



Project expected to improve water quality and trout productivity

Feather Publishing

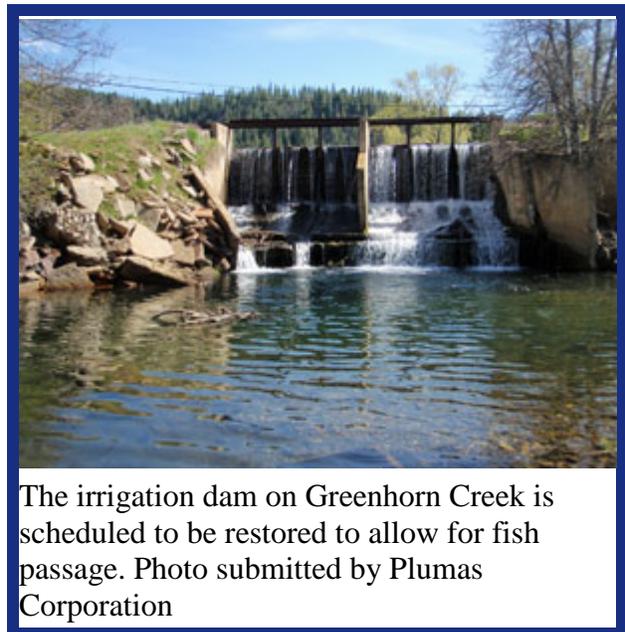
8/7/2015

Soon the fish in Greenhorn Creek will be able to swim upstream beyond the Highway 70 crossing thanks to local landowners and funding provided by the Sierra Nevada Conservancy.

Land use along Greenhorn Creek in American Valley is primarily agricultural. Eight years ago local agricultural landowners requested assistance with erosion problems along the creek on their properties.

Plumas Corporation's stream restoration specialists developed the Greenhorn Creek Integrated Restoration Project with funding support from the Plumas County Board of Supervisors using Title III federal funding, Plumas County Resource Advisory Committee using Title II federal funding, and landowner contributions.

The project objective is to improve water quality and trout productivity by stabilizing actively eroding areas of stream bank and streambed, and restoring fish passage at two agricultural diversion dams.



Comprised of six treatment areas along Greenhorn Creek in American Valley, the integrated project is expected to restore approximately 15 acres and 2,600 feet of stream channel.

Of the six treatment areas, four have been completed, one area was not funded for construction, and the final two treatments are expected to be accomplished this summer.

Project work this summer is scheduled to begin Aug. 10 and will occur both upstream and downstream of the Highway 70 crossing. The irrigation dam that creates the seasonal swimming and fishing hole on Highway 70 is currently a fish barrier due to stream-bed erosion below the dam, making it impassable for fish.

The project is expected to stabilize the stream bed using riffle-pool rock structures that will allow upstream fish migration.

The irrigation dam is owned and operated by Russell Reid. A similar fish passage structure was built on the Shea Ranch irrigation dam last year.

If project funding allows, upstream of Highway 70, on the Farnworth property, 220 feet of eroding bank will be stabilized by laying back the banks, planting vegetation, and installing two boulder vanes.

Boulder vanes are a line of boulders set at floodplain elevation and angled upstream to maintain flows in the center of the channel. These structures encourage deposition along the bank, and maintain depth in pools through the scouring action of the flowing water.

During construction, the treatment areas will be de-watered to protect water quality and aquatic life. The water will be pumped and piped into irrigation ditches and the creek to pass the flow around the construction site.

The boards in the irrigation dam are scheduled to be lowered Aug. 6 or 7, before construction is scheduled to begin, to dry out the work area. This will lower the water at the swimming and fishing hole along Highway 70 during the construction period, which is

scheduled to take two weeks to complete.

All construction is funded through a Proposition 84 state grant from the Sierra Nevada Conservancy.

Public benefits of the project include improved water quality from the removal of eroding banks as a source of sediment, and improved trout habitat in the form of boulder vane pools, shading on stream banks, and upstream migration passage.

The project also helps maintain productivity on agricultural lands that are now being lost to bank erosion, and improves irrigation dams by making them fish-passable.

Anyone with questions regarding the work on Greenhorn Creek can contact Plumas Corporation at 283-3739.