

RISKING DEATH TO SAVE A RIVER

Conservationist Mark Dubois, 30, has fought for a decade against the New Melones Dam on northern California's Stanislaus River. The \$337 million project is creating a vast reservoir that will eventually inundate 25 miles of the river's upper canyon—including prehistoric Indian villages and burial grounds, the remains of old Gold Rush camps and the most spectacular white-water run in the region. "We tried a little bit of everything—an initiative, state legislation, legal suits and rallies—but we're running out of time," said Dubois, who heads a group called Friends of the River. Last week, Dubois put his own life on the line to save the Stanislaus.

MANHUNT: In a message to the Army Corps of Engineers, which built the dam, and to President Carter, Dubois vowed to chain himself to a rock and drown in the canyon if flooding continued. "Part of my spirit dies as the reservoir fills," he wrote. Then he disappeared into the wilderness at a point called Parrott's Ferry, presumably to carry out his threat. Unwilling to risk Dubois's life, the engineers finally released enough water from the reservoir to halt the rising tide. "We will hold the level indefinitely," stated Col. Donald O'Shei. "We are not prepared to flood the canyon any further."

Officials started a manhunt with twenty park rangers, four boats, a plane and a helicopter. After Dubois is found, the Army engineers insist that they will fill the reservoir to test the dam's hydroelectric generators. Then the corps plans to turn over the project—with considerable relief—to the Bureau of Reclamation, which has defended it as a source of badly needed fresh water and electricity for nearby agricultural regions.

But Gov. Jerry Brown, who has rafted

down the river, doubts the dam is necessary. Last week, he cabled President Carter to halt the project permanently. "The beauty of the Stanislaus River Canyon and the life of Mark Dubois demand your personal intervention," said Brown. The President, who supported the Friends of the River in a 1974 speech, said nothing publicly. But Secretary of the Interior Cecil Andrus, said by aides to be "gravely concerned,"

permitted staffers to join the search for Dubois. And several California congressmen have introduced legislation to protect the Stanislaus under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.

A REVIEW? There were some suggestions that Dubois might be faking his gambit, but reporters later were led to his hideout. "He believes very deeply in what he is doing," said Interior Department official Daniel Beard, who knows Dubois well. "So he's there." And by calling national attention to his crusade, he may win a review of the project.

RAYMOND CARROLL with
MICHAEL REESE in San Francisco
and MARY LORD in Washington

Dubois (right) with ecologist David Brower: Damned dam?

