



California Department of Fish & Wildlife | NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service | Yuba County Water Agency  
 American Rivers | California Sportfishing Protection Alliance | Trout Unlimited

---

## ***YUBA SALMON PARTNERSHIP INITIATIVE***

---

### *Frequently Asked Questions—May 2015*

1. **Q. What is the Yuba Salmon Partnership Initiative?**
  - A. The Yuba Salmon Partnership Initiative (YSPI) is a collaborative, science-based initiative to contribute to the recovery of Central Valley spring-run Chinook salmon and Central Valley steelhead by enhancing habitat in the Yuba River downstream of Englebright Dam and reintroducing salmon (and possibly steelhead) into their historic habitat in the North Yuba River upstream of New Bullards Bar Dam.
  
2. **Q. Who is participating in the YSPI?**
  - A. California's Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), Yuba County Water Agency (YCWA), American Rivers, California Sportfishing Protection Alliance and Trout Unlimited. Others may become parties to the YSPI.
  
3. **Q. Why is it important to enhance habitat in the lower Yuba River and reintroduce salmon (and possibly steelhead) into the North Yuba River?**
  - A. California's once abundant salmon and steelhead runs have experienced severe declines over the last century, in part due to habitat loss and degradation. The YSPI represents a promising opportunity to continue to rebuild their populations in the lower Yuba River and reconnect these species to over 30 miles of valuable habitat in the Sierra Nevada's North Yuba River that has been inaccessible to them for more than 74 years. Reintroducing salmon and steelhead to habitat upstream of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Englebright Dam is a priority action in NMFS's 2014 Recovery Plan for Central Valley Chinook salmon and steelhead.
  
4. **Q. What actions will the YSPI take to enhance habitat in the lower Yuba River?**
  - A. The YSPI envisions a program to analyze, prioritize and implement habitat actions in the lower Yuba River downstream of Englebright Dam. Plans for lower Yuba River habitat enhancement activities have not been finalized but will be selected based on their ability

to meet certain principles described in the Term Sheet. These are likely to include improvement of riparian vegetation, improving fish passage at Daguerre Point Dam, actions to restore salmon spawning habitat, and measures to improve rearing habitat for juvenile salmonids, including expansion of side channel and floodplain areas to promote rapid growth of young salmon before they migrate to the ocean.

**5. Q. How could salmon and steelhead be physically reintroduced to the North Yuba River?**

A. There are two major dams that salmon and steelhead need to get around to reach the North Yuba River: the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' 260 foot high Englebright Dam and YCWA's 640 foot high New Bullards Bar Dam. Englebright Dam was built in 1941 to retain mining debris, while New Bullards Bar Dam was built in 1970 to provide flood control, water supply, hydropower, recreation and environmental benefits. The YSPI is evaluating the feasibility of a "collection and transport" program to move adult fish upstream to spawning habitat and juvenile fish downstream around these dams for rearing and migration to the sea.

The YSPI is considering the construction and operation of: (1) facilities downstream of Englebright Dam for the collection and transport of adult salmon; and (2) facilities upstream of New Bullards Bar Dam for: (a) acclimatization and release of adult salmon to migrate to and spawn in upstream habitat; and (b) collection and transport of juvenile salmon for release downstream of Englebright Dam. The YSPI is reviewing several alternatives for accomplishing reintroduction.

**6. Q. Are collection and transport facilities used for salmon reintroductions elsewhere?**

A. Collection and transport programs for the reintroduction of salmon have been used in the Pacific Northwest for decades. You can learn about the Baker Project (Washington) and the Pelton Round Butte Project (Oregon) at the following links: [http://pse.com/aboutpse/PseNewsroom/MediaKit/001\\_Baker\\_River\\_Fact\\_Sheet.pdf](http://pse.com/aboutpse/PseNewsroom/MediaKit/001_Baker_River_Fact_Sheet.pdf) and [https://www.portlandgeneral.com/community\\_environment/initiatives/protecting\\_fish/deschutes\\_river/default.aspx](https://www.portlandgeneral.com/community_environment/initiatives/protecting_fish/deschutes_river/default.aspx).

The YSPI reintroduction is a grand endeavor intended to take advantage of recent advances in reintroduction technologies from the Pacific Northwest and employ them here in the Sierra Nevada as a tool for contributing to the recovery of salmon and steelhead.

**7. Q. Are there any other alternatives, like dam removal, being considered in the Yuba River watershed?**

A. There have been a number of studies of anadromous fish passage alternatives in the Yuba River watershed, including by the Yuba Salmon Forum which did evaluate dam removal, but the YSPI is not considering dam removals. YSPI parties participated in the Yuba Salmon Forum. A variety of other actions are underway in the Yuba River watershed to protect, restore and enhance habitat for salmon, steelhead and other fish and wildlife species. For example, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will soon begin a Feasibility Study exploring options to contribute to the restoration of the Yuba River ecosystem, including an assessment of options to reintroduce fish upstream of Englebright Dam.

Additional measures are being implemented to improve fisheries habitat as part of the Yuba River Accord.

**8. Q. How long have people been working on getting fish past Englebright dam? Why has this taken so long?**

A. Englebright Dam has been a focus for many agencies and interests for more than 15 years, but the implementation of practical passage options are complicated, expensive and controversial. As brief background, the California Debris Commission built the 260 foot tall Englebright Dam in 1941 to safely retain mining sediment that was unleashed in the upper watershed during the Gold Rush and from mining efforts after that period. The U.S. Geological Survey estimated that the dam has stored over 28 million cubic yards of sediment, much of it contaminated with arsenic and mercury. Safely managing that debris would be a significant undertaking. Englebright Dam also presents a complete passage barrier to salmon, steelhead and other fisheries to the upper watershed. The YSPI represents a promising opportunity to finally identify and implement a practical option for moving salmon and possibly steelhead around the dam.

**9. Q. Because these salmon and steelhead species are listed as "threatened" under state and federal law, won't the reintroduction create problems for local communities, like Sierra County?**

A. Central Valley spring-run Chinook salmon and Central Valley steelhead are listed as "threatened" under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), and are federally protected. The YSPI will be working with local, state and federal agencies to implement provisions to gain the support of communities in the reintroduction area. Additionally, the 2014 NMFS Recovery Plan states that salmon recovery actions in the Yuba River Watershed should include measures to minimize regulatory requirements on local land and water users. YSPI plans to use multiple tools to ensure that the needs of water users, anglers, businesses and landowners in the reintroduction area, as well as other legal, social and economic concerns, are addressed. For instance, NMFS has authority under ESA Section 10(j) to designate these species as nonessential experimental populations. A designated experimental population that is determined to be not essential to the continued existence of a species does not receive the benefit of certain ESA protections normally applicable to threatened species, as a way of building community support for a reintroduction. This is a critical issue for the YSPI's success.

Spring-run Chinook salmon are also listed as a threatened species under the California ESA. The YSPI would also develop provisions under state law to protect local communities and provide consistency with the federal designations and regulations.

**10. Q. Will the reintroduction negatively affect fishing activities?**

A. As noted above, YSPI plans to use available tools to ensure that the needs of water users, anglers, businesses and landowners in the Yuba River Watershed are addressed. YSPI anticipates that the tools will be used to ensure that angling is allowed to occur as it does today as long as anglers are otherwise complying with fishing regulations and not intentionally fishing for reintroduced fish.

11. **Q. Does the YSPI have any relationship to the Bay-Delta?**
- A. Yes. If successful, the YSPI could improve the abundance of anadromous salmonids migrating through the Bay-Delta.
12. **Q. What is the status of the YSPI, and when is it expected to begin?**
- A. The YSPI participants have approved a non-binding Term Sheet, which provides a framework for the negotiation of a settlement agreement. The settlement agreement and related action plan will specify issues such as the facilities necessary to transport fish, habitat restoration actions downstream of Englebright, biological and technical metrics, legal and regulatory matters, funding, and the roles and responsibilities of each party for implementing the YSPI. If a settlement agreement is completed, these and other variables will affect when any aspect of the habitat enhancement and reintroduction programs could begin, but a pilot program could begin within 5-7 years and a full-scale reintroduction could potentially begin within 10-15 years, under ideal circumstances.
13. **Q. What are the main agreements made in the term sheet that is being released today, and what issues are still unresolved and need to be agreed to by the final settlement?**
- A. The Term Sheet identifies the broad outlines of the YSPI, including the primary focus of the habitat and reintroduction efforts (the Lower and North Yuba Rivers), and provides a conceptual framework for program funding, regulatory requirements, and the obligations of the YSPI parties. In the next phase of detailed discussions, intended to lead to a settlement agreement, key decisions about program governance, ownership of facilities, the timing of funding commitments, and consideration of stakeholder input into the YSPI process will need to be addressed.
14. **Q. How much are the YSPI actions expected to cost, and who will pay for them?**
- A. The full range of YSPI actions has not yet been developed. Until additional analyses are complete, it is difficult to estimate capital, operation and maintenance costs. Based on other passage and reintroduction programs, including the Baker River and Pelton Round Butte projects, the YSPI reintroduction project may cost upward of \$400-\$500 million over the 50 year life of the program (2015 dollars). YCWA and others have provided significant funding for the Yuba Salmon Forum and other fisheries studies, and YCWA has committed up to \$100 million to the YSPI over the next 50 years. Funding from other sources, however, would be absolutely necessary to implement the full action plan. As part of the settlement agreement, the YSPI intends to develop a comprehensive funding plan that identifies other local, state and federal entities with interests in salmon enhancement in the Yuba River. YCWA's commitment is a tremendous start toward implementing a program of this scale and will make it much easier to attract funds for specific program components from a variety of local, state and federal sources.
15. **Q. \$400-\$500 million is a lot of money — is it worth it to save these fish?**
- A. The YSPI is an ambitious effort to establish that salmon reintroductions in California's Sierra Nevada can contribute to the recovery of these iconic species. The discoveries and lessons that emerge from this process could be invaluable to biologists throughout the range of Pacific salmon species. Ultimately, this process is part of an effort to undo some

the damage caused during the Gold Rush. Hydraulic mining was one of the most disruptive events to occur in the Yuba River watershed – and it was undertaken for years without a full accounting of the unintended impacts to other resources in the watershed. Restoring this river and its salmon runs will be a significant step towards salmon recovery and has social, cultural and even economic benefits to all of California, especially future generations.

**16. Q. Will local communities benefit from the YSPI?**

A. A fundamental commitment of the YSPI is to collaborate with regional stakeholders. The YSPI is committed to ensuring that local communities in the reintroduction areas, particularly Yuba County and Sierra County, receive long-term social, economic and environmental benefits from a reintroduction.

**17. Q. Will the public have a chance to provide feedback or communicate its concerns regarding the YSPI?**

A. The YSPI is a collaborative approach that can't succeed without support from a diverse group of stakeholders including members of local communities. The YSPI commits to the use of a transparent, science-based process that offers opportunities for public input and response in developing the specifics of the anticipated programs. The YSPI intends to use several different forms of outreach to ensure that public input is received and considered, including the release of key documents to the public for feedback and meetings with interested stakeholders to address concerns as they arise.

**18. Q. Why is the focus of reintroduction on the North Yuba River? If the YSPI is successful, would it preclude salmon and/or steelhead reintroductions to the Middle Yuba River or the South Yuba River?**

A. The North Yuba River contains more than 30 miles of unregulated (i.e., no additional dams) river upstream of New Bullards Bar Reservoir. This is more than all other reaches above Englebright Dam combined. This segment of the North Yuba River also has higher and colder summer and fall unimpaired flows compared to the Middle Yuba River or South Yuba River, and the North Yuba River segment is a heavily forested area with several tributaries and more favorable fisheries habitat. For these reasons, the YSPI believes that a salmon and/or steelhead reintroduction in the North Yuba River has the best chance of being successful.

The YSPI Term Sheet states that, at some point, YSPI parties (other than YCWA) will consider anadromous salmonid reintroduction to the Middle Yuba River upstream of Our House Dam, if feasible and supported by the best available science. YCWA's role with respect to such consideration for the Middle Yuba River would be as a stakeholder, rather than as a project proponent. Yuba Salmon Forum studies show that, due to limitations in potential habitat during dry year types, reintroduction of salmon likely would not be self-sustaining in the South Yuba River.

**19. Q. Is the YSPI related to the proceedings under the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) for relicensing hydroelectric facilities in the Yuba River watershed?**

A. The YSPI is separate from proceedings for relicensing by FERC of YCWA's Yuba River Development Project (YRDP), and the relicensing of other projects in the watershed (e.g., the Yuba-Bear and Drum-Spaulding projects). YCWA will file the YSPI settlement agreement with FERC for informational purposes, asking that the terms of the settlement agreement not be incorporated into the new YRDP license or related regulatory approvals.

**20. Q. Who should I contact if I want to learn more about the YSPI?**

A. For more information regarding the YSPI, please contact:

- Tina Bartlett, California Department of Fish and Wildlife  
(916) 358-2900 / [tina.bartlett@wildlife.ca.gov](mailto:tina.bartlett@wildlife.ca.gov) / [www.wildlife.ca.gov](http://www.wildlife.ca.gov)
- Jon Ambrose, NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service  
(916) 930-3717 / [jonathan.ambrose@NOAA.gov](mailto:jonathan.ambrose@NOAA.gov) / [www.nmfs.noaa.gov](http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov)
- Curt Aikens, Yuba County Water Agency  
(530) 741-5015 / [Caikens@ycwa.com](mailto:Caikens@ycwa.com) / [www.ycwa.com](http://www.ycwa.com)
- Steve Rothert, American Rivers  
(530) 277-0448 / [srothert@americanrivers.org](mailto:srothert@americanrivers.org) / [www.americanrivers.org](http://www.americanrivers.org)
- Chris Shutes, California Sportfishing Protection Alliance  
(510) 421-2405 / [blancapaloma@msn.com](mailto:blancapaloma@msn.com) / [www.calsport.org](http://www.calsport.org)
- Chandra Ferrari, Trout Unlimited  
(916) 214-9731 / [Cferrari@tu.org](mailto:Cferrari@tu.org) / [www.tu.org](http://www.tu.org)