to help guard against a potentially dry year in 2009."

Background

On July 1, the District's Board of Directors declared an emergency after a mid-June underwater investigation at Caples Lake revealed major problems with two slide gates, located in a well-like shaft within the dam. Of particular concern is the lower gate that is about 64 feet under water when the lake is full. In asking for the

emergency declaration, District staff and expert consultants agreed that the gates must be replaced to ensure safe operation of the dam.

The District has located a manufacturer who can furnish the replacement parts, and the lake must be drawn down for the replacement work to proceed.

Caples Lake is part of Project 184, the hydroelectric power generation system that the District acquired from Pacific Gas and Electric Company in 1999.

* * * * *

For more information, contact Deanne Kloepfer at 530-622-4513.