



SOUTH YUBA RIVER CITIZENS LEAGUE

To: Chuck Bonham, Director, California Department of Fish and Wildlife
Will Stelle, West Coast Regional Administrator, NOAA Fisheries
John Nicoletti, Chairman, Yuba County Water Agency Board of Directors

Fr: Caleb Dardick, Executive Director, South Yuba River Citizens League (SYRCL)

cc: Curt Aikens, General Manager, Yuba County Water Agency
Tom Quinn, Tahoe National Forest Supervisor, US Forest Service
Tina Bartlett, Regional Manager, California Department of Fish and Wildlife
MaryLisa Lynch, Water Program Supervisor, California Department of Fish and Wildlife
Maria Rea, Assistant Regional Administrator, NOAA Fisheries
Steve Edmondson, Central Valley Office FERC Branch Chief, NOAA Fisheries
Dan Welch, Assistant Field Supervisor, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Steve Rothert, California Director, American Rivers
Chris Shutes, FERC Projects Director, California Sportfishing Protection Alliance
Brian Johnson, Executive Director, Trout Unlimited

Re: Yuba Salmon Partnership Initiative

Dt: May 12, 2015

On behalf of SYRCL's Board of Directors, I want to express my sincere respect and appreciation for the leadership and dedication the parties in the Yuba Salmon Partnership Initiative (YSPI) have demonstrated in working to improve conditions on the Yuba River for wild salmon.

As a local river conservation organization with over 3,500 members and 1,000 active volunteers, SYRCL is responsive to a local community that has been dedicated to restoring Yuba salmon for over two decades. Our membership and the local community want to know where SYRCL stands, and our Board has unanimously voted to express concerns with and opposition to the process underway to implement "trap and haul" to transport salmon to and from the North Yuba River.

For SYRCL, one of the greatest pleasures in recent years has been working collaboratively with the Agency and NGO members of the Yuba Salmon Forum to help restore salmon and steelhead in the Yuba River watershed. The Yuba Salmon Forum was a significant accomplishment and we wish it were meeting now so that we could continue to collaboratively address important and still unanswered questions regarding the best path forward for Yuba salmon.

Unfortunately, the Yuba Salmon Forum has been effectively replaced by the YSPI. SYRCL is disappointed in this shift from an open collaborative process with watershed stakeholders to the exclusive process of the YSPI, and the shift from pursuing reintroduction alternatives to a focus on trap and haul to the North Yuba River.

We recognize that YSPI parties believe that a trap and haul project to the North Yuba River is the best achievable action for Yuba Salmon, and while we respect your professional opinion, we are not convinced. We encourage the YSPI parties to pursue a plan to restore Yuba salmon that the watershed community will enthusiastically support, and for which we can join you in advocating for the necessary funding to implement. Rather than focus on developing a settlement agreement that might bind us in conflict, we request that the YSPI take on certain interim priorities that would allow for collaborative resolution. Specifically, we request the following:

1. **Reconvene the more inclusive Yuba Salmon Forum to develop mutually-agreeable plan for Yuba salmon.** Broader participation is needed to define the priorities and terms for major salmon restoration actions in the Yuba watershed.
2. **Prioritize, fund and implement a Biological Goals & Objectives (BG&O) process.** The process of evaluating biological goals and objectives for salmon and steelhead recovery in the Yuba watershed should commence without delay. We have seen the value of similar efforts in the San Joaquin River Recovery Program. This BG&O process would establish a more robust rationale for actions to recover spring-run salmon and steelhead from risk of extinction, as well as how those actions could be evaluated for success. The BG&O process must be open to stakeholders and have clear, persistent and unbiased facilitation.
3. **Request that the Army Corps of Engineers conduct a Feasibility Study that thoroughly analyzes fish passage.** Input from YSPI parties is needed to ensure that the Corps conducts a full analysis of both dam removal and design for dam modifications such as “notch and ladder.” The Feasibility Study needs to be completed using all information relevant to fish passage design and reintroduction planning, and not be limited to past reports for the Yuba Salmon Forum. Additionally, the Feasibility Study is a significant opportunity to provide direction and funding for restoration of the lower Yuba River.
4. **Make a strong investment in the lower Yuba River now.** There are several short-term actions that could be taken in the lower Yuba River that would have significant benefit to salmon and steelhead and are also actions described in the 2014 Recovery Plan for Central Valley Spring-run Chinook and Steelhead produced by NOAA Fisheries. YSPI parties have within their staff and resources, an impressive capacity to get things done on the lower Yuba River in the short term. We sincerely invite you to take this opportunity, and pledge our full participation.

We look forward to the opportunity to work with the YSPI parties to achieve our common goals for the salmon, for the Yuba River, and for our communities.