

# Sacramento River side channel cleared to aid juvenile salmon



Chip Thompson - Daily News

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By [Chip Thompson](#), *Daily News*

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Cottonwood >> Young salmon in the Sacramento River have a new place to grow strong before heading to sea, thanks to a project completed this week to reopen a clogged side channel near Lake California.

The channel, which had become blocked naturally over the years, will provide rearing habitat for juvenile salmon and is expected to improve the fishery, said Rob Irwin of the Sacramento River Forum. The juveniles seek out the side channels, where the current is gentler, in order to rest, eat and grow before continuing downstream. They may remain in the channels up to a year, depending on food sources.

The aim of the project, implemented by the Department of the Interior as part of the Central Valley Project Improvement Act, is to replenish spawning and resting areas lost due to construction of dams between Keswick Dam just north of Redding and the Red Bluff Diversion Dam. The improved channel is between river mile 269 and 270, just south of Lake California

“If the fish are healthy, the river is healthy,” said Jane Dolan of the Sacramento River Forum. “If the river is healthy, the community is healthy.”

The purpose of the Lake California Side Channel Restoration Project is to create a functional side channel at lower flows to provide additional rearing habitat for winter-run juvenile salmonids, as well as other species, according to a press release from the Resource Conservation District of Tehama County.

Downed trees, root balls and other barriers to the channel were removed and some were relocated within the channel to provide habitat for fish, said Jon Barrett, of the Resource Conservation District. In all, about 400 yards of the mile-long side channel that were clogged have been cleared during the week-long operation, which was completed Tuesday.

The channel has been reopened to boaters thanks to the project, Barrett said.

Planning and permitting for the project took about two years, said Vicky Dawley, of the Resource Conservation District.

Dawley said there will be ongoing maintenance of the channel to keep it open and the salmon population will be monitored through California State University, Chico.

The roughly \$300,000 project was a combined effort of multiple state and federal agencies, local water districts and conservation groups and paid for through a grant from the Bureau of Reclamation tied to the Central Valley Project. Other contributions came from reclamation and irrigation districts. The Resource Conservation District managed the project, which was overseen by the Sacramento River Forum.

Project partners include U.S Bureau of Reclamation, Chico State University, CSU Chico Geographical Information Center, California Department of Water Resources, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, the Sacramento River Forum; the Resource Conservation District of Tehama County, Reclamation District 108, Provident Irrigation District and Princeton-Cordora-Glenn Irrigation District, Steve Tussing Ecological Services, Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission and Tehama Environmental Solutions.