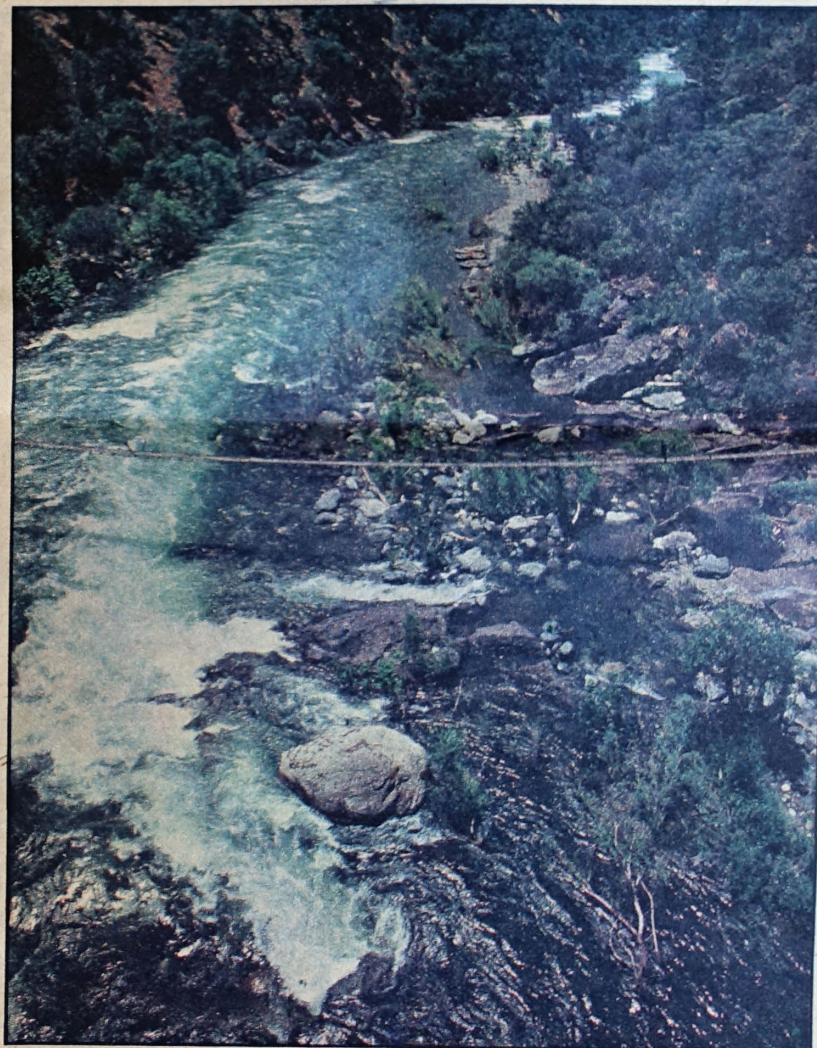


A \$350-million dam threatens to drown one of California's greatest white-water rivers.  
Unless Congress votes to save it, the Stanislaus will become a river of no return

# Will the Stanislaus Go Down For the Third Time?

By Tom Harris • Photography by Larry Orman



The size-16 feet are braced against the welded metal frame of the raft, the muscles straining across the slender but sinewy back and shoulders of the oarsman. The leverage that the six-foot-eight giant applies to the oars spins the bulky Avon rapidly across the face of the thundering rapids. The bow slams into the huge boil behind Death Rock and the passengers scream, half in delight, half in shock, as the chilling sheet of water washes over them.

Their run down the Stanislaus River is already two rapids old. There is no time now for reflection about whether it will be their last, whether this summer is to be the last hurrah for one of the nation's most heavily used white-water boating runs. That will come later, around the campfire.

For now, it is enough to experience the sheer thrill of being swept by the untamed force of a charging river through a scenic, unspoiled canyon.

It is a special moment for the bearded man at the oars, Mark Dubois. For him, it is a homecoming from endless meetings, strategy sessions and lobbying efforts to save the threatened Stanislaus from extinction. Instead of fighting the irresistible force of bureaucratic momentum and powerful political forces, he can lean back and flow with what, to him, are friendlier forces. Here, at least, he is in control.

The artfully timed strokes sweep the raft and its wide-eyed passengers just out of reach of jagged rocks, or safely through chutes where the rampaging river is only yards wide and races madly downhill from the crest of the Sierra Nevadas.

continued

Clockwise, from left: Mark Dubois, arch-champion of the Stanislaus, navigates the famous "Devil's Staircase." Between Parrott's Ferry Bridge (shown) and Camp Nine Bridge lie the nine miles of wild water that the conservationists are fighting to preserve. Mark

Dubois discusses his plans with Charles Warren, former chairman of the President's Council on Environmental Quality. The Stanislaus Canyon offers 12 major rapids in 9 miles, and is one of the three most popular boating runs in the U.S.

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