



## Denis Peirce: Lower Yuba in good hands

BY DENIS PEIRCE  
FISHING COLUMNIST,

I attended the Gold Country Fly Fishers meeting last week and learned a lot about what is going on with the Lower Yuba River.

From the 1990s through 2006, there was an ongoing controversy regarding fish, water and environmental issues. During the 2006-08 period, the interested parties decided to work together to reach a workable compromise, acceptable to all of the competing interests.

The end result was the Yuba River Accord finalized in 2008. The accord set forth guidelines for water flows, timing of the flows and water temps among other things. The party responsible for the implementation of most of the conditions is the Yuba County Water Agency (YCWA).

The YCWA, founded by the state legislature in 1959, controls the water at Bullard's Bar. Bullard's is the main water source for the Lower Yuba, most importantly during the dry season. The most significant part of the accord, in my opinion, was the creation of the River Management Team (RMT) and the funding of this 10-person team for 10 years with a total budget of \$10 million. The decade-long term with funding allows for long-term planning and focusing on issues that may not be readily solved in one or two government budget cycles.

Ultimately, it is the selling of water, which is funding the RMT.

From an angler's prospective, it is the ongoing river study that holds promise for me. The team has been mapping the river, plotting salmon spawning areas and running fish traps to sample the fish, to name just a few of the many facets to their work. The goal of this management team is to test various water flow and temperature regimes to assure the best conditions that can be maintained based on yearly rainfall conditions and the needs of water users. They are also determining the feasibility of various rehabilitation projects over the entire course of the river, from Englebright Dam to Marysville. Ultimately, the RMT will be recommending and implementing projects on the river for maximum fish sustainability within the parameters of the YCWA's obligations for flood control, hydroelectric production, and supplying water to downstream users.

I came away from the meeting confident the YCWA was committed to being a good steward of the watershed in which they control the water. The River Management Team that they have assembled has the scientific expertise and the resources to back up their intentions. For more detailed information, visit their web site ([www.ycwa.com](http://www.ycwa.com)).

On the fishing front, the rain and snow keep coming, which continues to keep our lakes on the rise. Oroville has come up 30 feet in the last month with a good snow pack that will be caught later. Shasta has risen 55 feet since the first of the year.

The best fishing prospects in the near future remain the Lower Yuba for catch and release trout fishing. Bullard's Bar and Oroville are good bets for spotted bass.

The Sacramento River is the place to look for sturgeon fishing. Brett Brady ([www.fishbarebones.com](http://www.fishbarebones.com)) was down scouting the river last Friday. He reports that equipment was at work cleaning the silt off the ramp at Tisdale. Middle February is his date to begin fishing the Sacramento between Knights Landing and Colusa.

My reports from Pyramid Lake in Nevada have begun to improve. The water temp is now above 40 degrees. Boat anglers are working over water depths of 40 to 60 feet. The fish are scattered from the surface down to 30 feet. They have been caught on a variety of lures from dark to light with no definite pattern. A fly angler caught and released a cutthroat that bottomed out his 15 pound scales last week. The largest trout weighed in at the check out station was more than 9 pounds.

The fishing is not wide open, but it is OK. As the water gets up to 45 degrees, it will turn on.

Denis Peirce writes a weekly fishing column for The Union and is host of "The KNCO Fishing & Outdoor Report," which airs 6-7 p.m. Fridays and 5-6 a.m. Saturdays on 830-AM radio. Contact him via e-mail at [dpeirce@theunion.com](mailto:dpeirce@theunion.com).