



SOUTH YUBA RIVER CITIZENS LEAGUE

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Local Conservationists Oppose Plan to Truck Salmon to and from the North Yuba River

Nevada City, CA – Yesterday in Sacramento, representatives of state and federal agencies, along with three conservation groups, held a press conference to announce plans to “collect and transport” Spring-run Chinook salmon in trucks around dams to the North Yuba River above New Bullards Bar Dam. The Yuba Salmon Partnership Initiative (YSPI) released a term sheet for an agreement that would also restore salmon and steelhead habitat in the lower Yuba River downstream of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers’ Englebright Dam. YSPI includes the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, NOAA Fisheries, Yuba County Water Agency, American Rivers, Trout Unlimited and California Sportfishing Protection Alliance.

“We support reintroducing salmon and steelhead to the upper Yuba River watershed to save them from risk of extinction. However, SYRCL cannot support the plan announced today to truck wild salmon to and from the North Yuba River. At an anticipated price tag of \$700 million to construct vast concrete and steel facilities in the river and operate a fleet of fish-hauling trucks and boats, trap and haul is a scientifically uncertain means of restoring wild salmon and unsustainable over the long term,” said Caleb Dardick, SYRCL Executive Director.

The Board of Directors of the local river conservation organization, the South Yuba River Citizens League (SYRCL), stated that it is premature to endorse “collect and transport” when there are still so many unanswered questions about alternative ways to restore a self-sustaining wild salmon population in the Yuba River watershed.

“We support the portion of this plan calling for the restoration of salmon habitat in the lower Yuba River and we believe it should commence immediately,” said Gary Reedy, SYRCL’s Senior River Scientist, who has led the organization’s Yuba salmon restoration studies for more than seven years. “We appreciate the hard work and good intentions of the stakeholders involved in the Initiative, who include some of our closest friends in the conservation community, as well as the Yuba County Water Agency, which is central to providing solutions to salmon restoration in the Yuba River watershed.” SYRCL is a leader in salmon restoration project planning and implementation in the lower Yuba River, where there are many immediate opportunities to improve conditions for wild salmon and other species. In 2011, SYRCL planted over 6,000 trees on the barren gravel bars below Englebright Dam and those trees are growing strong and tall, proving that bare riverbanks devastated by hydraulic

mining can be restored to benefit salmon and steelhead. Additionally, SYRCL has commissioned studies describing how floodplain restoration actions could be designed to improve salmon habitat.

The closed-door Yuba Salmon Partnership Initiative (YSPI) replaced four years of open meetings and studies by the Yuba Salmon Forum, an inclusive stakeholder process designed to develop a salmon restoration plan that could be widely supported. “Regrettably, the Yuba Salmon Forum did not complete its investigation of alternatives to reintroducing salmon to the upper Yuba River watershed, alternatives including modifying Englebright Dam to provide more continuous and volitional fish passage rather than trucking them around 40 miles of river canyon,” said Reedy.

In a letter sent to YSPI members in the conservation community a month ago, SYRCL recommended that the group reconvene the Yuba Salmon Forum to develop mutually-agreeable outcomes for Yuba salmon, and forego this plan for trap and haul to the North Yuba River. In addition SYRCL supported the following specific actions:

- Await the outcome of a \$3 million Feasibility Study by the Army Corps of Engineers into the best way to get anadromous fish around Englebright Dam, which currently blocks all fish passage to the upper Yuba watershed, a leading factor threatening the existence of Spring-run Chinook Salmon. That study is expected to be completed by 2018 and is jointly funded by the Yuba County Water Agency (YCWA).
- Ensure that funds pledged by the YCWA (capped at \$100 million according to the term sheet released today) be spent first on salmon habitat restoration projects on the lower Yuba River that can benefit endangered salmon, green sturgeon and steelhead right away. These projects are scientifically sound, have the support of all stakeholders and provide a clear path toward improving salmon habitat in the short term.

“For more than 30 years, SYRCL’s 3,500 community members have worked hard to protect and restore the Yuba River, and their voices deserve to be heard. We think it is essential that any project with the potential to impact the river, its species and the people who live near it have the input and support of the local community,” Dardick said, referencing SYRCL’s concern that YSPI did not include other stakeholders including Native American representatives, the U.S. Forest Service, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and others.

SYRCL has a long history and track record of working collaboratively on Yuba issues including winning state Wild and Scenic Rivers Act protection for the South Yuba River, negotiating the historic Yuba Accord with YCWA, and saving the South Yuba River State Park from closure, to name only a few.

About SYRCL:

The South Yuba River Citizens League (SYRCL, pronounced “circle”) is the leading voice for the protection and restoration of the Yuba River watershed. Founded in 1983 through a rural, grassroots campaign to defend the South Yuba River from proposed hydropower dams, SYRCL has developed into a vibrant community organization with over 3,500 members and volunteers based in Nevada City, CA.

For more information, including copies of the YSPI Term Sheet and Concept Plan, please visit:

<http://yubasalmonnow.org>