



# SACRAMENTO RIVER



# WATERSHED PROGRAM

Working together to sustain, restore and enhance our watershed's resources while promoting our long-term social and economic vitality.



SINCE 1996

# THE SACRAMENTO RIVER WATERSHED



## SACRAMENTO RIVER WATERSHED FACTS

- ♦ The Sacramento River is the dominant source of fresh water critical to the long-term health of its watershed and the San Francisco Bay and Delta ecosystems.
- ♦ It provides nearly all of the water for the State and federal water projects.
- ♦ The major land uses in the watershed are forestry, agriculture, urban settlement, mining, and recreation.
- ♦ The watershed's urban population is projected to double over the next 50 years.
- ♦ Two million acres, about 12 percent of the watershed, are currently irrigated, producing economically significant yields of rice, fruits, nuts, alfalfa, grain, and tomatoes.
- ♦ Its rivers and streams support a multitude of important resident and anadromous fisheries.
- ♦ It also supports numerous additional beneficial uses, including local drinking and industrial water supplies, wildlife habitat, and recreation.



# OUR WATERSHED

The water bodies and lands within our watersheds support a range of resources and activities that are critical to our daily lives. A watershed must be actively protected and maintained to ensure the long-term health of its resources. When watershed health declines, water quality and wildlife habitat are degraded and farm land becomes less productive. Proper management has a beneficial impact on soil productivity, flood safety, water quality, and wildlife habitat. Effective watershed management conserves and enhances fundamental resources while providing for the needs of people and ecosystems.

The 27,000 square-mile Sacramento River watershed is the source of water for over 20 million California residents, businesses, and farms. It is bounded by the Sierra Nevada mountain range to the east, the Cascade and Klamath ranges to the north, and the Coast Range to the west. Its major tributaries include the Feather, Yuba, Pit, and American rivers. At its downstream end, the Sacramento River empties into the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta. These waters mix in the San Francisco Bay and then flow into the Pacific Ocean.

## STATE OF THE SACRAMENTO RIVER WATERSHED

We now have a better understanding of our watershed's health as a result of combining the water quality data from the groups monitoring the Sacramento River and its tributaries with the data collected by the Sacramento River Watershed Program (SRWP). Many sections of the Sacramento River and its tributary creeks and rivers have been adequately monitored, but others have not. The SRWP and others are working to fill these information gaps in an effort to make our knowledge of the watershed more complete. Currently, we know that:

- ♦ Water quality varies throughout the watershed and is dependent on several factors including land use practices, water supply, water uses, and seasonal fluctuations.
- ♦ Most monitored sites on the mainstem Sacramento River meet water quality objectives.
- ♦ Drinking water quality in rivers within the watershed remains high.
- ♦ Metals are generally not a problem except for mercury, which was mined extensively during the Gold Rush.
- ♦ Mercury levels in fish are lower than expected based on the mercury concentrations in water.
- ♦ Toxicity to aquatic organisms in urban drainage can be high.
- ♦ Limited bioassessment monitoring conducted in tributaries indicates good ecological health

Land uses can change rapidly and impact water quality in the Sacramento River watershed. Active watershed management is a key mechanism to tackle the challenging problem of reducing the negative impacts of pollutants of concern within the watershed.

# SACRAMENTO RIVER WATERSHED PROGRAM

Since 1996, the Sacramento River Watershed Program has been dedicated to enhancing the watershed through a collaborative management approach that focuses on water quality research, education, information sharing and stakeholder involvement. We believe that a healthy, thriving watershed contributes not only to the well-being of the creatures that live in it, but also to the region's economic and social vitality.

Policy direction for the SRWP comes from the stakeholders of the watershed and is implemented by a 21-member Board of Trustees. The SRWP functions through consensus-based working subcommittees whose membership is open to anyone with interest, and through annual stakeholder meetings held throughout the watershed.

## **A REGIONAL NETWORK FOR COOPERATION AND INFORMATION EXCHANGE**

The SRWP functions as a liaison among watershed constituents, local, state, federal and tribal governments, non-governmental organizations, special districts, and others who live, play, work or otherwise have interest in the health of the Sacramento River basin.

The forums provided by the SRWP ensure that the SRWP represents the diverse interests of its stakeholders, promotes the efficient use of resources, and develops educational and outreach programs for the watershed.

## **A SCIENTIFICALLY RESPECTED WATER QUALITY MONITORING PROGRAM AND BODY OF KNOWLEDGE** — The SRWP conducts water quality monitoring that:

- Complements agency and watershed group efforts
- Provides for a comprehensive look at water quality within the watershed
- Establishes a framework to identify constituents of concern within the watershed that may affect the health of the aquatic system
- Is available to others and is posted on the Internet at <http://baydelta.ca.gov>

The SRWP monitoring program has been developed to be cost effective and is well coordinated with the major monitoring efforts within the watershed. The

Monitoring Subcommittee produces an annual report that compiles available data and assesses water quality within the watershed. The water quality data are well respected by the scientific community.

## **A RESEARCH PROGRAM TO PROVIDE CRITICAL INFORMATION GAPS** — SRWP subcommittees are

investigating major environmental stresses in the watershed including mercury contamination, contaminated runoff from agriculture and urban areas, drinking water contaminants, and toxicity to aquatic organisms from unknown causes. The research activities focus on critical information gaps that, when filled, will advance scientific understanding and ultimately be used in management decisions. For more information about monitoring, research and management strategies, visit our website at [www.sacriver.org](http://www.sacriver.org). A list of the SRWP subcommittees can be found on the back panel of this brochure.



**[WWW.SACRIVER.ORG](http://WWW.SACRIVER.ORG)**

THE SACRAMENTO RIVER WATERSHED PROGRAM IS AN OPEN STAKEHOLDER FORUM

Our mission is to ensure that current and potential uses of the watershed's resources are sustained, restored, and where possible, enhanced, while promoting the long-term social and economic vitality of the region.

## A PARTNERSHIP WITH NATIONAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS AND LOCAL MEDIA

— The SRWP has established partnerships with the “River of Words” Program connecting kids to their watersheds through poetry and art and the Global Learning and Observation to Benefit the Environment (GLOBE) Program that improves student understanding of science by involving them in performing scientific measurements, analyzing data, and participating in research with collaborating scientists.



Partnerships with local media and business sponsors have built a television campaign to raise awareness of how human activities affect the Sacramento River watershed's health, and to encourage the public to take action to avoid activities that pollute or degrade waterbodies.



## SRWP ACCOMPLISHMENTS



- Successful implementation of a regional monitoring program
- Peer reviewed monitoring reports and management strategies for mercury and organophosphate pesticides
- Program website [www.sacriver.org](http://www.sacriver.org)
- Virtual resource center for all to obtain information on the activities in the watershed
- Professionally-produced television public service announcements to encourage citizens to become watershed stewards
- Quality Assurance Program Plan for SRWP monitoring activities ([www.sacriver.org](http://www.sacriver.org))
- Technical reports (including plans and results), *Waterways* newsletters
- Networking forum for those working in Northern California watersheds
- High quality monitoring data available on the California Department of Water Resources website: <http://baydelta.ca.gov>
- A watershed education program that includes education workshops, K-12 teacher training and partnerships with GLOBE and River of Words

**Photo Credits:**

**Bert Katzung**  
Sacramento River Watershed Program  
Texas A&M University Agricultural Program  
USGS Water Resources of California



## GET INVOLVED

The Sacramento River Watershed Program is an open stakeholder forum. Board of Trustees meetings and subcommittee meetings are held on a regular basis. Everyone is encouraged to participate. Schedules and other information are available at [www.sacriver.org](http://www.sacriver.org)

**REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION:**

(888) 815-3330 or [info@sacriver.org](mailto:info@sacriver.org)

**SRWP SUBCOMMITTEES**

- Agricultural Issues Workgroup
- Biological & Habitat Subcommittee
- Delta Tributaries Mercury Council
- Grants Subcommittee
- Monitoring Subcommittee
- Public Outreach and Education Subcommittee
- Toxics Subcommittee

Each individual plays a role in watershed vitality. Below are a few activities that you can do to make a difference in the health of your watershed:

- Attend a SRWP meeting
- Get involved with your local watershed group
- Conserve water
- Properly dispose of household chemicals and cleaners; use the least toxic products
- Use pesticides wisely, according to the label, and only when necessary
- Clean-up pet waste and dispose of it in the garbage
- Recycle used motor oil
- Support cleanup efforts and spread the word!