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Construction project breaks ground at Intake, Mont.

GLENDIVE, Mont.—Representatives from Bureau of Reclamation, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Fish and Wildlife Service, the EPA, the Montana Department of Environmental Quality and the Montana Department of Natural Resources among others will celebrate the official groundbreaking for the Lower Yellowstone Project Friday, Aug. 13, at 1 p.m.

The event will take place at the project site, located approximately 15 miles northeast of Glendive, Montana.

“This project is designed to continue diverting water from the Lower Yellowstone River into irrigation canals for regional farmland that is among the highest economically producing farmland in the state and facilitate migration for the pallid sturgeon into 160 miles of the river ecosystem upstream from the dam,” said Omaha District Project Manager, Louis Uptmor. “Biological studies have indicated that the existing dam prevents the upstream migration of fish and the diversion allows them to enter and become trapped in the irrigation canals.”

The Lower Yellowstone Project is a two-phase construction project. The first phase is to construct a new intake for the main irrigation canal and install fish screens to prevent fish from entering and becoming trapped in the irrigation canals. On July 13, the contract for the first phase was awarded to Ames Construction Inc. from Aurora, Colorado for \$17.8 million. Work is scheduled for completion by June 30, 2011.

The second phase of the project will include the construction of a new rock ramp that will sustain the existing diversion for the region’s main irrigation canal. The new rock ramp is designed to allow fish to travel upstream and restore the ecosystem through enabling access for the pallid sturgeon to the 160-mile habitat, which has been inaccessible since the original dam was constructed more than 100 years ago. The contract for the second phase is scheduled to be awarded in September 2011.

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