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## Proposals to remove dams spawn debate

MARK SHERMAN, Associated Press Writer

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(07-13) 11:39 PDT MARYSVILLE, Calif. (AP) -- Daguerre Point Dam on the Yuba River is a curious sight.

Water streams over it, even in dry times, raising this question: Does it serve a purpose anymore?

For environmental groups, the 25-foot-high dam located 20 miles east of Marysville is a prime candidate for removal -- at a cost of \$60 million to \$100 million -- as part of the federal and state commitment to improve passages for endangered fish.

But for local farmers and water officials, the dam offers a convenient point at which to channel river water for irrigation. It also keeps century-old mining debris from washing down the river.

"Daguerre serves a whole lot of useful functions," said Curt Aikens, general manager of the Yuba County Water Agency.

The debate over Daguerre Point reflects a conflict involving several California rivers and streams that pits protecting the environment against preserving decades-old farming and recreational arrangements.

Years of negotiation by federal, state and local officials, environmentalists and farmers have produced an agreement to restore the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta. A critical element of the accord was improving conditions for endangered fish in the delta and along tributaries.

But as money for the agreement dwindles in Sacramento and Washington, some environmental groups are losing faith that many dams will be removed.

"This is a good example of where theory runs afoul of politics," said Steve Evans of Friends of the River in Sacramento. "In a lot of the restoration programs put together by scientists, removing obstruction to salmon runs is a way of solving problems. But then the people who recreate and live nearby, plus the water interests downstream, object."

Taking out Daguerre Point Dam and the much larger Englebright Dam 11 miles upstream would open nearly 65 miles of the Yuba River. Englebright Dam, at 260 feet high, also provides hydroelectric power and recreational uses in the reservoir it forms, and is considered an unlikely candidate for removal.

Separate studies funded by state and federal governments are looking at ways to improve fish passages at both dams.

Both dams were built to capture debris from hydraulic mining that otherwise could have clogged the

Feather and Sacramento rivers.

Aikens said building more effective fish ladders at Daguerre Point should satisfy environmental concerns without threatening the water supply that irrigates 80,000 acres of land in Yuba County.

Two fish ladders at either side of the dam provide some access to upstream spawning grounds, but both camps in the conflict cite conflicting studies on how many fish make it around the dam.

Aikens said the dam actually keeps predatory fish from eating young salmon and steelhead trout before they are ready to make their way downstream.

But Evans said there is no question that more fish would make it to the spawning grounds if there were no obstruction.

"Here is a river corridor we actually could restore," he said.

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