

Hemphill Dam

This dam is located about 2 miles upstream of (east of) Lincoln, CA on Auburn Ravine.



This concrete diversion dam is operated by Nevada Irrigation District. It is about 60 feet wide and has 6 foot tall concrete abutments on both sides. The top of the concrete portion of the dam is about 8 feet above the pool below it. Unlike many other dams, this dam has a sloping face. That slope is about 11 feet long from the top of the dam down to the pool below it. Because of the height and length of that slope, salmon and steelhead are not able to jump over this dam, but in some water conditions they manage to swim up that slope and over the dam. The large rocks at the base of the dam were placed there to reduce undercutting of the dam as water curls off the slope into the pool. During the irrigation season (April 15 to October 15), a metal frame and wooden boards are added to the top of the dam as seen in this photo. This raises the water level about 3 feet so that water will flow into the Hemphill Canal. The intake for the canal is unscreened so it is likely that young salmon and steelhead migrating downstream will follow the flow into the canal where they will eventually die.

Surveys conducted by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife and Friends of Auburn Ravine indicate that about 90% of the salmon and steelhead that try to swim up over this dam fail to do so. There are six miles of good spawning areas above this dam. If it could be replaced with a modern water diversion system that would allow unimpeded upstream migration, salmon and steelhead would have access to almost 3 times as much spawning area as they do now in Auburn Ravine.



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