



DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT

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PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

Date: June 9, 2009
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Freshwater Park Construction to Begin June 29, 2009

Park to remain open, but dam for swimming area will not be installed this summer

Construction of a permanent fish ladder for the seasonal dam at Freshwater Park will begin on June 29 and run through September. The ladder will ensure that fish can pass around the seasonal dam that is regularly installed in the summer to create a popular swimming area. The fish ladder will be part of multi-purpose structure that includes a handicapped-accessible ramp and observation platform.

In order to provide the dry conditions that are required for construction, the dam for the swimming area will not be installed in 2009. Other areas of the park, including the playground and picnic areas, will remain open. The summer day-use fee for the park has been reduced from \$5 to \$3 due to the absence of the swimming area this year.

Freshwater County Park has been owned and operated by the County of Humboldt since 1939. Freshwater Creek meanders through the park, and the park's main attraction during the summer is a swimming area created by a seasonal dam, which has been installed annually since the 1920s. The park is unique for providing resource-based recreational opportunities and public access to Freshwater Creek in a watershed which is mostly privately owned.

The multi-purpose fish ladder structure is the highlight of a park improvement project that began in 2007 and will continue through 2010. The project is funded by the California River Parkways Grant Program using funds from Proposition 50, the California Water Security, Clean Drinking Water, Coastal and Beach Protection Act of 2002. Other project components include construction of a gazebo and pedestrian boardwalk, informational kiosks, streambank stabilization, fish habitat enhancements, non-native invasive plant removal, and re-vegetation with native plants.

During the construction period, certain areas of the park will be off limits to the public due to heavy equipment operation and construction activities. Boundaries of all construction site areas will be clearly marked with flagging and/or other cautionary means.

Freshwater Creek, which drains into Humboldt Bay via Eureka Slough, provides habitat for fish such as Chinook salmon, coho salmon, and steelhead. Two significant fish habitat restoration projects have occurred in close proximity to the park through cooperative efforts between the California Department of Fish and Game and Humboldt County. In 2000, rock weirs were installed along the first 50 feet of Cloney Gulch, which enters Freshwater Creek at the downstream end of the park, to aid fish passage into the tributary. In 2005, a new bottomless arch culvert was installed on Graham Gulch, located immediately upstream of the park, to allow free access for salmon and steelhead.

In 2001, efforts were initiated to create a means for juvenile fish to freely move up- or downstream within Freshwater Creek during the approximately three months when the park's seasonal dam is in place. Humboldt County worked with local fisheries professionals, State and Federal agencies, Humboldt State University, and local community groups to design, construct, operate, and monitor a temporary fish ladder. The fish ladder met its objectives, but was not intended as a permanent solution and reached the end of its useful life in 2008. In addition, after several years of operation, design features were identified to improve performance.

The Freshwater Park improvement project was put on hold in mid-2008 due to the state budget crisis, but was recently given the green light for completion.

For more information regarding the Freshwater Park improvement project, please contact the Humboldt County Department of Public Works, Natural Resources Division at 445-7741.