

One of the largest fish screens in New Zealand taking shape

March this year saw the construction phase of the Rangitata Diversion Race (RDR) \$17 million fish screen project begin, and it is now over halfway through. The RDR is a 67 kilometre long channel that diverts water from the South Island's Rangitata River for irrigation, stock water, and hydropower generation.

The RDR has been in operation since 1945, over time technologies have continuously been improved and environmental aspects investigated, and the new fish screen was no easy feat.

Rangitata Diversion Race Management Limited (RDRML) Chief Executive Tony McCormick said "there have been years of work and research put into this and it is great to see it taking shape".

The main fish screen structure is 105 metres long and 5 metres high, but the amount of actual screen area is over 370 square metres which was enough to wrap a one-metre-high barrier right around a rugby field.

The fish screen will divert up to 34 cumecs into the RDR whilst excluding sporting and native fish and returning them safely back to the river via a fish bypass channel.

Mr McCormick said they were now about 60 percent through the construction phase. All major excavation work had been completed and the main concrete structure supporting the screens was 90 percent complete.

"All the seven T-screens (the large cylindrical screens) are now on-site and the main outstanding components due from Australia in the next month are the flat-screen panels and the lay-flat gate that regulates the flow in the by-pass."

"We expect to have all the screens mounted by mid-September and have completed the main construction phase by year-end."

"We are planning public open days for early in the New Year (likely February) where visitors will have the opportunity to walk through the facility before the cut-over into the RDR and wet commissioning in May (2022)."



The Rangitata River (top right hand corner) flows adjacent to the fish screen.

