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**NOAA and California Officials Agree to Remove Large Concrete Dam  
To Eliminate Safety Hazard and Restore Steelhead Habitat**

NOAA joined state and local officials today in a pledge to remove the San Clemente Dam to eliminate a threat to the lives and property of those along California's lower Carmel River, and help restore the watershed for federally protected steelhead trout.

The 89-year old, 106-foot high dam, which once helped bring water to residents of Monterey County, is at risk of failing during a significant earthquake or flood. Sediment has been building up behind the dam for years, making it a hazard for those living below it and almost useless as a water storage reservoir. If the dam were to fail, an estimated 2½ million cubic yards of sediment and more than 40 million gallons of water could rush downstream with potentially disastrous consequences.

The dam removal will also aid in the recovery of steelhead trout by opening up access to more than 25 square miles of spawning and rearing habitat. Steelhead in Carmel River were listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act in 1997.

"The removal of the San Clemente Dam will help restore richness to the entire ecosystem of the Carmel River while eliminating this major safety threat to the people and their property along it," said Rodney McInnis, NOAA's Fisheries Service southwest regional administrator. "The dam removal is vital to the recovery of this important steelhead trout run."

According to the agreement signed today, NOAA, the California State Coastal Conservancy, and California American Water will work along with other federal, state, and local organizations to develop a project plan for the Carmel River Reroute and San Clemente Dam Removal Project by November. The dam removal itself may take place as early as 2012.

The total cost for the project is currently estimated at about \$85 million. According to the agreement, California American Water will pay approximately \$50 million, while the California State Coastal Conservancy, with assistance from NOAA, will secure the additional \$35 million from state, federal, and private funding sources by the end of the year.

"The San Clemente Dam Removal Project presents a unique opportunity for public and private interests to work together to realize public benefits far beyond what either could achieve working alone," states Sam Schuchat, executive officer of the California State Coastal Conservancy.

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