

YUBA COUNTY



COUNTY INFORMATION

Size: 644 sq. miles (1,668 sq. kilometers)

Population: 71,938 (as of 2000 US Census)

Location: North-Western Sierra

Official Website: www.co.yuba.ca.us/

CONSERVATION STORY

The South Yuba River Citizens League Unites Residents to “Save Yuba Salmon”

Yuba County salmon are in trouble, and the South Yuba River Citizens League is working to change this.

For centuries, Chinook salmon have traversed the Lower Yuba River, Feather River, Sacramento River, San Joaquin Delta to and from the Pacific Ocean at the beginning and end of their lives, a round trip of over 300 miles. However, over the past few years increasingly fewer fall-run Chinook salmon have returned to spawn in the Lower Yuba River in Yuba County.

The Lower Yuba River in Yuba County provides one of the last wild runs of for Central Valley salmon, including fall-run and spring-run Chinook salmon. The fall-run are a “candidate” for Endangered Species Act listing, and the spring-run and Steelhead are both listed as “threatened” species.

The numbers of salmon returning in the fall to spawn has decreased since 2003. Last year, 909 were counted, two years ago 1,671 were and in 2003 there were 3,842. ⁽¹⁾ The count was well below the average count from 1953-1989, which is 13,050 fish and even sinks below the bottommost range or returns for that period of 1,000 to 39,000 salmon. ⁽²⁾ In other tributaries to the Delta such as the Feather River, fall-run salmon counts have been low as well. ⁽⁴⁾

NOAA Fisheries has published a report stating that only 242 spring-run spawners made there way up the Yuba River in 2007. The California Fish and Game estimated that approximately 2,600 Fall-run Chinook salmon spawned in the Yuba River compared to an estimated 18,000 spawners in 2005.

Climate change and changing ocean conditions are both considered possible factors in the quickly depleting salmon population. Executive Director Zeke Grader of the Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Associations notes that ““Obviously the collapse of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta has had an impact on Central Valley salmon populations and the problem may be exacerbated by ocean conditions, especially the lack of krill.” ⁽⁵⁾

An organization in Yuba County has dedicated themselves to the protection of the salmon population. The South Yuba River Citizens League (SYRCL) is a community non-profit conservation group based in Nevada City. The group began in 1983 as a small group of unpaid, passionate volunteers. Since the organization’s reaction, the SYRCL has been dedicated to protecting the Yuba River from numerous unnecessary dam proposals, hydro-electric developments, and further degradation.

Each fall, SYRCL holds numerous community events such as the “SYRCL Wild and Scenic Environmental Film Festival” and the “Yuba Salmon Rafting Tours” each fall which teach attendees about the journey of the Chinook.

Their latest campaign is called “Save Yuba Salmon.” The campaign includes working with decision-makers to eliminate unnecessary fish death at the fish ladders, improving existing spawning and rearing habitat, improving fish passage at Daguerre Dam, and returning salmon to their ancestral spawning habitat.

A vital part of the campaign has been to provide adult volunteers and student youth in the Yuba with information about the plight of the Chinook salmon and opportunities to help protect them. Called “Journey of the Salmonids” presentation, the educational presentation teaches students about the California Science Concept Standards of life cycles, habitat, and adaptation through the story of the Chinook salmon’s journey on the

Yuba River. And at each presentation, one lucky volunteer or staff member dresses up as a six-foot salmon called “Tiny.”

According to Lyndly Martin, RiverTeachers Program Coordinator, the “Journey of the Salmonids” assembly program and “Yuba River Salmon Expeditions” have educated over 40,000 students on the watershed and water cycle concepts and salmonid and river ecology.

Another integral program is the RiverScience program. Trained volunteers gather water samples to collect data about river pH levels, temperature, and possible chemical contents. The data tells SYRCL about possible upstream erosion, mercury contamination, storm-water runoff, dams, and hydropower facilities. These impact people, the river itself, and all species living near or in the river.

Joel Passovoy, who served as an AmeriCorps member with SYRCL throughout 2007 and helped lead over 70 trained volunteers on water monitoring trips across the Yuba river, stated, “the data gathered can be a vital part in helping to understand connections that exist between Chinook salmon, water quality, and impacts to that water quality.” As for the volunteers: “They really are great volunteers,” said Passovoy. “Some drove for hours just to get there through the snow in the winter. Then they dedicated hours of time once a month for twelve months to monitor the river.”

Yuba and Nevada County residents interested in getting involved or finding out more about the South Yuba River Citizen’s League and their “Save Yuba Salmon” campaign should visit www.yubariver.org.

CITATIONS

1. <http://www.theunion.com/article/2007110230159>
2. Reynolds FL, Mills TJ, Benthin R, Low A. 1993. Restoring Central Valley streams; a plan for action. Sacramento (CA): California Department of Fish and Game. 129 p.
3. <http://www.theunion.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=2007110230159&template=printart>
4. <http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?file=/c/a/2007/10/30/MNAAT2VTR.DTL>
5. <http://www.scwa.ca.gov/documents/OceanConditionsImpactSalmonReturns102907.pdf>
6. South Yuba River Citizens League <http://yubanet.com/regional/California-s-Central-Valley-Salmon-in-Unprecedented-Collapse.php>. *California's Central Valley Salmon in "Unprecedented Collapse" Yuba's Wild Salmon Runs No Less Severe*

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ORGANIZATIONS

Middle Mountain Foundation

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County of Activity: Yuba, Sutter, Colusa, southern Butte.

Issue Focus: Preservation of the Sutter Buttes, agricultural lands, grazing lands, open space, and habitat. Work with local government agencies to adopt smart growth policies to enhance the previous items, along with air and water quality.

Public Events: Snow Goose festival, Hawk Flight, Live Oak Peach Festival, Yuba City Christmas Stroll, and our Sunset Serenade.

Volunteer Opportunities: Yes. Hike guides into the Sutter Buttes, and project volunteers needed.

Accepts Donations: Yes

Description: The Middle Mountain Foundation works to protect the land and natural resources of the Sutter Buttes and surrounding regions for present and future generations. We accomplish this work through collaboration with landowners, government agencies, and local business.

PUBLIC OFFICIALS AND AGENCIES

Yuba County Board of Supervisors

Mailing Address:

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Website: <http://www.co.yuba.ca.us/departments/bos/>

Senate Representative – 4th District:

Counties Represented: Butte, Colusa, Del Norte, Glenn, Nevada, Placer, Shasta, Siskiyou, Sutter, Tehama, Trinity and Yuba counties

Website: <http://republican.sen.ca.gov/web/4/>

Assembly Representative – 3rd District

Counties Represented: Lassen, Plumas, Butte, Sierra Yuba, Nevada, Placer

Website: <http://republican.assembly.ca.gov/members/a3/index.aspx>