

## \$3M Yuba River study begins

By Andrew Creasey/[acreasey@appealdemocrat.com](mailto:acreasey@appealdemocrat.com) | Posted: Thursday, July 9, 2015 12:04 am

A \$3 million study looking at the feasibility of various habitat improvements along the Yuba River is underway.

A federal cost-sharing agreement was approved in June between the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Yuba County Water Agency for the study, with YCWA contributing \$1.5 million in both cash and in-kind contributions.

The study will look at a full slate of rehabilitation measures, including fish passage at Englebright Dam and restoring the ecosystem of the lower Yuba River, which provides most of the habitat for spring-run Chinook salmon and steelhead juvenile rearing, to a more natural condition, said Curt Aikens, general manager of YCWA.

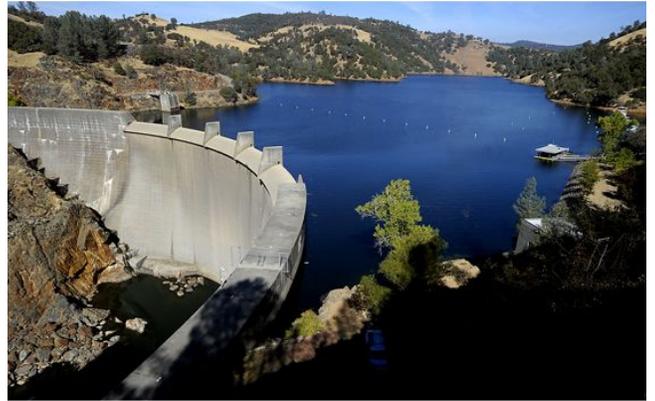
Ultimately, the process will emerge with one feasible solution to be sent to Congress for authorization.

But what that one solution will be is still unknown.

The South Yuba River Citizens League, a conservation organization in Nevada City, has made it clear that the feasibility of installing fish passage over Englebright Dam, which is currently a complete barrier to migration, should be the main focus of the study.

"Some assert that it's not feasible to pass fish into the Upper Yuba watershed above Englebright Dam except by an elaborate system of trapping and hauling fish to and from the North Yuba River," said Gary Reedy, river science director for SYRCL. "We'd like to see this feasibility study thoroughly address remaining questions about providing fish passage to habitat upstream of Englebright Dam, as well as removal of Daguerre Point Dam and habitat restoration opportunities for the Lower Yuba River."

Englebright Dam is a complete barrier to the historic Chinook salmon, steelhead and green sturgeon spawning grounds in the Upper Yuba watershed. It has been the central issue in the debate over bringing endangered fish back into the upper reaches of the Yuba River, and the dispute has at times spilled into the courtroom.



### Englebright Dam

Fish passage at Englebright Dam will be one of the issues studied in the project.

Conservation groups such as SYRCL and American Rivers have long maintained fish passage to and from habitat above Englebright Dam is essential to restoring a healthy population of spring-run Chinook salmon.

Aikens said that fish passage will be among the options studied.

"This study is an ecosystem restoration study and will look holistically at ecosystem restoration, although fish passage and recovery is an important component or potential beneficiary of ecosystem restoration," Aikens said.

Complete removal of Englebright Dam is likely not feasible, given the large amount of contaminated debris — estimated at 28 million cubic yards — the dam was built to hold back, Aikens said.

The first step of the study will be a collaborative design and planning session to determine the project's scope. This will include a public comment period that is expected to take place in fall of 2015.

"We want everything that everyone has imagined to be brought up," said Corps Spokesman Robert Kidd. "This is the time to bring it up."