

## River accord earns praise

By Ben van der Meer/Appeal-Democrat  
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The Lower Yuba River Accord has gotten the Yuba County Water Agency the state's highest environmental honor, the 2009 Governor's Environmental and Economic Leadership Award.

The accord was honored for its blueprint for increasing in-stream flows along 24 miles of the river for salmon and steelhead populations.

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger gave the agency, which helped craft the 2006 accord and is responsible for its implementation, the award at the Global Climate Summit in Los Angeles.

Yuba County supervisor and agency board member John Nicoletti said receiving the award was a credit to providence and local know-how.

"It's kind of amazing that all these things happened in the right moment," said Nicoletti, who received the award along with agency chairman Sid Muck, director Roger Abe and agency general manager Curt Aikens. "We addressed everything from agricultural concerns to environmental concerns to urban concerns and proved we could individually manage our system without oversight from the state."

Representatives from two environmental groups that assisted in crafting the accord, The Bay Institute and Trout Unlimited, also received praise from the governor.

The accord includes a \$6 million monitoring and evaluation program, 170,000 additional acre-feet of water annually for fish populations and allows the agency to continue to meet its obligation for irrigation, hydropower, recreation and water transfers.

As well, equipment being used by the agency will be replaced with cleaner devices, including replacement of 75 diesel groundwater well engines being supplanted by electric motors.

Nicoletti noted that since the accord went into effect last year, the river's steelhead population has been on the rise and the agency has been able to double the amount of water flow from what the state originally demanded.

"That we were able to fully implement the accord is the proof of success when we fully manage our resource," Nicoletti said.

The agency was one of 15 recipients of the 2009 economic and leadership awards, in the category of Ecosystem and Watershed Stewardship.

The awards were created in 1993 and are administered by the state Environmental Protection Agency and the Natural Resources Agency.

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