Introduction

Welcome to the Sacramento River Basin. The following chapters will take you on a journey through California’s largest river and its watershed. All of the information in the Sacramento River Basin: A Roadmap to Watershed Management (Roadmap) is on Sacramento River Watershed Program’s website in an interactive format. Go to www.sacriver.org to further explore the Sacramento River Basin through gigapans, video, photos, maps, and links to additional resources.

What Is a Watershed?

A watershed is the area of land where all of the water drains from it and goes into the same place (think of a bathtub). Everyone lives in a watershed. They can be big (like the Sacramento River Watershed) or small (like the Dry Creek Watershed). Because the term watershed can refer to drainage areas of a wide variety of sizes, this may create confusion about what is being discussed. Words such as drainage, basin, subbasin, and subwatershed are also used to describe areas that drain water. For the purposes of the Roadmap, the Sacramento River and its watershed are referred to as the Sacramento River Basin. Tributaries to the Sacramento River are referred to as watersheds (e.g., Yuba River Watershed, Battle Creek Watershed, etc.). The Roadmap groups watersheds that share similar issues and features into six subregions (as discussed on page 2).

A watershed not only represents an assemblage of natural resources, it also defines a community of people who live there and ideally share an interest in the health of its natural resources. The people who live within the boundaries of a watershed have a direct impact on the health and condition of their watershed. Stewardship of a watershed implies a shared responsibility for the condition and improvement of the land and water resources.

Residents, landowners, government agencies, organizations, businesses, and tribes influence the condition of the watershed through daily actions and decisions. The protection and improvement of a watershed requires that all of those living there assist in its maintenance and/or restoration to achieve a healthy balance.

Cache Creek

McCloud River
INTRODUCTION

The Roadmap

The Roadmap provides a comprehensive look at watershed management in the Sacramento River Basin. For most of the watersheds, an assessment of existing conditions and a management plan have been developed. What has not been done is weaving these assessments and management plans together to take a comprehensive look at the entire Sacramento River Basin. The purpose of the Roadmap is to do that—to provide an overall picture of the Sacramento River Basin and identify goals/objectives and actions to improve watershed conditions.

Chapter 2 of the Roadmap provides an overview of the Sacramento River Basin as a whole and discusses some of the common themes and issues. From the Basin scale, Chapter 3 turns to the six subregions that make up the Sacramento River Basin. For the purposes of the Roadmap, those subregions are defined as:

- Northeast Subregion—watersheds that drain to Lake Shasta
- Westside Subregion—watersheds that drain from the coastal mountains to the Sacramento River
- Eastside Subregion—watersheds that drain to the Sacramento River from the Southern Cascade Mountains and Sierra Nevada (north of the Feather River Watershed)
- Feather River Subregion—watersheds located within the Feather River Watershed
- American River Subregion—American River, Bear River, and Yuba River watersheds
- Sacramento Valley—that portion of the Sacramento Valley north of Sacramento, including the mainstem of the Sacramento River

Each subregion section includes a discussion of the primary watersheds located within that subregion. For each watershed, the following topics are discussed—all of which are based on previous assessments and management plans:

- Existing conditions (hydrology, water quality, vegetation, fish and wildlife, social)
- Key issues of concern
- Management goals and objectives
- Management organizations active in the watershed

Chapter 4 provides an overview of water quality monitoring programs in the Sacramento River Basin and discusses the benefits of a Regional Monitoring Program. Chapter 5 includes information regarding a Watershed Health Tracking Program and the value of using watershed health indicators to track changes in watershed conditions. An indicator project using Sacramento River Watershed Program’s pilot study for the Feather River Watershed is given as an example.

Chapter 6 highlights restoration projects that were implemented to address key management issues within each of the subregions. These projects exemplify what actions currently are being implemented and supply inspiration for future projects.

Lastly, a list of reference materials, sources of additional information, local watershed organizations, and Resource Conservation Districts is included in the References section.

Next Steps

The Roadmap is programmatic in nature and sets the stage for future program actions to be implemented at the local level. The intent is to develop an overall framework for management of the Sacramento River Basin, while simultaneously moving toward implementation projects that address key management issues in a watershed.

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1 Roadmap recognizes that multiple government agencies are involved in watershed management at many levels; however, this document focuses on the local, grassroots organizations that are conducting watershed stewardship activities.
Sacramento River Basin Subregions
Guide to the Map Layers

Maps and statistics in the Roadmap are based on the best available information at the time of printing. Although every effort has been made to provide the most accurate information possible, there may be unintentional errors or omissions.

Watershed Boundaries

Watershed boundaries are derived from the CalWater Dataset produced by the California Interagency Watershed Mapping Committee. Subregions are delineated based upon CalWater boundaries but do not conform to a particular hydrologic scheme. Rather the subregions were identified based upon subjective assessment of similar watershed management issues, local watershed group spheres of influence, and expert knowledge of both the human and hydrologic aspects of regions within the Sacramento River Basin.

Hydrology

Stream layers from the USGS’s National Hydrography Dataset and Digital Line Graph map datasets were used to develop the hydrology maps. Some of these layers were edited for cartographic clarity and to simplify cluttered maps.

Vegetation

CALVEG data from the USFS was used to develop the vegetation maps. CALVEG is a hierarchical classification system of actual vegetation designed to assess vegetation-related resources throughout California.

Land Use

National Land Cover Dataset data files from the USGS were used to develop the land use maps. This mapping is based primarily on 2001 satellite imagery, and describes the vegetation, water, natural surface, and cultural features on the land surface.

Land Ownership

GreenInfo Network’s California Protected Areas Database (a GIS inventory of all protected open space lands in the state of California) was used to develop the land ownership maps. The database contains lands held in fee ownership by public agencies and nonprofit entities; it does not contain data on private conservation and other similar public agency easements. The database was developed by GreenInfo Network for general use in land use planning, education, and other activities that do not rely on the data for a legally binding decision.