

Letter to the Editor, San Francisco Chronicle

Date: 4/6/24

Re: Your recent coverage of the Eel River Dam Removal

I am writing as a resident of the Eel River Watershed who feels the recent article regarding the Eel River dam removal was very unbalanced.

Yes, it is true that Potter Valley must make adjustments if water is no longer diverted out of The Eel River Watershed. However, there was no description of the great damage that has been done to the Eel River, the fish, the indigenous tribes and small communities whose lives were upended and whose economy was depressed by the loss of a vibrant, healthy wild river.

Geographically, the Eel River Watershed runs north and was historically known for providing lumber, salmon, and produce. The river was the lifeblood for local tribes and provided economic opportunities for many. When the colder headwaters were diverted south, the watershed and its inhabitants lost the opportunities that flowed with it. The vineyards and farms of the south prospered while the salmon lost their spawning grounds, the tribes and small communities lost a healthy river and the economic opportunities it provided.

This pattern of sending water from Northern California to the south should be stopped. It is damaging to the overall ecology. It is damaging to the lives of northern populations that are robbed of their natural resource. It is damaging to the tribes that depended on the river, the salmon who are dying, and the recreational opportunities that could become a building block for tourism and local jobs.

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