

Matthew Pera
Staff Writer

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What's the rush?: SYRCL urges rivergoers to be patient while snow melts

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Elias Funez/efunez@theunion.com |

Matt Green, Chief Ranger with the Sierra District, left, and SYRCL Executive Director Caleb Dardick tell people to skip the river this year due to dan...

Following the deaths of three swimmers at the Yuba River this year, and 17 deaths at rivers across the state, the South Yuba River Citizens League hosted an informational gathering Friday morning to urge community members and visitors to stay safe and make smart decisions when looking for ways to cool off from the summer heat.

"After five years of drought and low flows, we've gotten used to summer coming earlier and earlier, with people swimming as soon as April," said SYRCL's executive director, Caleb Dardick.

This year, he said, heavy snowpack in the Sierra is causing extremely dangerous conditions along the Yuba, including cold water temperatures, swift currents and high flows.

Matt Green, chief ranger for the Sierra District of California State Parks, urged swimmers to wait until late July or August before entering the river.


Water temperatures along the Yuba are between 32 and 40 degrees, according to Janet Walther, power generation manager for Pacific Gas and Electric.

PG&E controls flow from Spaulding Reservoir into the South Yuba, and Walther reported that water is

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flowing out of the reservoir at a rate between 800 and 1,400 cubic feet per second. Last year, Walther said, the rate was between 12 and 15 cubic feet per second.

"Spalding is currently full," she said. "Snowmelt coming in is going right back out."

Nevada County Supervisor Heidi Hall urged visitors to explore the region's other attractions, such as Grass Valley's Thursday Night Markets, Nevada City's Summer Nights and the many hiking trails scattered throughout the county.

"Skip the dip, stay away from this river, share this information with your friends and look out for your children," Hall said.

To contact Staff Writer Matthew Pera, email mpera@theunion.com or call 530-477-4231.