

FILLING OF DAM HALTED IN HUNT FOR PROTESTER

MODESTO (AP)—Federal officials have stopped filling the controversial New Melones Dam and have started a search for a foe of the dam who reportedly chained himself to a rock below the proposed high-water mark.

Col. Donald O'Shei of the Army Corps of Engineers said at least 20 men in ground teams, plus crews of two patrol boats and a helicopter searched unsuccessfully Tuesday for Mark Dubois, executive director of Friends of the River.

Acquaintances of Dubois, 30, said he drilled a hole in a rock at a hiding place somewhere along the reservoir's 60-mile shoreline Monday, drove in a spike and chained himself to the rock in order to stop the filling of the dam.

O'Shei said the search will continue today. Meanwhile, the water level of the new reservoir 35 miles northeast of Modesto, which has been the object

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of protests by environmentalists for nearly a decade, has been held at 803.5 feet above sea level. Dubois' friends said he chained himself 2 to 3 feet above that water level.

O'Shei said the Corps wants to raise the water level to 808 feet to test the hydroelectric generators, the last step before construction can be signed off as completed and the \$283 million project turned over to the Interior Department to operate.

He said filling of the reservoir will not be resumed until Dubois is found or searchers are satisfied he is not there.

Friends of the River and at least eight other environmental groups oppose filling the reservoir above the 800-foot elevation because it would flood a portion of the Stanislaus River, one of California's last free-flowing rivers.