



FISH AND GAME NEWS

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NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Proposed Settlement Benefits Yuba River Salmon and Steelhead, Provides Certainty for Local Farms and the Environment

The California Department of Fish and Game (DFG), the South Yuba River Citizens League and the Yuba County Water Agency (YCWA), along with 14 state and federal agencies, environmental interests and local irrigation districts, announced an innovative settlement proposal to protect Chinook salmon and steelhead in the lower Yuba River, while insuring reliable water supplies for local farms and the environment. The proposed settlement is known as the proposed Lower Yuba River Accord (Accord).

The Accord includes three essential agreements that collectively will resolve nearly 15 years of controversy and litigation over instream flow requirements in the river. DFG Director Ryan Brodrick, and representatives of the 16 other parties, announced the agreements at a ceremony today on the banks of the lower Yuba River, near Marysville.

“I want to thank the environmental and fisheries groups, local farmers, and state and federal agencies that developed this proposed settlement. They’ve set a standard of collaboration and imagination that others throughout the state should follow,” said Brodrick.

The Accord is based on three proposed agreements: a fisheries agreement, a water purchase agreement and conjunctive use agreements. The fisheries agreement, intended to benefit some of the last wild populations of salmon and steelhead in the Central Valley, includes instream flow requirements ranging from 260,000 acre-feet in a dry year (an increase of 25,000 acre-feet) to more than 574,000 acre-feet in wet years (an increase of more than 174,000 acre-feet).

“We have seen in other river systems the devastating effects on native fish when water interests compete rather than cooperate,” said Brodrick. “The proposed Lower Yuba River Accord is a landmark achievement not only because it will improve salmon and steelhead habitat and provide certainty for water rights and irrigation, but also because it is the product of unparalleled cooperation and compromise.”

Another critical component of the Accord, the water purchase agreement, represents the first major long-term water purchase by the State of California for the CALFED Bay-Delta Program Environmental Water Account (EWA). The EWA was established to protect fish and wildlife species, primarily threatened and endangered fish in the Bay-Delta ecosystem. Under the agreement, YCWA would provide 60,000 acre-feet of water per year for the EWA, and up to 140,000 acre feet of supplemental water supplies in dry years for the State Water Project and Central Valley Project.

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The revenues from the water purchase agreement will enable YCWA to finance a range of measures in Yuba County, including a \$6 million lower Yuba River fisheries monitoring, studies and restoration program.

Under the conjunctive use agreements, YCWA and local irrigation districts will implement a series of conjunctive use and efficiency activities to better integrate operations of New Bullards Bar Dam and Reservoir with irrigation activities. To protect local groundwater supplies, the program will be carefully managed consistent with YCWA's Groundwater Management Plan. Certain diesel groundwater pump motors will be also converted to cleaner, more efficient electric motors.

Certain parties to the Accord that are also involved in pending litigation in California Superior Court, will now request a stay in the Court's proceedings so they can begin the necessary environmental compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act, the National Environmental Policy Act, and the state and federal Endangered Species Acts. That process is expected to require 18 months. For now, interim measures will be implemented to begin moving forward with related steps. The Lower Yuba River Accord will formally take effect beginning in late 2006.

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