

COMMENTS BEFORE THE PUBLIC WORKSHOP ON
WHITE-WATER MITIGATION FOR THE STANISLAUS RIVER
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We have waited a long time for this meeting. A number of us have traveled a long way to speak for the Stanislaus and its future. My name is David Kay, and I have come from the Bay Area to represent the California White-Water Advisory Board. Others of us represent a range of river-running and environmental interests.

We are ostensibly here to address ways to mitigate destruction of white-water values on the Stanislaus when New Melones Dam is completed. But our more general concern encompasses the entire resources of the river — its unique spectrum of ecological, cultural, and recreational values. It is my earnest hope that these values will be fully recognized now and in the future, and that the Corps and the politicians will finally understand why the Stanislaus is irreplaceable, and why so many people cry out for its protection.

White-water recreation is certainly one of the main features of the Stanislaus. Indeed, it is probably the most popular white-water run in the West. In 1974, the Corps of Engineers invited a number of river-runners to form a citizens' committee to advise them on ways to develop alternative sites for white-water boating. The committee includes¹ Sierra Club River Touring Sections, the American Canoe Assn., AWA, individual paddlers, and professional rafting groups.

Now known as the California White-Water Advisory Board, the committee knew at the onset that full mitigation was impossible, and that there was no single way to replace the rapids of the Stanislaus. So it studied a range of rivers up and down the state and, in 1975, submitted 9 recommendations to the Corps. Of these, only 4 are now receiving serious consideration. These are the South Fork of the American River, the Yuba, the ~~upper~~ Mokelumne, and Cache Creek. Discounted as economically impractical were the North Fork of the Feather, the Bear River, the Tuolumne, and the Stanislaus itself above Parrot's Ferry. An already inadequate mitigation plan had been thoroughly slashed by the Corps, and the outcome is now piecemeal and wholly unacceptable.

It must be noted that protecting the Stanislaus above Parrot's Ferry was the White-Water Advisory Board's very first recommendation to the Corps. We determined that this was the only real way to mitigate the impact of New Melones Dam. With no justifiable reason to fill the reservoir to capacity in the foreseeable future, we felt the recommendation was only a matter of common sense. Several precedents had already been set elsewhere for partial reservoir filling where environmental factors were at stake or when there simply wasn't enough demand for water in the first place. In any case, the Corps refused comment on the mitigation merits of partially filling New Melones Reservoir. By failing to mention it in their "Study of White-Water Alternatives," the Corps committed a forgery and a cover-up in the eyes of its own advisory committee.

By way of official input to the Corps, the California White-Water Advisory Board makes the following requests:

(1) Protect the upper Stanislaus above Parrot's Ferry by partial filling of New Melones Reservoir until such time, if ever, there is valid reason to inundate the entire river.

(2) Qualify the 4 rivers now under study as only mitigating loss of the Stanislaus below Parrot's Ferry. In so doing, it must be acknowledged that the South Fork of the American River is already heavily used by boaters, and that a hitherto discounted alternative like the North Fork of the Feather should be reconsidered.

(3) Cease all further construction and clearing plans at Parrot's Ferry and Camp 9 as incompatible with scenic and cultural resources in these areas.

(4) Hold full-scale public hearings in large metropolitan areas like Sacramento, San Francisco, and Los Angeles where the most river users reside to give the people of our state a democratic opportunity to comment on the full spectrum of mitigation planning.

On one hand I thank the Corps for caring about mitigation in the first place. On the other hand, I blame them for failure to develop a satisfactory mitigation program that includes protecting the upper Stanislaus.

It is time to look at the whole picture, to accept the diversity of human needs. The Stanislaus, wild and free-flowing, enhances the value of life for many thousands of people each year. The kayakers and private boaters are part of an American heritage of individualism and strength of character. The professional rafting companies who serve the general public are not just selling water by the river. They are putting urban-worn people in touch with themselves in nature. Let the best of the Stanislaus flow through time as a symbol of our grace in the real House of God.

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