



BUSINESS CENTER

144 Ferguson Road

MAIL

P.O. Box 6570

Auburn, CA 95604

PHONE

530.823.4860

530.823.4960 - fax

WWW.PCWA.NET

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Date: September 5, 2007
Contact: David A. Breninger, (530) 823-4860
or: Dave Carter, (530) 265-NEWS

American River Returns to its Natural Channel

(Photos of the restored river channel are available through PCWA Clerk to the Board Cheri Sprunck at (530) 823-4850.)

AUBURN -- For more than 30 years a half-mile segment of the North Fork American River at Auburn, California, has been diverted through a bypass tunnel.

That all changed on Tuesday, Sept. 4, when the river was returned to its historic channel and work crews closed off the bypass tunnel.

Water began flowing through the full length of the reconstructed segment of river at about 4:30 p.m. on Tuesday afternoon, a milestone moment in a successful 15-year campaign by local, state, and federal officials.

Restoration of the river was made possible through the leadership of the federal Bureau of Reclamation and the Placer County Water Agency (PCWA), working in collaboration with other public entities.

The restored river channel is part of an overall \$75 million project that includes return of a permanent pump station to PCWA that will allow the Agency to pump up to 35,500 acre-feet of water from the river canyon to their water customers. The project also includes recreational access and road improvements.

PCWA General Manager David Breninger and PCWA Director of Strategic Affairs Einar Maisch were on hand Tuesday as the water gushed through the restored historic river channel.

-more-

"It was very impressive watching the river returned to its natural course," he said. "And, it is most rewarding to know that the Placer County Water Agency has played a significant public policy role, as well as provided strong financial support along with federal and state funding sponsors, in achieving this historic restoration of the North Fork American River at Auburn."

PCWA operated a pump station on the river in the 1960s and early 1970s but it was removed by the federal government to make way for the then-planned Auburn Dam. When construction of the dam was suspended in 1977, PCWA was left without a permanent, year-around reliable pump station to access agency-owned water.

Breninger, who has managed the countywide water agency for over 15 years, noted that the American River pump station and river restoration project has been the agency's top water resource priority during his tenure.

PCWA, with full support of Congressman John Doolittle, began over a dozen years ago to convince Federal officials to return to the Agency a permanent pump station, said Breninger. "Congressman Doolittle boldly defended the rights of the Agency, as well as secured federal funding for this project's success," said Breninger.

"Under Congressman Doolittle's constant advocacy, federal officials through the late 1990s designed the pump station and river restoration project and construction began at the site in October 2003," said Breninger.

Maisch, who also witnessed the historic moment, has been the agency's key representative in moving the project through many challenges over the years.

He said flows in the river will be kept at low levels for the coming few months for maintenance upstream on the Middle Fork Project and to conduct testing at the new pump station and river diversion. Full operation of the American River pump station is planned for January, Maisch noted.

-more-

American River Returns to its Natural Channel
Page three

Due to continuing construction, the site will remain closed to public use until sometime this spring. Maisch said plans for management and operation of the site are now being developed by USBR with the California Department of Parks and Recreation and will be publicly announced when completed.

Funding for the \$75 million pump station, river restoration and recreational improvements project has been provided by the federal government through the Bureau of Reclamation (60 percent, \$45.4 million), PCWA (35 percent, \$25.6 million) and the State of California (5 percent, \$4 million).

-30-