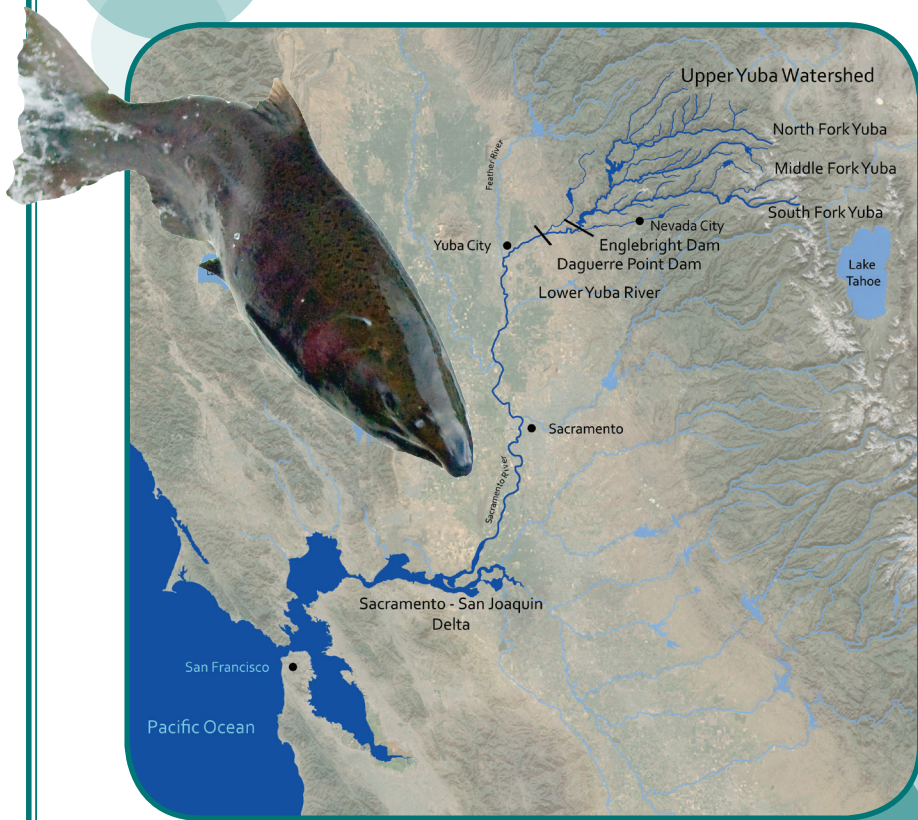


Yuba Salmon Now

from the summit to the sea

• Campaign Plan



South Yuba River Citizens League

in partnership with



American Rivers
Rivers Connect Us

Putting it in Perspective: Why Salmon?

The South Yuba River Citizens League (SYRCL) has joined forces with American Rivers on the Yuba Salmon Now campaign to bring wild salmon back from the brink of extinction and restore robust populations that can swim freely to their ancestral waters in the Upper Yuba Watershed.

The Yuba Salmon Now campaign is based on the premise that there is value in protecting and restoring wild places and wild creatures, and that wild salmon are one such species worth saving. Many of the values associated with wild salmon are known and can be quantified.

For example, wild salmon feed entire ecosystems with their nutrient-rich bodies. They start and end their life cycle in the freshwater streams and rivers that braid the West Coast, and travel thousands of miles between the time they hatch and, their last act

in life—spawning. As part of their life's journey, they serve as enormous pumps, pushing vast amounts of marine nutrients upstream, feeding some 137 species. It is no coincidence that the largest remaining populations of top predators such as brown bears and eagles occur where there are still healthy salmon runs.

Salmon are also indicators of river health as they use the entire river ecosystem, from the headwaters to the ocean, and are extremely attuned to changes in river flow and water quality. Generally, the more pristine, diverse and productive the freshwater ecosystem is, the healthier the salmon population. Declines in the capacity of a watershed to grow salmon usually indicate declining ecosystem health.

Human communities also depend on salmon for protein as well as income. For example, the salmon fishery closures in 2008 and 2009 resulted in the loss of 1,823 jobs and \$118.4 million in income compared to the level of the salmon fishery in 2004 and 2005.

Wild salmon can be saved from extinction and the Yuba is the best opportunity for restoration.



Photo by John Daly ©

In addition, wild salmon are not only healthier for you than farmed raised salmon, with more omega-3s per ounce and none of the intense concentration of toxins from the feed that farm-raised fish are given, but the texture, color and taste of wild salmon are superior to any farmed salmon. Unfortunately, salmon farms of some kind make up about 80 to 90 percent of salmon on the market today.

Because of the wide-ranging and complex life histories of salmon, most salmon stocks are dying the "death of a thousand cuts." If we do not take bold actions to reverse these declines, it is likely that these species will go extinct. We cannot let this happen on our watch. That is why we call this campaign *Yuba Salmon Now*.

It wasn't always like this. Wild salmon once returned to Central Valley rivers in the millions each year, up to 300,000 in the Yuba alone. Today, Yuba salmon

runs have dropped to less than 8,000, leading to their listing in 2002 as threatened with extinction under the Endangered Species Act. Dams built on the Yuba, particularly Englebright Dam, are the primary cause of the demise of Yuba salmon because they block the fish from reaching miles of historic spawning habitat in the

Sierra Nevada. Providing fish passage to their historic spawning grounds is urgently needed to halt this continuing slide toward extinction. Below we provide the details and invite you to join this powerful campaign.

Recent studies confirm that the Yuba has the potential to once again support large numbers of salmon and steelhead trout if we could address two problems: blocked fish passage and the legacy of hydraulic mining.

Why the Yuba River is Key

Wild salmon can be saved from extinction and the Yuba is the best opportunity for restoration.

Despite the fact that dams currently create a dead end for migrating salmon, federal and state fish experts



believe the Yuba River offers the best opportunity in the Sierra to restore wild salmon.

The Yuba Salmon Now campaign envisions a day when wild salmon swim freely from the *summit to the sea*—liberated from the threat of extinction and restored to their ecological prominence in our state’s natural heritage—and once again provide jobs, world-renowned fishing, and a source of healthy food.

To achieve this vision, the Yuba Salmon Now campaign is building public support to compel the federal government, which owns Englebright Dam, to take responsibility for the harm caused to Yuba salmon and provide fish passage over Englebright, as recommended by their own federal fish experts.

Reestablishing salmon populations in the upper Yuba River watershed would be a historic achievement—salmon have never been restored to any Sierra headwaters since dams blocked their passage on every river nearly a century ago. This ground-breaking success would be a first in California.

For nearly a decade, SYRCL and American Rivers have led the effort to restore the Yuba’s wild salmon runs by addressing the residual effects of the mining era and fighting to provide passage to the headwater spawning grounds.

Threats and Barriers to Saving Salmon

The Yuba River, with its cold, clear emerald waters cascading out of the high Sierra over polished granite boulders, demands and deserves restoration attention. Numerous recent studies confirm that the Yuba has the potential to once again support large numbers of salmon and steelhead trout if we could address two problems: blocked fish passage and the legacy of hydraulic mining.

Approximately 110 miles from the Golden Gate Bridge, salmon returning from the ocean encounter two dams on the Yuba River: Daguerre Point and

Englebright, both owned by the US Army Corps of Engineers. They first reach Daguerre Point Dam, which for over a century has delayed fish as they try to find the antiquated fish ladders and ascend the 25 foot high dam. Daguerre Point Dam allows predators to devour a large portion of juvenile salmon moving downstream. The fish that

get past Daguerre Point cannot travel more than 13 miles before encountering the 260-foot tall Englebright Dam – a



complete barrier to any fish passage, blocking over 100 miles of high-quality upstream habitat that once supported tens of thousands of salmon returning to spawn.

Extensive hydraulic mining for gold in the late 1800s transformed the Sierra landscape, including the Yuba watershed, which suffered perhaps the most significant damage from mining of any California river. Miners shot powerful jets of water from massive metal nozzles and washed hillsides into streams that filled the lower river valleys with gravel and cobbles. In a matter of years, the Yuba's headwaters were deforested, mountains were washed away, valley farms were buried in Sierra sediment, and the salmon and indigenous cultures that depended on them were all but destroyed.

The remarkable resiliency of rivers, however, has allowed the Yuba to recover many of the fundamental elements of a healthy salmon river such as clean, cool water and good spawning grounds. Despite the difficult passage at Daguerre and the dead end at Englebright, the Yuba's fundamental health has prompted both federal and state fisheries experts to identify the Yuba River as the best opportunity in the Sierra Nevada to restore wild salmon.

We've now reached a critical phase in our work to restore the Yuba's salmon. The next 12 to 36 months are key.

What We are Doing About It

For nearly a decade, SYRCL and American Rivers have led the effort to restore the Yuba's wild salmon runs by addressing the residual effects of the mining era and fighting to provide passage to the headwater spawning grounds. Through our leadership and collaboration, we have made more progress than ever before. For example,

studies are underway to evaluate strategies to return fish to the upper Yuba, including dam removal, and on-the-ground projects have begun to reestablish the forests surrounding the lower Yuba that were decimated by mining debris. Most importantly, all key stakeholders in the Yuba are engaged in a discussion about how to collectively restore Yuba salmon, albeit at the same time they are engaged in litigation and other strategies to achieve their interests.

Since 2009, SYRCL and American Rivers have played a vital role in the Yuba Salmon Forum, a multi-stakeholder process that is studying three options for restoring wild salmon:

1. Restore the lower Yuba River below Englebright Dam to provide habitat for 400% more fall-run Chinook salmon—from 8,000 today to 32,000.



Photo by Ralph Cutter ©

2. Establish a viable run of spring-run Chinook salmon above Englebright by temporarily transporting fish in trucks around the dam to the upper watershed, which would demonstrate that the upper Yuba can provide habitat, increasing numbers of fish and building critical momentum for further rebuilding salmon populations.

3. Remove Englebright Dam or build a fish ladder over it to provide fish passage, which is seen as the ideal long-term and sustainable solution to restoring wild salmon on the Yuba.

The Yuba Salmon Now campaign supports taking immediate actions in the lower Yuba now, without ever losing sight or compromising the ultimate goal of free fish passage for wild salmon from the summit to the sea and back again and again.

We have discovered that when we work with communities to restore fish habitat many other magical things begin to happen: trails are created along rivers, schools start programs to monitor river health, children bring their parents to watch salmon returning from the sea to their spawning grounds, small businesses such as fly shops and boat rental companies thrive, communities are strengthened or sometimes even created. It is this magic that we hope to spark through this campaign.

When we work with communities to restore fish habitat many other magical things begin to happen.

Recent Accomplishments

SYRCL and American Rivers have been working to restore salmon to the Yuba River using the following strategies:

- **Defend Salmon:** SYRCL challenged the federal government in court for failure to protect and recover threatened salmon, steelhead and sturgeon on the Yuba River, resulting in a new 2012 Biological Opinion, instructing the Army Corps of Engineers to improve conditions for salmon on the lower Yuba and fish passage to the upper Yuba.
- **Fight for More Water:** American Rivers and SYRCL have been at the forefront of hydropower dam relicensing efforts and bringing together stakeholders to solve long-standing disagreements through the Yuba Accord negotiations and in the Yuba Salmon Forum.
- **Secure Congressional Support:** Recognizing that congressional leadership is imperative to saving wild salmon, SYRCL and American Rivers hand-delivered over 2,000 postcards to Congressman John Garamendi urging him to take action to protect these threatened fish.
- **Restore Riparian Trees:** SYRCL is spearheading the first hands-on restoration project ever attempted on the



Yuba and has planted more than 6,000 riparian trees for salmon rearing habitat.

- Investigate Options: SYRCL commissioned and published restoration plans and assessments, which describe past and current conditions on the Yuba and map out a vision for the future.
- Educate Children: SYRCL has shown our salmon life cycle and water conservation assemblies to more than 200,000 children throughout Northern California.
- Build a Community: SYRCL has built partnerships with local Native American tribes to heal cultural and historic wounds through community celebrations such as Calling Back the Salmon and Indigenous Peoples Day.

Why Now? Urgent Actions Over the Next Three Years

We've now reached a critical phase in our work to restore the Yuba's salmon. Over the next 12 to 36 months we must target the key decision makers and:

1. Advocate for the Yuba Salmon Forum's final recommendations to include free passage over Englebright Dam for fish as well as interim measures to establish new salmon populations in the upper Yuba and significant improvements to fish habitat in the lower Yuba.
2. Secure measures to improve fish passage at Daguerre Point and Englebright Dams in the next Biological Opinion due in May 2014. Be prepared to litigate if collaborative efforts fail.
3. Ensure that when the federal government renews three hydropower licenses for Yuba dams for another 40 to 50 years that those license terms compel the hydropower operators to protect threatened fish by improving water quality and increasing instream flows.
4. Meet with local and regional members of Congress to request that they listen to their own federal fish experts and take the steps necessary to save the Yuba's salmon. Most importantly, they should direct the Army Corps to implement fish passage and habitat improvement measures as required by the Biological Opinion.
5. Build a statewide and national coalition of salmon advocates, elected officials, environmental leaders and local residents to demonstrate that we are a united community that is committed to saving Yuba salmon from extinction.
6. Publish a "Vision for Salmon in the Yuba Watershed," which will educate the public about the challenges and opportunities involved in salmon restoration in the Yuba River watershed.





Photo by John Daly ©

What You Can Do to Help

The cost of completing the critical next steps in our campaign is \$1,000,000 over the next three years. Funding will be secured through several sources, including individual donors, events, grants and volunteer support. We need your help to make this vision a reality.

Your contribution will improve salmon habitat and help to establish healthy and abundant populations of salmon in the Yuba watershed. Please make a significant contribution to save salmon today.

We have built one dam for every day since Jefferson signed the Declaration of Independence... Surely among 75,000 there are a few mistakes.

-Bruce Babbitt



Photos by Dan Bennett ©

CONTACT US:

South Yuba River Citizens League
313 Railroad Ave. #101, Nevada City, CA 95959

(530) 265-5961
www.yubariver.org