

United for the Yuba

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Strategic Action Plan
Executive Summary
July 1, 2015 - June 30, 2018

Dear Friends,

SYRCL's mission is to unite the community to protect the Yuba River. We hope you enjoy reading this Executive Summary of our newly updated 3-year Strategic Action Plan, which will guide our work from July 2015 through June 2018.



This plan is an open invitation to Yuba River lovers to engage personally in the protection and restoration of the watershed:

- ▶ Ready to stand up for the Yuba? Join our campaigns to restore wild salmon and defend the river from inappropriate dams, mines and other threats.
- ▶ Sick of the garbage left on the beaches and trails? Register for the annual Yuba River Cleanup.
- ▶ Want to foster a culture of stewardship for the river? Join our River Ambassadors and talk one-on-one with visitors all summer long.
- ▶ Concerned about the river's health? Get trained to be a River Monitor.
- ▶ Like to get your hands dirty? Sign up for one of our Restoration projects on the lower Yuba or summit meadow.
- ▶ Want to inspire activism? Help staff the Wild & Scenic Film Festival showing hundreds of environmental documentaries selected to make a difference.

We encourage all Yuba River lovers to volunteer, donate, and join as dues-paying members so your voice can be counted on behalf of the river. With your active support, SYRCL intends to remain as the central hub for community activism to protect, restore, and celebrate this watershed we love.

SYRCL's programmatic work is organized into several coordinated departments including River Advocacy, River People, River Education, River Science, and the Wild & Scenic Film Festival. This document summarizes each department's goals, objectives and actions that we hope to accomplish over the next three years with the community's active support. Download the complete Strategic Action Plan at www.yubariver.org.

For the Yuba,

Caleb Dardick
Executive Director

Joe Bell
Board President

River Advocacy

The role of an advocacy organization is to take action whenever necessary; to have the skills and capacity to serve as the voice for the river; and to mobilize river lovers to defend against threats to the Yuba.

Yuba Salmon Now

Today, SYRCL's primary advocacy focus is salmon restoration. SYRCL's Yuba Salmon Now campaign seeks to build widespread community and government support for both immediate and long-term salmon restoration goals. We are advocating for a sustainable reintroduction plan so that one day, salmon and steelhead will be able to swim freely to the upper Yuba River. We know there are many challenges to this goal, which is why it is essential that all stakeholders support the immediate implementation of salmon habitat restoration projects in the lower Yuba River where the fish exist now.

Dam Relicensing

Dam relicensing is another major focus of our advocacy work. The hydropower dams in the Yuba watershed are regulated through 30–50 year licenses issued by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC). That is why our staff and volunteers are present and fully engaged as the decisions made today will have consequences for decades. SYRCL and our partners are advocating for improved flows, water quality, fish passage, and restored ecosystems.



Defend Against Threats

During the past three years, SYRCL responded to a variety of controversial proposals such as reopening a gold mine on the San Juan Ridge and building a massive new dam on the Bear River. Whenever proposals like these came to light, we got informed, engaged our partners, educated our members, and took action as needed. Since some of these proposals move very slowly over many

SYRCL serves as the voice of the river; mobilizing river lovers to defend against threats to the Yuba.

years, we vigilantly monitor them, ready to take action.

And when we win, like when we secured State funds for the restoration and reopening of the historic Bridgeport Covered Bridge, or when we succeeded in getting Archon Energy's planned hydropower project at Daguerre Point Dam cancelled, we celebrate our victories with our members!

River People

The River People program's core functions include volunteer coordination, communications, media relations, community outreach, and grassroots mobilization.

The numbers behind SYRCL's people-powered activities are staggering: over 700 people volunteer for the Yuba River Cleanup each fall, over 600 support the Wild & Scenic Film Festival every January, up to 80 volunteers are trained River Monitors, and another 40 serve as River Ambassadors.

Yuba River Cleanup

SYRCL's River People program produces the annual Yuba River Cleanup to engage the community in keeping the river clean. Over the past 18 cleanups (1998-2015), our volunteers have removed more than 154,000 pounds of trash and 40,000 pounds of recyclables (nearly 100 tons!) from 80 miles of rivers and creeks.



River Ambassadors

In 2012, we recognized that a one-day-a-year cleanup was no longer enough to deal with the ever-increasing number of river visitors. SYRCL's River Ambassador program recruits and trains up to 40 volunteers to speak one-on-one with visitors at the four major crossings. Using a friendly, non-confrontational approach, River Ambassadors educate folks about the polluting impacts of trash and dog waste, the dangers of broken glass, and the catastrophic potential of wildfire. After four summers (2012-15), the River Ambassadors logged 3,661 hours on the river, spoke with 18,273 people about best stewardship practices, and picked up 25,132 pieces of garbage and dog waste.

The number of volunteers behind SYRCL's people-powered activities are staggering.

Informing our Members

SYRCL strives to keep our members well informed and engaged. That's why we publish an e-newsletter every two weeks and host an annual "State of the Yuba" forum as part of Earth Day celebrations.

We want to be responsive to community interests, which is why we formed a Community Advisory Board, and conduct an extensive Community Survey during the update of these Strategic Action Plans.

This action plan calls for increasing the number of volunteers in all aspects of SYRCL's work, and raising the visibility of Yuba River issues throughout the community to encourage increased stewardship.

River Science

The purpose of SYRCL's River Science program is to ensure that our advocacy and program work is informed and supported by the best science available. Specifically, River Science guides our River Monitoring and Restoration programs, as well as our watershed education, salmon advocacy, and dam relicensing work.

The River Science program enhances our understanding of the watershed and provides SYRCL with the authority to be in the forefront of scientific discussions about the Yuba.

River Restoration

The River Restoration program is focused on working with partners to restore the health of mountain meadows and the vitality of the lower Yuba River fishery. In addition, the program seeks to protect and rehabilitate the river corridors from threats like invasive species, abandoned mines, and large illegal cannabis grow sites, all of which will reduce fire risk, stream degradation, and improve biodiversity. A new "Restoration Plan for the Yuba Watershed" will highlight the restoration needs of the watershed from the headwaters all the way down to the confluence with the Feather River.

Restoration in the lower Yuba (primarily riparian planting, and gravel and wood augmentations) will increase ecosystem-wide biodiversity and improve the survival of juvenile salmonids. SYRCL has already planted more than 6500 trees at Hammon Bar on the lower Yuba River and we will continue to monitor their growth.

Meadow Restoration

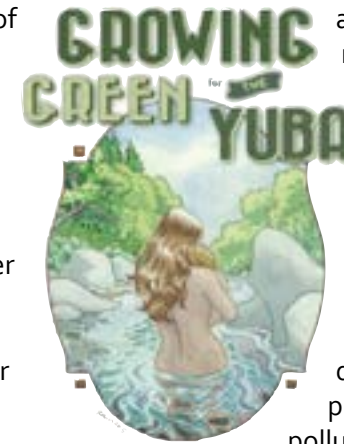
Meadow restoration purifies and stores groundwater while sequestering carbon - creating resiliency in our headwaters against drought and climate change impacts. We have secured



grants to restore over 800 acres of mountain meadows during the next few years.

Cannabis Cultivation Impacts

Recently, SYRCL has begun to address the negative impacts of cannabis cultivation such as water diversions, overuse of fertilizers, pesticides and other chemicals, and clear cutting. When Governor Brown signed new cannabis laws in 2015, he wrote, "Unregulated marijuana cultivation poses one of the greatest threats to our fish and wildlife in the state." We will continue to host informative workshops for growers about the best practices in sustainable and ecologically sound marijuana cultivation in the Yuba watershed



Science enhances our understanding of the watershed

and work with public lands managers to remediate and monitor large, illegal grow sites.

River Monitoring

Started in 2000, SYRCL's River Monitoring program is guided by a detailed River Monitoring Plan. This plan highlights the importance of citizen science data collection and focused projects to scientifically monitor pollution sources and potential water quality threats. Each year, more than 60 well-trained, active volunteer River Monitors collect high quality baseline data at nearly 40 sites.

SYRCL provides careful scientific oversight to ensure that water quality and restoration monitoring

data are collected in a scientifically defensible way, ensuring that SYRCL's data is a respected and reliable resource for members of the scientific community and within collaborative forums about the Yuba River. Should a threat be detected and SYRCL called upon to be a whistle blower, the data will be credible and scientifically sound – and it is publicly available at www.yubashed.org.



River Education

SYRCL's River Education program provides premier educational programs about Yuba salmon, water conservation, and watershed health to students and the larger community.

Salmon Education

Many Yuba watershed residents are unaware that up to 300,000 salmon once returned to the Yuba every year; now as few as 8,000 return in a given year. That's why we want people to see for themselves the salmon that do make it back to spawn in the lower Yuba River. We offer rafting and walking Salmon Tours for the public and school groups to learn about the salmon life cycle first-hand. Nearly 500 students participate in our fall Salmon Tours – and we hope to see that number grow each year.

School Assemblies

Our program reaches students at their schools too. Our school assembly about water conservation, the "Great Water Mystery," will reach over 6,000 students at nearly 70 assemblies in 2015. That's up from 4,000 at 33 assemblies the year before thanks to funding from local and



regional water agencies. We also have a new "water audit" program where they learn how to take action to conserve water at their very own schools. And should funding become available, we hope to re-launch our "Journey of the Salmon" assemblies for kids in the greater Yuba River watershed.

Field Science

Our "Field Science" Program is engaging high school students to protect the Yuba River. We take large groups of students on overnight field trips to learn about our watershed and assist with our meadow restoration and river monitoring efforts. This experiential learning opportunity allows them to participate in SYRCL's work, collecting data on the ecology, biology, and hydrology of the Yuba watershed. They learn how removing invasive plants

and restoring meadow health purifies and stores our water – important knowledge given the ongoing drought and diminishing snowpack.

Laura Wilcox Scholarship

High school graduates with a commitment to the environment are encouraged to apply for SYRCL's "Laura Wilcox Scholarship." Since 2002, SYRCL has awarded a \$4,000 college scholarship each year in memory of Nevada County teenager Laura Wilcox who was tragically killed in 2001.

With greater knowledge, our community members become more effective advocates for the river.

Ongoing community education about the Yuba watershed is critical to fulfilling SYRCL's mission. With greater knowledge, our community members become more effective advocates on behalf of the river.

Wild & Scenic Film Festival

The Wild & Scenic Film Festival enters its 14th year with a strong foundation and a proven track record of success. What began as a two-day festival with one venue has grown to a five-day festival with more than nine film venues in both Nevada City and Grass Valley. In 2015, more than 6,000 people attended the festival from near and far with 60% of the audience coming from the local area.

The film festival aims to inspire environmental action. We strive for excellence among environmental film festivals by weaving together an exciting and layered program that combines cutting edge films, activist workshops, art, music, and celebrations. The festival is a boost to SYRCL's revenues and our local economy through lodging, meals, and temporary hiring.

The film festival aims to inspire environmental activism.

Film Festival On Tour

The Wild & Scenic Film Festival On Tour brings together the best of the home festival's films in an evening program designed to provide other national and international organizations with a turn-key event to increase their membership, raise funds, and inspire activism in their community. Traveling to more than 150 venues each year, the On Tour program also raises funds to support SYRCL's other programs.

This action plan seeks to ensure that the Wild & Scenic Film Festival remains sustainable and financially successful while presenting an excellent environmental film festival, one that educates the community about issues global and local while inspiring activism and love for the natural world.



Leading the Fight for the Yuba River

Today the Yuba River Watershed is facing a host of threats:

- ▶ Record drought – with demands for a new dam on the Bear River that would impact the Yuba
- ▶ Abandoned gold mines – that continue to pollute the river
- ▶ Illegal marijuana grows – diverting water, harming streams and creeks
- ▶ Intense river visitation - nearly 700,000 visitors come to the river every summer– far too many of whom are insensitive about trash, glass, dog waste and fire
- ▶ Risk of salmon extinction – but an unsustainable, short-sighted plan to truck wild salmon around dams to and from the North Yuba River is not the answer

SYRCL is working hard on all of these fronts to protect the Yuba. Whenever necessary, we mobilize the community to address a crisis – but most of the time river conservation work requires steady engagement over the long haul.

Membership Matters.

By joining or renewing your membership, you can help guarantee that SYRCL will protect the Yuba River watershed for years to come and be able to respond rapidly to new threats as they arise, without needing to scramble for funding before acting. With your continued support, SYRCL is committed to:

- ▶ Restoring wild salmon to their native waters
- ▶ Defending the river from inappropriate dams, mines and other threats
- ▶ Fostering a culture of stewardship for the river
- ▶ Safeguarding the Yuba River as a natural treasure
- ▶ Leading cutting-edge river science to restore critical habitats and ecosystem functions
- ▶ Providing essential education programs throughout northern California to build the next generation of river advocates

Join or renew today! Contact Julie Pokrandt, Development Director at (530) 265-5961 x214. Or give online at YubaRiver.org.



*Read the complete Strategic Action Plan online at
www.yubariver.org/about/strategic-action-plan*



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