



## Update No. 2 Caples Lake drawdown and slide gate replacement project



For immediate release  
July 31, 2008

### Caples Lake drawdown continues

**Streams to remain at higher levels into September  
Area recreation businesses are open throughout the drawdown**

**Placerville, CA . . .** Drawdown of water stored in the Caples Lake reservoir along Highway 88 in Alpine County continues, resulting in higher-than-usual water flows for this time of the year in Caples Creek and the Silver Fork American River. At this time, the stream flows are expected to remain at the current levels through August and the first few weeks of September. However, fluctuations may occur, and visitors in the vicinity of the two streams are cautioned to hike and camp away from the stream edges and not to cross downed tree “bridges.”

So far, the drawdown has reduced the water level at Caples Lake by about five feet. The reservoir should continue to drop four to five feet per week in August.

Area businesses are open throughout the drawdown, and many recreation opportunities are available in the Highway 88 corridor. The Caples Lake cement boat launch is useable through this week for aluminum boats on trailers, but after this weekend will likely not be useable for the rest of the season. The boat ramp at nearby Silver Lake is open. Kayaks, canoes, and boats can be rented at Caples Lake and will follow the drawdown. Shore fishing at the lake is accessible. All Eldorado National Forest facilities and trails are open except for the Lake Margaret Trail, which was closed by the Forest Service for safety reasons related to the higher water levels at the creek crossing.

El Dorado Irrigation District (District) began the drawdown two weeks ago to provide safe working conditions for a crew that, in mid- to late September, will begin to replace the two slide gates at the Caples main dam and complete other needed repairs.

The District is proceeding under an emergency declared by the District’s Board of Directors on July 1, after a mid-June underwater investigation revealed major deterioration of the gates.

Caples Lake is part of Project 184, the hydroelectric power generation system that the District acquired from Pacific Gas and Electric Company in 1999. Under conditions of the federal license to operate the system, the District must assure safe operation of the dam. If the slide gates, for example, were to fail in an open position, uncontrolled releases could result in unsafe conditions downstream.

In addition to the safety concerns, the District is seeking to balance a number of competing interests, including fisheries in the reservoir and downstream of the dam. At this time, the District proposes to mitigate impacts to the fisheries by constructing a temporary “bladder” dam, when the water level is low enough, to store some of the reservoir’s water. Preliminary consultations with the state Department of Fish and Game

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indicate that the amount of water that can be stored behind the bladder dam may not be sufficient to sustain the reservoir fishery over the winter. However, the District is developing a fisheries management plan to help identify options to re-establish the reservoir fishery once repairs are completed. Water stored by the temporary dam will be released for the fisheries downstream of the dam until adequate reservoir storage is available.

Future project updates will provide more details on these and other issues related to the drawdown as information becomes available. District staff will also brief the Board of Directors during the Board's regular meetings. The meeting schedule is posted on the District's website at [www.eid.org](http://www.eid.org), or can be obtained by calling 530-622-4513.

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