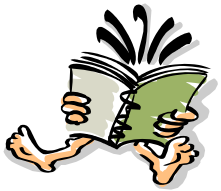
March 2003

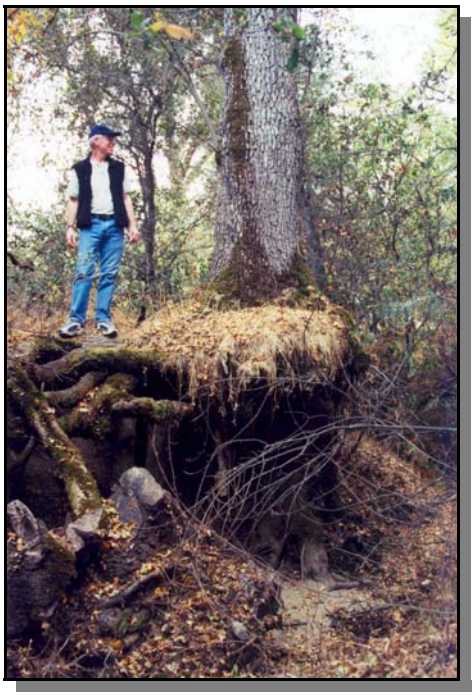
Cosumnes River Task Force

http://www.cosumnesriver.org

Cosumnes River Resources Inventory and Assessment Phase II



Phase II of the Cosumnes River Resources Inventory and Assessment is now well underway. Northwest Hydraulics Inc. has been collecting data to be used in reconstructing the history of the Cosumnes River from Highway 16 to the confluence of the Mokelumne River. Some of the **preliminary** observations include:



Ken Rood with Northwest Hydraulics Consultants, Inc. on top of unstable bank in Moco Canyon (photographer: Jeff Peters, Jones & Stokes).

- The lower Cosumnes River has been increasingly confined by land use changes over time. Flows are concentrated in the main channel by levees, bridges, and other encroachments. There has also been a loss of sloughs and distributary channels due to land reclamation, mainly in lower half of project area.

- Significant channel incision, 7 to 16 feet, has occurred along on the lower Cosumnes River since 1907. Survey data shows that the majority of channel incision occurred between 1957 and 1972 and channel incision is now either proceeding at a very slow rate or has stopped entirely.

- Historical planform changes have been greater in the lower half of the project area. Several distributary channels, small lakes and marshes were reclaimed for farmland downstream of Highway 99 between 1907 and 1953. Small sloughs, historically abundant between the Cosumnes River and Deer Creek from Wilton Road to Highway 99, have all but disappeared. However, the general alignment of the Cosumnes River from Highway 16 to Wilton Road has remained relatively constant for the last 100 years, aside from some areas of bank erosion and minor channel shifting.

- There are multiple causes of historic changes in river geomorphology. Key historic changes that have affected channel morphology include land reclamation, levees, bridges, dam construction, changes in basin land use, groundwater usage, and hydraulic mining. It is important to realize that channel adjustment on the lower Cosumnes River is a response to both local changes (e.g. levees and bridges) and basin-scale changes that affect hydrology and sediment yield.

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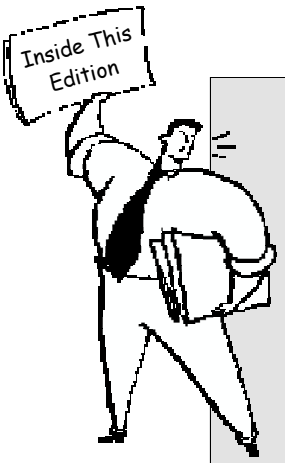

Sacramento County; Sloughhouse, Amador, El Dorado, Florin, and Lower Cosumnes Resource Conservation Districts; Reclamation District 800, The Nature Conservancy, Sacramento-El Dorado-Amador Cattlemen's Association, Sacramento County Farm Bureau, and USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

Groundwater Management Plan

In our Fall 2002 newsletter, we introduced you to the three water districts: Omochumne-Hartnell, Galt and Clay that comprise the Southeast Sacramento County Agricultural Water Authority (Water Authority). Well, they've been busy. Together they have created a preliminary Groundwater Management Plan (GMP) and applied for grant funding to develop an even more comprehensive plan and possibly implement some of the projects identified in the GMP.

The Authority developed a preliminary GMP to ensure that groundwater resources are sustained and protected. The Groundwater Management Plan (GMP) reflects the following goals:

- Establish a contract for the acquisition of surface water
- Maintain local control of groundwater management
- Preserve agricultural activities in the area
- Maintain local control of water distribution, advocacy, and planning
- Maintain each District's independence in representing their respective voters and water users

In moving toward these goals the Water Authority has submitted a grant to the Department of Water Resources - Office of Planning and Local Assistance under the Local Groundwater Management Assistance Act of 2000. If funded, the Water Authority will work collaboratively with the state, federal and local agencies and stakeholders on mutually beneficial projects. The Water Authority's focus will be on obtaining information and implementing projects to determine groundwater levels and groundwater volume in storage, groundwater quality, surface water contributions to groundwater and conjunctive use where surface water is made available to groundwater users. Additionally, the Water Authority will educate the public regarding water conservation; identifying, protecting, and enhancing groundwater recharge areas; and well abandonment and destruction. Applicants will be notified of funding in May.

Environmental Quality Incentives Program

Are you a farmer and rancher who is facing serious threats of soil erosion, water quality, or has other natural resources concerns? Through the 2002 Farm Bill program, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) may be able to help. The NRCS offers the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), a voluntary program of technical and financial incentives addressing natural resources concerns by helping to implement structural and management conservation practices on eligible agricultural lands.

Goals of the Program:

- To improve water quality by eliminating discharges from dairies, livestock operations and by reducing stream bank erosion as well.
- Improve irrigation water management and systems to reduce water use and return flows.
- Improve fish and wildlife habitat.

Application Process:

- Applications are available to all agricultural producers. Check with your local USDA Service center for periodic ranking dates.
- Applications will be evaluated using a state and locally developed procedure to optimize environmental benefits.
- No individual or entity may receive EQIP payments in any crop year in which their average adjusted gross income for the preceding 3 years exceeds $2.5 million, unless 75% of the income is derived from farming, ranching, or forestry interests.
- Landowner or tenant must have control of the property for the life of the contract, 2 to 10 years.
- A Conservation plan must be developed. EQIP may pay up to 75% of the costs of certain conservation practices. Total cost-share and incentive payments are limited to $450,000 per individual or entity over the 5-year period of the 2002 Farm Bill.
- Potential EQIP participants must submit the necessary forms, a list of proposed practices, cost estimates and designs for the proposed project to their local USDA Service Center.

For more information on this or other conservation programs, contact NRCS at (916) 714-1104 ext. 3.

Freeport Regional Water Project

In 2002, the Sacramento County Water Agency (SCWA) and the East Bay Municipal Utility District (EBMUD) formed the Freeport Regional Water Authority (FRWA), a joint powers authority. To improve service to their customers, the FRWA recently proposed the Freeport Regional Water Project (Water Project).

The proposed Water Project would improve reliability of the SCWA and EBMUD water delivery systems. The Water Project would be cost effective and have a minimum environmental impact.

New surface water facilities would provide for delivery of water to SCWA Zone 41 service area customers. Additionally, EBMUD customers would gain an alternative source of water in case of catastrophic events or scheduled maintenance at Pardee Reservoir. New facilities will also enable the US Bureau of Reclamation (Bureau) to deliver, pursuant to their Central Valley Project (CVP), supplemental water to the EBMUD. The supplemental water will enable EBMUD to meet its customer's current needs and reduce existing and future deficits to manageable levels during drought conditions.

The FRWA, acting as lead under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the Bureau, acting as lead under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) will create an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) and Statement (EIS), respectively. In spring 2003, a Draft EIR/EIS will be released for public comment with possible modifications included prior to Final submissions for approval. The EIR/EIS will contain analyses of the physical, biological, social and economic impacts that could arise from the alternatives and the cumulative impacts of implementing those alternatives with past, present and future projects.

For More information: http://www.ebmud.com/water_&_environment/water_supply/current_projects/freeport/default.htm

Zone 40 Water Supply Plan

The Sacramento County Water Agency (SWCA) has proposed adopting the 2002 Zone 40 Water Supply Master Plan (Master Plan). The primary objective of the Master Plan is to provide a flexible plan of water management options that can be implemented and revised as conditions warrant and feasibility changes. The Master Plan identifies the facilities needed to implement a phased water supply program to meet the estimated water demands within Zone 40 through 2030. The Master Plan covers 46,620 acres or just over half of Zone 40 located in the southeast portion of Sacramento County (http://www.saccodwr.org/zone40.htm).

The primary goal of the Master Plan is to provide conjunctive use of local groundwater and surface water supplies by constructing a water treatment plant, a new surface water diversion structure, water conveyance pipelines, and groundwater extraction, treatment, and distribution facilities. These facilities would be used for the production, conservation, transmission, distribution, and wholesale/retail sales of surface and groundwater.

The SWCA, as the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) lead agency, will create a Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Master Plan and distribute it this spring for public comment. The focus of the EIR will be on identifying the probable environmental impact as a result of the Master Plan projects. The EIR analysis will include many factors some of which are: biological resources (including impact to the Cosumnes), land use, aesthetics, noise, water quality, hydrology, public health and safety, and groundwater. The analysis will also identify possible alternatives and the significant unavoidable effects, growth induced impacts, and cumulative impact pertaining to each. The SCWA will use the Final EIR when considering the various alternatives and the possible environmental impact and mitigation measures available when rendering a decision to approve or deny the Master Plan.

Schedule of Events

The Cosumnes River Task Force usually meets:
Date: Second Tuesday of Every Month
Where: Sacramento County Farm Bureau in Elk Grove
Time: 7:00-8:30 p.m.
For up-to-date information contact Tina Lunt at
(916) 714-1104 ext. 112,
by e-mail at Tina.Lunt@ca.usda.gov or visit us online at
http://www.cosumnesriver.org.

Our Mission

"The mission of the Cosumnes River Task Force is to develop a long term strategy that will encourage restoration of watershed health and improve flood management."

Cosumnes River Task Force News

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Editing by
Tina Lunt

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Please contact Tina Lunt, Sloughhouse Resource Conservation District (916) 714-1104 ext. 112 with questions or comments.

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And We're Making Progress in Other Areas Too:

Jones & Stokes (J&S) is working on characterizing observed erosion such as identifying areas with a disproportionate amount of sediment per subwatershed as "hot spots". J&S is inventorying streambank erosion in the lower watershed through flight observations and on-the-ground field collection while the upper watershed is being limited to on-the-ground field observations as much of the area is not accessible to aircraft.

J&S is creating Geographical Information System (GIS) maps to illustrate changes in land use and land cover over time. GIS maps are also being created to show roads within the watershed. Unsurfaced roads are known potential contributors to river sedimentation and may be given special attention in future projects. J&S will be using existing data from both the National Forest Service and Tiger Line as well as hand digitizing other road data from sources such as aerial photographs to create these maps.