

California Department of Water Resources



Contacts:

[Pete Weisser](#)  
DWR PIO  
(916) 653-3350

[Steve Martarano](#)  
DFG PIO  
(916) 654-5866

July 8, 2002

For Immediate Release

**SOUTHERN SIERRA FISH BARRIER WILL PROTECT GOLDEN TROUT**

SACRAMENTO---Workers high in the remote southern Sierra Nevada this month will start building a new fish barrier dam on the South Fork of the Kern River to give California's State fish a better chance to survive.

At an 8,000-foot altitude site on the edge of the Golden Trout Wilderness, 25 miles south of Mount Whitney, workers will replace a deteriorating rock structure with a new barrier, designed to protect California Golden Trout from predation or breeding with non-native brown and rainbow trout.

The California Golden Trout was designated California's State Fish in 1947.

In the 1970's, the Department of Fish and Game and Inyo National Forest initiated a fish barrier program to prevent upstream movement of the browns and rainbows. The fish barrier is intended to safeguard the high-altitude goldens from planted browns and rainbows, which thrive in lower regions of the Kern River's South Fork.

DFG proposed the new barrier as part of its effort to protect native fish species, especially goldens. This is a cooperative project with the Sequoia and Inyo national forests, the US Fish and Wildlife Service, and several angling organizations. DFG is funding the project and has contracted with DWR for construction.

The Department of Water Resources designed the new barrier structure and will administer the construction contract for the project, according to Bill Forsythe, an engineer in DWR's Division of Engineering.

The low concrete structure will span the stream channel, causing the stream to cascade over the structure, creating a barrier to upstream fish migration. When complete, the structure will resemble a low waterfall, with a smooth downstream face.

DWR awarded a \$1.3 million contract on May 30 to the successful bidder, Whitaker Contractors, Inc., of Santa Margarita. Construction is scheduled to begin during the first week of July, with completion targeted for early October.

To avoid ecological impacts on Inyo National Forest land at and around the site, construction materials will be flown to the high-altitude construction site by helicopter.

According to George Heise, a DFG senior hydraulic engineer, this is the newest of several barriers to be constructed in or around the Golden Trout Wilderness for protection of the California Golden Trout.

o0o

*The Department of Water Resources operates and maintains the State Water Project, provides dam safety and flood control and inspection services, assists local water districts in water management and water conservation planning, and plans for future statewide water needs.*