

## **Other Voices: Development at Donner, the Yuba, and you**

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When it comes to development in the headwaters of the South Yuba, what goes on up there must come down here.

Those of us living downstream not only swim in that water – at Edwards, at Purdon, at Bridgeport – we drink it, too.

The South Yuba River starts as snowfall on one of the great iconic landscapes of the High Sierra: Donner Summit. That snow melts, runs through intermittent streams, filters through Van Norden Meadows, and tumbles down into our water supplies – and swimming holes.

But those headwaters on Donner Summit are at risk of massive resort development. Landowners proposed to carve up 3,000 acres – from Sugar Bowl, around Serene Lakes, and on both sides of the Yuba River/American River divide.

New development would wipe out the natural scenery of the area and remake the region into a series of sprawling resort subdivisions, doubling the amount of development in the area, adding miles of new roads, damming free-flowing creeks, and destroying the remarkable sense of place on the Summit.

Measured in sewage alone, new development would convert 100 million gallons of alpine source water into effluent each year. Current proposals for dealing with wastewater include spraying effluent into the Yuba watershed and/or discharging it directly into the River.

Clearly, we can do better. Sierra Watch and SYRCL (the South Yuba River Citizens League) are working together to organize a shared commitment into a winning conservation campaign. Sierra Watch is coordinating strategic meetings with local residents, second homeowners, and Summit businesses. SYRCL volunteers are out in the field, monitoring key water quality indicators in the River itself.

Our goal is ensure a responsible blueprint that puts development where it belongs, permanently protects important forest and meadow habitat, and ensures downstream water quality.

Can we really protect Yuba headwaters? Can we turn back massive resort development? Absolutely; we've done it before. SYRCL famously saved the South Yuba from destructive dams and continues to protect the river and its watershed. Sierra Watch reversed development approvals in Tahoe's Martis Valley, demonstrating how we can work together to protect the places we love.

Now we've teamed up to defend Donner Summit. You can learn more by visiting [www.syrcl.org](http://www.syrcl.org) and [www.sierrawatch.org](http://www.sierrawatch.org). Or stop by either Nevada City headquarters and pick up your own "Save Donner Summit" bumper sticker.

And, next time you're at the River, take a look upstream. Appreciate the high mountain creeks and meadows where the River starts. Then commit to securing their role as the headwaters of your favorite local swimming hole.

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