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Walla Walla District
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Corps installs temporary prototype spillway weir at McNary

UMATILLA, Ore. – The installation of the first of two prototype surface-bypass structures at McNary Lock and Dam should be completed this week, officials at the Walla Walla District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, announced today.

The temporary spillway weir, or TSW, will be used for research activities to develop valuable information for improving passage conditions for out-migrating juvenile salmon and steelhead in the Columbia River, said Project Manager Kevin Crum.

The prototype weir will allow flexibility in testing to help determine the best location and flow to attract juvenile fish to the bypass entrance, said Ken Hansen, hydraulic engineer for the project. “The information we gather in testing the weir will help us make informed decisions in consideration of permanent surface bypass systems for McNary”.

Tri-State Metal Fab Inc. of a Spokane, Wash., was awarded the contract in December to build a prototype spillway weir at McNary Dam. The Corps exercised contract options for a second, modified temporary weir bringing the total contract value to about \$2.5 million. Unlike the huge, 5-story-tall, one-piece surface bypass structures installed at Lower Granite and Ice Harbor dams, the temporary spillway weirs are shipped in sections and assembled during installation. The first weir is currently being installed in spillway bay 20, with initial biological testing to occur in about a week, said Crum. The second spillway weir will be installed in a couple of weeks into spillway bay 21 or 22, depending upon the results of hydraulic and biological analysis, he said.

WHAT IT IS – The new weir is different from past weirs the Corps has built – this one is called a Temporary Spillway Weir. The TSW is a part of a two-year prototype testing program for acquiring information prior to installation of a more permanent system. It is about 35-feet high and 50-feet wide. The massive, steel structure weighs about 250-thousand pounds. It can be fitted into any one of McNary’s 22 spillway bays. The temporary structure has a low relative cost, is easier to implement and allows for flexible biological testing.

HOW IT WORKS - The TSW is a surface bypass structure fitted into a spillway bay to create surface spill. The crest is shaped to create an overflow trajectory that contacts the spillway at a relatively shallow angle.

HOW IT HELPS – Juvenile salmon and steelhead using a surface bypass route pass the dam near the water’s surface under lower accelerations and lower pressures, providing a more efficient and less stressful route while reducing migration delays at the dam. The TSW will allow for biological testing to determine the best lateral location, number of entrances required, configuration and attraction flow required for a permanent surface bypass installation.

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For more information about the spillway weir and other programs to benefit anadromous fish in the Columbia River Basin, check out the “Fish Programs” links on the Walla Walla District’s homepage www.nww.usace.army.mil/.