

Submitted to The Union

July 10, 2014

'DamNation' screening to benefit SYRCL



“DamNation” explores the change in the national attitude toward dams and the value of having healthy rivers. Shown is a dam being taken down.

The South Yuba River Citizens League’s Wild & Scenic Film Festival and American Rivers bring you a screening of the film “DamNation,” followed by a discussion on Yuba salmon, as part of the Nevada Theater film series July 20. Funds raised will benefit American Rivers and SYRCL’s Yuba Salmon Now Campaign.

This powerful film odyssey across America explores the sea change in our national attitude from pride in big dams as engineering wonders to the growing awareness that our own future is bound to the life and health of our rivers. Dam removal has moved beyond the fictional Monkey

Wrench Gang to go mainstream. Where obsolete dams come down, rivers bound back to life, giving salmon and other wild fish the right of return to primeval spawning grounds after decades without access.

“DamNation’s” cinematography and unexpected discoveries move through rivers and landscapes altered by dams but also through a metamorphosis in values, from conquest of the natural world to knowing ourselves as part of nature, according to the film’s synopsis.

“There are so many reasons to see this film. Come for the visually stunning footage. Come to celebrate a new era for our dam-obsessed nation — a fresh chapter of dam removal and river revival. Come for the hope generated by seeing undammed rivers heal and salmon populations return. Come to see the spirited 94-year-old Katie Lee recollect Glen Canyon before it was submerged. Come to be inspired by former Earth First graffiti activist Mikal Jakubal.

“Or just come for the explosions. In any case, do not miss the film that river lovers across the nation are talking about,” said Elizabeth Soderstrom, senior director of Conservation for American Rivers.

“DamNation” opens big, on a birth, with the stirring words of Franklin D. Roosevelt at the dedication of Hoover Dam, and on a death, as the engineer at Elwha Dam powers down the turbine on its last day. DamNation stints neither the history nor the science of dams and above all, conveys experiences known so far to only a few, including the awe of watching a 30-pound salmon hurtling 20 feet into the air in a vain attempt to reach the spawning grounds that lie barricaded upriver. We witness the seismic power of a dam breaking apart and once the river breaks free, the elation in watching wild salmon — after a century of denied access — swimming their way home.

“This film is an opportunity for fans of the Wild & Scenic Film Festival and river lovers to gather and support river and salmon issues in our own backyard, as it’s a benefit for SYRCL and American River’s Yuba Salmon Now campaign,” said Melinda Booth, festival director.

“Phenomenal filmmakers Ben Knight, Travis Rummel and Matt Stoecker, along with producers Yvon Chouinard and Beda Calhoun, have made a documentary film on rivers and dams that rivals a Hollywood blockbuster in terms of engaging the audience and telling a compelling story. It is definitely a ‘don’t miss’ for river and film lovers.”

The film will screen at 7 p.m., July 20, at the Nevada Theatre in Nevada City. Tickets are \$15 for general admission or \$50 for VIP admission, which includes a pre-event wine reception and reserved seating. They are available at www.wildandscenicfilmfestival.org or at the SYRCL office, 313 Railroad Ave., Nevada City, Calif. Call or email Melinda Booth for more information: Melinda@syrc.org; 530-265-5961 x 202.

©2005 - 2014 Swift Communications, Inc.