

Ag board praises Yuba water accord

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The Yuba County Water Agency has been praised by members of the California State Board of Food and Agriculture for creating a model of water management.

In response to a presentation to the board July 22 by agency manager Curt Aikens, Board Chairman Al Montna called the Lower Yuba River Accord a "landmark environmental home run.

"It is a model of what we're trying to achieve," Montna said. "It's remarkable."

The accord involved three years of negotiations among 18 stakeholders, among them government agencies, environmental groups and irrigation districts.

It took shape after years of lawsuits over management of salmon and steelhead populations on the Yuba River. It contains agreements laying out fisheries management and guidelines for water purchases and conjunctive use.

The accord's agreements went into effect this year after approval by the state in 2008.

"Like many California water conflicts, ours played out in the state Water Resources Control Board, in the state legislature, and in the California superior court," Aikens told the board. "At times the controversy became all-consuming for us and Yuba County's farmers. Now the good part is the controversy is over."

Agriculture Secretary A.G. Kawamura likewise praised the accord as a "foundation for us all to learn from."

"When you create a solution, if it can be duplicated in other areas ... we would want to certainly follow the model," Kawamura said in response to Aikens' presentation. "And not just in this arena, but in other areas."