

**East Merced RCD**  
Middle San Joaquin-Lower Merced-  
Lower Stanislaus Watershed



**Amount Funded:** \$286,957

**Additional Funding Obtained to Date:** \$2,400,000

**Background**

The lower Merced River and its adjacent floodplains have been heavily altered through channel narrowing, diking, placement of revetments (rip rap), removal of riparian vegetation and gravel mining. The lower Merced is almost entirely privately owned and its predominant land use is agricultural. Issues of concern in the watershed include: urbanization, water quality, habitat degradation, invasive species, and pesticide, herbicide and fertilizer run-off.

**Benefits to the Watershed**

- ◆ Coordinated a workshop for landowners on the Irrigated Lands Conditional Waiver Program. The coordinator provided information on Best Management Practices and distributed water quality test kits. Approximately 25 people attended the training.
- ◆ Coordinator has been proactive about educating state and local officials to the condition and needs of the watershed. Attended the CARCD Day in the Capital event and apprised legislators of the activities of the Merced River Stakeholders.
- ◆ Underwent training from Sustainable Conservation for a coordinated permitting program and began determining appropriate practices for the watershed.
- ◆ Provided training to three school staff to support a K-12 education element utilizing Adopt a Watershed curriculum.
- ◆ Facilitated the Merced River Stakeholders meetings. The MRS has adopted an information exchange focus versus a project focus in the past year.



*Lia McLaughlin (far right) with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service providing information to the public on non-native invasive species at the Merced River Fair.*

**Benefits to CALFED Program**

**Watershed Management** – Planned and conducted the first ever Merced River Summit to bring together staff representing seven agencies and groups (Merced Irrigation District, Upper Merced River Watershed Council, Merced River Stakeholders, East Merced RCD, Mariposa County RCD, Merced Education Research Initiative, and UC Merced) that are conducting work on the river. This group will continue collaborative efforts through the Merced River Alliance. Worked toward sustainability of watershed efforts by securing additional funding for project, permitting and outreach efforts.

# El Dorado Irrigation District

## South Fork American Watershed



**Amount Funded:** \$214,157

**Additional Funding Obtained to Date:** \$27,500

### Background

The South Fork American River watershed is located in one of the fastest growing regions of the Sierra Nevada. The population growth in the Sierra is expected to grow between 100-500% in Sierra counties over the next ten years. This growth will increase tourism, recreation and residential development, exerting extensive impacts on water demand, water quality and natural habitat. Aging water infrastructure, energy production, old mining operations and past logging practices continue to challenge the preservation and restoration of our natural resources. In addition, climate change is predicted to shrink the Sierra snow pack by 36% in the next 50-100 years. Changes in temperature could exacerbate drought, flooding and wildfires. For these reasons, it is imperative that a comprehensive and coordinated watershed approach be used to protect our natural resources from current and upcoming issues.

### Benefits to the Watershed

- ◆ Created a Regional Watershed Coordination Team to identify issues, facilitate funding and coordinate activities within the Cosumnes River watershed, North Fork, Middle Fork and South Fork of the American River Watershed.
- ◆ Established the American River Watershed Portal, a web based online library of information about the American River Watershed: <http://www.americanriverwatershed.net>. This portal will centralize and simplify the process of accessing watershed information and keeping track of activities.
- ◆ Educated the public, stakeholders and agency staff on the connectivity between upper and lower American River issues through a presentation at the American River Watershed Conference April 21-23 at Sacramento State University.
- ◆ Provided stakeholders and the public with information regarding the controversial Weber Creek restoration project. Enhanced communication and facilitated cooperation with downstream landowners.
- ◆ Collaborating with El Dorado County Water Agency and stakeholders throughout the South Fork Watershed to develop a drought plan with priority actions and alternatives for additional water supply.
- ◆ Established a regional water management group of water agencies, power utilities and conservation groups in the Cosumnes, American, Bear and Yuba (CABY) river watershed's to submit a grant application for the Proposition 50 Integrated Regional Water Management Program.



*American River Watershed Conference.*

- ◆ Working with the Regional Watershed Authority, an entity comprised primarily of water purveyors in the Sacramento area, to coordinate their Integrated Regional Water Management Plan with the Upper American Watershed. Their implementation package includes a watershed management project to address septic leakage issues in the upper South Fork of the American River Watershed.
- ◆ Drafting a proposal with the Sacramento River Watershed Program to include interactive GIS mapping for the Sacramento Watershed, and specifically the American River Basin through the Watershed Portal.

**Benefits to CALFED Program**

**Watershed Management** – Developed a database consisting of government agencies, watershed groups, businesses, environmentalists, and landowners. The database is used to facilitate communication and to provide concerned citizens with critical information. Submitted an Integrated Regional Water Management Plan (IRWMP) for the Cosumnes, American River, Bear, and Yuba River upper watersheds. This plan will improve regional watershed management, increase coordination between water agencies, water districts, watershed groups, and non-profits, and ensure that limited resources are directed to priority projects within the community. Established a Regional Watershed Coordination Team to address regional issues. The group meets monthly to ensure collaboration, cooperation, and to facilitate communication among its members. Finalized the American River Watershed Portal for the benefit of all users interested in the activities, data, and projects within the watershed. This will increase stakeholder participation and educate local residents about the organization and their watershed.

**Water Use Efficiency** – Developed a recognition program to reward homebuilders and developers that have adopted water efficient methods in design, construction, and landscape. Included the strategy to “Maximize the use of recycled water to offset potable and non-potable water needs” and “Optimize water conservation to offset potable and non-potable water needs” in the Water Conservation Field Service Program application.

**Ecosystem Restoration** – Included environment and habitat protection and eight strategies in the IRWMP application for protecting and enhancing environmental resources. This will ensure that these issues are addressed when implementing projects locally.

**Drinking Water Quality** – Drafting a proposal for a GIS interactive mapping system for the American River Basin to establish baseline water quality data through a GIS interactive mapping model. This project would identify gaps in water quality data and/or identify potential non-point source contamination. Worked with the Regional Watershed Authority to include a watershed project to address septic leakage issues in the upper South Fork of the American River watershed.



*EID drought workshop.*

**Water Storage/Conveyance** – EID hosted the third of four initial drought preparedness workshops on April 15 2005. More than 25 people from the community, in addition to EID and Water Agency staff, attended the session. Included were members of the Drought Advisory Committee, formed to assist EID and the Water Agency in developing a strategic plan to prepare for and address the effects of drought.

## **Fall River RCD Lower Pit Watershed**



**Amount Funded:** \$195,518

**Additional Funding Obtained to Date:**

### **Background**

The Lower Pit River Watershed spreads across northeastern California. Water drains into Shasta Lake and ultimately into the Sacramento River. The watershed's diverse landscape offers opportunities and challenges in aquatic, forest, and rangeland ecosystems. Invasive species and non-point source pollution impact watershed ecosystems and the resources they support. Noxious and aquatic weeds, including Eurasian watermilfoil, perennial pepperweed, and purple loosestrife obstruct water flow to hydropower facilities, reduce agricultural production, and alter ecosystem function of fish, plants, and wildlife. Tributaries to the Pit River are also impaired by non-point source pollution impacts. The Fall River is listed as an "impaired water body."

### **Benefits to the Watershed**

- ◆ Began a Fall River monitoring program. Responsible for developing the draft monitoring plan, obtaining funding for the program, and securing the equipment necessary to conduct monitoring activities along the river.
- ◆ Completed the draft Perennial Pepperweed Management and Monitoring Plan, which was submitted to the Technical Advisory Committee for review.
- ◆ Wrote articles for the RCD newsletter that was distributed throughout the community. The articles discussed critical issues, encouraged community involvement, and educated local residents on agricultural and environmental topics.
- ◆ Compiled information for watershed, noxious, and aquatic weed protocols. Will begin collecting information for planning and proposal development. A bibliography will be published and integrated with the local Geographic Information System (GIS) database.
- ◆ Mapped Purple Loosestrife in the Fall River sub-watershed. Provides basic information that will be incorporated into the RCD Purple Loosestrife Management Plan. Once implemented, the plan will be instrumental in controlling this noxious weed within the watershed.
- ◆ Conducted water monitoring on private property. Landowners volunteered to provide access to assist in improving water quality. Landowner involvement has continued to grow throughout the area.
- ◆ Worked with the Pit River Watershed Alliance, Shasta Weed Management Area, Modoc County Weed Management Group, and other partners on the Fall River RCD's Watershed Program to minimize duplication of efforts and ensure a comprehensive approach in dealing with local issues.

### **Benefits to CALFED Program**

**Ecosystem Restoration** – Completed several elements of the Watershed Management Program including a draft management plan that focused on perennial pepperweed, a noxious weed that has invaded riparian

habitats and degraded ecological diversity of the McArthur swamp. A proposal was also completed describing the control work that will be done on the swamp. The project was approved for funding and work will commence this year. The watershed coordinator has been working diligently with local landowners. As a result, several landowners have allowed access to their property to perform water quality monitoring work and to map noxious weeds. During the past year, numerous articles have been written and distributed. This provides residents with information on upcoming events, ongoing projects, and actions they can take to prevent fires and reduce the spread of noxious weeds.

**Ecosystem Restoration** – Planning has been completed on several plans to eliminate noxious weed infestations throughout the watershed. During the later part of 2005, on-the-ground activities will begin to reduce noxious weed satellite populations.

**Drinking Water Quality** – Water quality monitoring has begun along the Fall River. The information collected will be used to improve water quality in the river.

# Friends of Deer Creek

## Upper Yuba Watershed



**Amount Funded:** \$196,385

**Additional Funding Obtained to Date:** \$197,610

### Background

Deer Creek is a major tributary within the Upper Yuba Watershed and provides water to the Bay-Delta system. Rapid population growth is causing dramatic changes to the environment and exerting tremendous pressure on the region's natural resources. Past mining practices, increased pesticide and herbicide runoff, and erosion sedimentation from residential development have contributed to the creek's degradation. The area's high fuel loads and rural setting makes it very susceptible to fires. Due to mercury contamination from decades of gold mining, the State posted a fish consumption advisory for mercury. Sedimentation of sand, silt, clay, and fine particulate matter make it difficult for fish to spawn and for people to enjoy the water for recreation.

### Benefits to the Watershed

- ◆ Researched and selected two restoration sites: An abandoned road crossing on Squirrel Creek, a major tributary to Deer Creek; and Little Deer Creek, a quarter mile section that flows through Pioneer Park in Nevada City.
- ◆ Developed and distributed a brochure informing stakeholders and property owners about our Squirrel Creek Restoration Project and the need for a healthy watershed. The brochure also includes information on the harmful effects of sedimentation and how we are creating a riparian vegetation "buffer" zone to prevent erosion and provide shade to cool the water.
- ◆ Researched, developed, and prepared a draft "Good Roads, Clear Creek" program. Assistance was provided by the Mattole Restoration Council, SWRCB representatives, USFS, and county personnel.
- ◆ Developed a mercury working group knowledgeable on mercury contamination representing individuals from CRWQCB, USGS, Forest Service, City of Nevada City, NID, County sanitation officials, Universities of Reno and Davis, and stakeholders from the Deer Creek Watershed.
- ◆ Designed a collection and laboratory protocol for measuring algae dry mass, which will be used along with benthic macroinvertebrate studies, as a measure of the health of the watershed.
- ◆ Began a GIS aerial mapping program of the watershed that will identify land owners and areas of disturbance within riparian zones.
- ◆ Developed a restoration plan for the Deer Creek watershed based on the Deer Creek Coordinated Resource Management Plan (CRMP).



*Volunteer identifying macroinvertebrate samples.*

- ◆ Coordinated experts to speak at future workshops on areas of erosion and roads that contribute to sediment deposition in the creek. The information will be used to assist the city of Nevada City in developing grading ordinances to reduce sediment entering waterways.
- ◆ Researched alternative methods of tertiary treatment of foothill wastewater treatment plants, particularly wetlands applications. A report was generated discussing the options and potential impacts.
- ◆ Began developing a plan with Nevada City to implement effective tertiary treatment at the Nevada City Wastewater Treatment Plant. Three alternative treatments are being discussed for implementation. They are ultraviolet disinfection, land application of biosolids, and a constructed treatment wetland.
- ◆ Designed a Mercury Assessment and Remediation Survey for the Deer Creek Watershed. This survey will help to quantify mercury sources in order to conduct effective, scientifically-sound remediation with measurable benefits, and target remediation resources where they will have the greatest impact.

**Benefits to CALFED Program**

**Water Management** – Numerous outreach activities were conducted over the past year to educate stakeholders and to stimulate local involvement. A meeting held near the end of 2004 to discuss mercury issues was attended by more than 35 stakeholders. Comments were collected and used by the Mercury Working Group in their decision making process. Landowners were notified and offered an opportunity to participate in the Sierra Nevada Mercury Working Group, Native Plant Revegetation project, and a Roads and Sediment workshop. The Mattole Restoration Council was contacted to find out about their “Good Roads, Clear Creeks” program, which has been highly successful in reducing sedimentation. Consequently, the coordinator and other staff members began developing a similar program specifically designed for the Deer Creek Watershed. FoDC staff conducted an inventory of roads and identified parcels and landowners who may benefit from the “Good Roads, Clear Creeks” program. We began working with the Tahoe National Forest and Nevada County Department of Transportation to build the “Road’s” inventory database. The Watershed Coordinator participated in writing grants to secure long-term support for the watershed and provide funding for projects within the watershed.



*Collecting macroinvertebrate samples from Deer Creek.*

**Water Use Efficiency** – The Watershed Coordinator worked with the Nevada Irrigation District and local citizens to develop a grant that will increase water conservation and recycling in the Deer Creek Watershed.

**Ecosystem Restoration** – Two restoration sites were chosen: An abandoned road crossing on Squirrel Creek, a major tributary to Deer Creek; and Little Deer Creek, a quarter mile section that flows through Pioneer Park in Nevada City. A brochure informing stakeholders and property owners about our Squirrel

Creek restoration was designed and distributed. The Watershed Coordinator involved community members and the Bitney Springs High School Community Service class in our creek restoration projects.

**Science** – FoDC created a laboratory space for training volunteers to identify macroinvertebrates and chemically assay nutrients (nitrates, phosphates, ammonia, etc.), bacteria (total coliform & e-coli), total suspended solids, and algae. The lab has space for up to ten students. A Mercury Advisory Group was developed to assist in a synoptic survey of the Deer Creek Watershed. We completed an investigation of known tertiary treatment of wastewaters being conducted in other watersheds. We designed a collection and laboratory protocol for measuring algae dry mass, which will be used along with benthic macro invertebrate studies, as a measure of the health of the watershed. We began an Algae Biomass Study and conducted a Diurnal pH Study to assess temporal variations. We conducted a Turbidity Meter Calibration Study to refine turbidity monitoring to use as a surrogate for suspended sediment in monitoring. FoDC continues to monitor water quality to better support ecosystem health. Results from water quality data, sets parameters for future restoration and remedial efforts; and applications for new funding.

# Georgetown Divide RCD

## South Fork American



**Amount Funded:** \$123,386

**Additional Funding Obtained to Date:** \$127,100

### Background

The watershed is located within the fastest growing region of the Sierra Nevada. Water quality is affected by many factors including timber and mining operations, agricultural runoff, industrial facilities, and recreational use. The threat of catastrophic fires is of paramount concern. Urban pockets are scattered throughout the area, often surrounded by thick vegetation. Fuel loads are growing rapidly. Structures, habitat, animals, and people are threatened. Although numerous reservoirs provide water for local use, hydroelectric production, and agricultural purposes, it is insufficient to meet everyone's needs. Competing demands create conflicts, which can only be resolved through collaboration and cooperation.

### Benefits to the Watershed

- ◆ Worked with Watershed Coordinators from the South, North, and Middle Forks of the American River to establish the Regional Watershed Coordination Team (RWCT). Provides an ideal forum to address issues on a regional basis, share information, and cooperate on grant applications.
- ◆ Assisted in creating and promoting the American River Watershed Portal and online database. Stakeholders can find out about upcoming events and ongoing projects, post data, and share information and resources.
- ◆ Obtained grant money from Sierra Nevada Alliance to purchase equipment for monitoring activities. Volunteers collect data throughout the area, which is used to identify potential problems and the types of projects that would be most beneficial to the community.
- ◆ Completed another year of the Watershed Education Summit (WES). WES invites a select group of students from area high schools to join agency representatives and professionals in the upper watershed for a three-day intensive data collection effort utilizing water quality, habitat data, and channel survey techniques. Almost 50 students participated and the event in an excellent education and outreach opportunity within the community.
- ◆ Supported the RCD, SFARWG, and the Agricultural Watershed Group in applying for a grant that will provide agricultural communities with the knowledge, understanding, and tools necessary to make resource-based decisions.



*Traverse Creek Water Quality Training Day.*

- ◆ Organized several educational outreach events including a workshop on Mountain Lion Awareness, a Water Quality Stream walk, and a class on Photo Point monitoring. Each event consisted of more than 40 participants and provided attendees with useful information.
- ◆ Established a Volunteer Citizen Monitoring Group in Traverse Creek Watershed. Almost 40 volunteers were given training, which consisted of three days of orientation to monitoring, a day in the field using equipment, and a day learning the proper way to walk a stream and document information using photos. The volunteers are already out in the watershed, gathering data. This is critical since Traverse Creek was identified in the SFAR Stewardship Strategy as an area of concern because of water quality, road density, and sedimentation parameters.
- ◆ Established a Volunteer Citizen Monitoring Group in Hangtown Creek Watershed. A teacher and his group of high school students are collecting data and monitoring the creek.

### **Benefits to CALFED Program**

**Watershed Management** – Facilitated monthly South Fork American River Watershed Group (SFARWG) meetings. Prepares agendas, records minutes, and conducts outreach activities to boost participation. The meetings provide local residents an opportunity to discuss critical issues and offer their input. Actively working with other groups to ensure a coordinated, collaborative approach to critical issues in the community. Worked with the Fire Safe Council to create a post fire rehabilitation resource document that the community can use to avert future disasters and refer to in the event of a fire. Actively collaborating on the Integrated Regional Water Management Plan with the other watershed coordinators to ensure a regional approach.

**Ecosystem Restoration** – Organized a native grass planting at Traverse Creek. The RCD developed a Xeriscape garden at the local library. It was a success and has stimulated tremendous interest within the community. Consequently, the watershed coordinator is expanding the project and is creating another Xeriscape garden with high school students at the El Dorado County Fairgrounds. This site will have greater exposure and provide an opportunity to educate more residents about the benefits of local plants and effective methods of conserving water. Worked with partners to secure funding for fuels management projects in the upper watershed. Planned and conducted a work day on Traverse Creek where volunteers removed non-native plants, planted natives, and also performed trail maintenance.

**Drinking Water Quality** – Collecting water quality data from monitoring activities along Hangtown Creek and Traverse Creek which will be used to determine the best type of projects to implement so that water quality will be improved.

**Science** – Assisting UC Davis researcher to begin looking at Periphyton as a biological indicator in the American River. Currently pursuing funding and developing a plan.

## Glenn County RCD Upper Stony/Sacramento- Lower Thomes Watersheds



**Amount Funded:** \$78,292

**Additional Funding Obtained to Date:**

### **Background**

The Stony Creek Watershed encompasses approximately 700 square miles of public and private land in Glenn, Colusa and Tehama Counties, and is the second largest Sacramento River tributary on the west side of the Sacramento River. *Arundo donax* and *Tamarix* have colonized much of the lower reach of the creek, and three dams built in the upper watershed have disrupted channel morphology. Natural gravel flow and recruitment has been blocked causing greater channel scouring and bank erosion. Access of anadromous salmonids to the upper reaches of the creek has also been blocked. In addition, water quality sampling by DWR has detected elevated levels of mercury in the sediment.

The watershed coordinator position is currently being funded through the CBDA Costa-Machado Water Act of 2000. The DOC grant will be used to sustain the position from June 2006 through June 2007.

### **Benefits to the Watershed**

- ◆ Successfully negotiated with a local landowner the use of 100 acres of his property for an eradication and revegetation demonstration site.
- ◆ Coordinated and facilitated four Landowner Advisory Committees with more than 40 attendees to discuss landowner issues and concerns within the watershed.
- ◆ Coordinator acted as a mentor for Student and Landowner Education in the county's Watershed Stewardship Program (SLEWS). Coordinator also participated in a Willows School District program, instructing teachers on environmental education.
- ◆ Conducted five workshops with a local high school on habitat restoration field techniques.
- ◆ Began drafting a landowner agreement for projects to be implemented in the watershed.

### **Benefits to CALFED Program**

**Watershed Management** – The coordinator made ten informational presentations to local groups, government agencies, and schools on Stony Creek, watershed programs and native vegetation issues. The coordinator also met with countless individuals to establish contacts and build trust in the community. Compiled relevant watershed literature such as past assessments and studies and wrote an annotated bibliography summarizing basic information and data gaps. Submitted four newspaper articles promoting restoration projects in the watershed. Also wrote and circulated a quarterly newsletter to all landowners in the watershed.

# Los Angeles & San Gabriel Rivers Watershed Council

Los Angeles / San Gabriel Watersheds



**Amount Funded:** \$249,854

**Additional Funding Obtained to Date:** \$128,535

## Background

The watersheds of the Los Angeles and San Gabriel Rivers cover 1,513 square miles, from the San Gabriel Mountains in the north to the Pacific Ocean at Long Beach. The two have been prehistorically linked as a single-braided channel system, and they share two major aquifers (Central Basin and Main San Gabriel Basin). The Los Angeles and San Gabriel watersheds are among the most heavily impacted by urbanization in Southern California. Imported water needs range between 55% and 65%. Water conservation is a significant challenge with the focus on reducing outdoor water consumption.

## Benefits to the Watershed

- ◆ Nearly completed a comprehensive native plant profiler, image library and information database that will be utilized by restoration and landscape specialists to determine appropriate plant materials for watershed projects. The database includes information on more than 250 taxa.
- ◆ Raised approximately \$128,000 for invasive weed mapping needs in the watershed.
- ◆ Planning continues on a series of annual sustainable landscape workshops that are targeted for landscape and restoration design professionals.
- ◆ Submitted a full proposal to NFWF for a large scale native seed collection, banking and distribution program. The proposal was developed in collaboration with Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden.



*Frank Simpson, Drew Ready (WC) and Nancy Steele are members of the Landscape Ethic Committee.*

## Benefits to CALFED Program

**Watershed Management** – The coordinator is a member of several active committees including the Watershed Council’s Landscape Ethic Committee, the California Department of Food and Agriculture’s Weed Management Area Committee, and the California Native Plant Society Horticulture Subcommittee. Membership on these committees has allowed the coordinator to facilitate a number of interagency discussions on collaborative projects.

**Ecosystem Restoration** – Prepared a PowerPoint presentation on sustainable landscape practices that discusses grass cycling, composting, mulching, hydrozoning, micro emitters and evapotranspiration - based irrigation. Gave presentation to the “Year Around Garden Club” at Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden.

# Mariposa RCD

## Upper Merced Watershed



**Amount Funded:** \$155,654

**Additional Funding Obtained to Date:** \$476,405

### Background

The Upper Merced River Watershed is generally considered to be in good condition; however, there are no systematic studies supporting the watershed's status. The economic vitality of local communities is uniquely dependent on the watershed's good health; recreation and tourism to Yosemite National Park are the basis of the county's economy. Downstream users of the river are also dependant on its water quality. Collection of baseline data is needed to help formulate future land use decisions and actual conditions in the watershed.

### Benefits to the Watershed

- ◆ Implementing an Action Plan developed in cooperation with the BLM. The Action Plan includes monitoring impacts on the riparian zone of three popular recreation sites with the goal of reducing litter, erosion, trail braiding, and inappropriate toileting.
- ◆ Volunteers restored a 2.5 mile section of the South Fork Trail between Hites Cove and the Savage-Lundy Trail junction.
- ◆ Completed the second year of yellow starthistle eradication along five miles of campground access roads.
- ◆ Conducted four river cleanup projects during the year. Activities included cleanups of swimming holes, removal of graffiti from rocks along the Merced River, and quarterly litter patrols.
- ◆ Coordinated and held a weed warrior day in the North Fork drainage.



*South Fork Trail of the Upper Merced River during wildflower season.*

### Benefits to CALFED Program

**Watershed Management** – Set up a new office for the Upper Merced River Watershed where volunteers, agency staff, the executive committee, and the watershed coordinators can work, meet and share resources. Identified and obtained existing agency plans for the Upper Merced River Watershed for reference by stakeholders. Obtained a grant from the State Water Resources Control Board to develop an alliance between the Upper Merced River Watershed Council and the Lower Merced Stakeholders. Attended scoping meetings and public hearings, and provided comments on proposed revisions to the BLM's Sierra Planning Area Management Framework and to the National Park Service's Merced River Plan.

**Ecosystem Quality** – Helped identify and train docents for the Hites Cove Trail during wildflower season on four weekend mornings. Docents provided information on the trail, safety precautions, wildflower identification, and watershed stewardship.

**Drinking Water Quality** – Participated in an Outfitter Workshop where the coordinators presented information on the watershed to rafting companies and discussed how to reduce impacts, especially on water quality and the spread of invasive species, at launch and recovery locations and campsites.

Teams of citizen monitors were trained and have assessed water quality at 11 sites along the Merced River. Data will be used to assess the health of the watershed.

# Mojave Desert/Mountain Resource Conservation & Development Council

Upper Kern / South Fork Kern Watersheds



**Amount Funded:** \$216,236

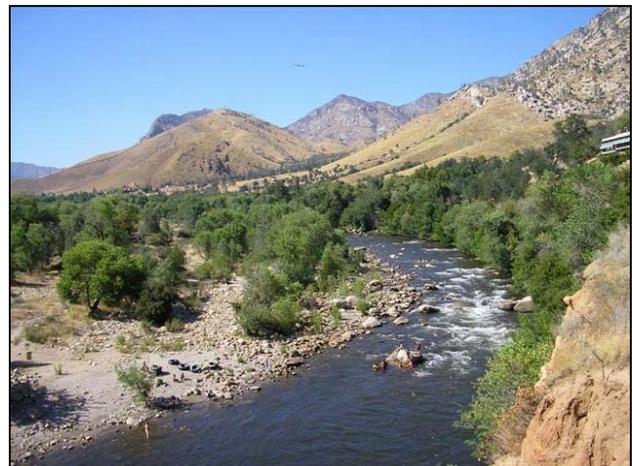
**Additional Funding Obtained:** \$1,575

## **Background**

The area provides tremendous recreational opportunities for millions of Californians and others. Visitors kayak, boat, fish, hike, ride motorcycles, or simply relax. As the population increases so do the challenges. Trash is thrown into the rivers and along riverbanks while unwary visitors spread non-native and noxious weeds. Over the past several years, major fires have burned hundreds of thousands of acres contributing to sedimentation, erosion, and the destruction of habitat. Not only are the spawning areas for the Golden Trout threatened, but also so is the largest cottonwood-willow riparian habitat in the Western United States. This provides habitat to many important animal and plant species. The demand for water downstream is immense and can only be resolved if the diverse communities cooperate and work together to resolve local issues.

## **Benefits to the Watershed**

- ◆ Assisted in obtaining the necessary permit and crew to remove debris and obstructions in the South Fork of the Kern River. This will improve water quality and allow water to flow as intended.
- ◆ Presented information to numerous groups including the Pacific Forest and Watershed Lands Stewardship Council.
- ◆ Worked with two local schools and the Kern Valley Cemetery to prepare applications for arsenic mitigation grants.
- ◆ Participated in conducting water quality testing of irrigation runoff at the Kern River Golf Course.
- ◆ Supported efforts to establish a program for inner city and disadvantaged youth to experience a wilderness experience.
- ◆ Gave PowerPoint presentation regarding MCL of arsenic compliance issues at the Kern River Valley Chamber of Commerce meeting.
- ◆ Researched and presented 22 sustainable development principles to the Kern County task force drafting the Kern River Valley Specific Plan. The Plan will specify design guidelines, development, conservation issues and economic development considerations for the next 20 years.
- ◆ Provided input to the Task Force implementing the Upper Kern Basin Fishery Resources Management Plan.



*North Fork of the Kern River.*

## **Benefits to CALFED Program**

**Water Management** – Attended numerous meetings including the Kern River Valley Joint Tourism meeting where the watershed coordinator was able to interact with stakeholders and provide residents with information about the goals and objectives of CALFED and how the Kern River Valley is a partner in that effort. Participation in numerous outreach events including the Turkey Vulture Festival and the Kern River Preserve also provided an ideal opportunity to inform local residents about the CALFED program and to recruit volunteers. Set up a display at the Whiskey Flat Days. Materials were distributed to stakeholders. Developed a partnership with the Kernville Union School District to develop educational materials and student participation in watershed activities. A local biologist agreed to instruct a class on monitoring water quality in streams. This provides an opportunity to recruit and train additional volunteers to monitor local creeks and streams. Provided the Fire Safe Council with information on re-vegetation of areas that were mechanically cleared for fire protection. Partnered with several local groups to plan a bike path around Lake Isabella for recreational use by local residents and visitors to the area. Worked with other partners to collect water quality data at the local golf course. Water use efficiency data will be collected and used to determine the amount of water now used on the golf course. Comparing this data to data gathered after best management practices are put into effect will show any reduced usage in water from the river. Progress on identifying willing landowners to participate in the installation of new water control structures, which will enhance stream flow and improve irrigation diversions continues. Old structures have been evaluated and new design specifications are being developed. This will not only benefit both the landowners and endangered species in the area, but the amount of water available to Central Valley farms downstream of the project.



*South Fork of the Kern River.*

Worked with other partners to collect water quality data at the local golf course. Water use efficiency data will be collected and used to determine the amount of water now used on the golf course. Comparing this data to data gathered after best management practices are put into effect will show any reduced usage in water from the river. Progress on identifying willing landowners to participate in the installation of new water control structures, which will enhance stream flow and improve irrigation diversions continues. Old structures have been evaluated and new design specifications are being developed. This will not only benefit both the landowners and endangered species in the area, but the amount of water available to Central Valley farms downstream of the project.

**Ecosystem Restoration.** – Assisted in securing a permit and the crew to remove debris and obstructions in the South Fork of the Kern River. The blockage reduces water flows, which poses numerous problems. Worked with partners to submit a grant proposal for control of invasive Purple Loosestrife along the South Fork of the Kern River. Participated in two task forces for implementation of the Upper Kern Basin Fishery Resources Management Plan. Continued to reach out to local landowners. Visited and inspected several existing irrigation diversions. All these outreach activities help us to preserve and improve the habitat of the endangered Southwest Willow Fly Catcher which resides in the South Fork of Kern River and the Golden Trout habitat of the upper Kern River watershed.

**Drinking Water Quality** – Provided assistance to several organizations that manage water systems to ensure that water quality standards and certifications are met. New Federal regulations pertaining to reduction in levels of arsenic in drinking water take effect January 2006. Currently several workshops are being planned to introduce the issues of managing arsenic levels for small water users. Industry representatives will demonstrate new ideas, equipment and methodologies for reducing arsenic levels. We will work with California Rural Water Association and help with grant applications for small water users. Effective management and cooperation within the community will ensure the diversity of water providers within the area. Currently, public water systems draw on multiple aquifers for drinking water, which reduces the potential of overuse of any one aquifer and reduces future dependence on surface water.