The San Clemente Dam Removal & Carmel River Reroute Project: a unique approach to dam removal. Kevan Urquhart, Senior Fisheries Biologist & TAC Member, Monterey Peninsula Water Management District, P.O. Box 85, Monterey, CA 93942-0085. 831-658-05643. kevan@mpwmd.net [www.mpwmd.net](http://www.mpwmd.net)

The largest dam removal in California was just completed on the Carmel River in Monterey County, removing one of the most unsafe dams in the State. The whole process from deeming it unsafe in 1992 to complete removal in 2015 took 23 years, and cost $83,000,000. The project was a public-private partnership between the dam owner and state and federal government resources agencies. The dam impeded adult steelhead immigration and blocked the movement of bedload sediments, thereby starving the river of spawning gravel, while contributing to channel incision and beach erosion. The dam also prevented volitional redistribution upstream of juvenile steelhead and other aquatic life for 93 years. It utilized the steepest fish ladder in western North America, and the reservoir had nearly completely filled in with sediment. We review the history of decisions and constraints that drove the dam removal process to include the first-ever rerouting of a river around an accumulated sediment field, which will be banked in place in perpetuity. The project was largely completed in November of 2015, and is experiencing its first winter storms during an El Nino year. It is hoped that this major improvement in habitat connectivity and fish passage will contribute to the recovery of the Carmel River steelhead, one of the most important sub-populations in the South Central California Coast - Distinct Population Segment, listed as ‘Threatened’ under the Federal Endangered Species Act.

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