

Section 2. Assessment Objectives

BACKGROUND

Passed by the California State Legislature in 1986, Senate Bill 1086 called for a management plan for the Sacramento River and its tributaries that would protect, restore, and enhance both fisheries and riparian habitat. The law established an Advisory Council composed of representatives of state and federal agencies; county supervisors; and representatives of landowners, water contractors, commercial and sport fishing interests, and general wildlife and conservation interests. In 1989, this Council published a plan known as the Upper Sacramento River Fisheries and Riparian Habitat Management Plan (Upper Sacramento River Fisheries and Riparian Habitat Advisory Council 1989). Many of the fisheries action items in the plan have since been, or are being, implemented; these actions include construction of fish bypass structures at diversions on the Sacramento River and its tributaries, as well as the Shasta Dam temperature control structure.

In 1993 the Advisory Council was reconvened to develop a specific implementation program for habitat management. The Council developed a Sacramento River Conservation Area Handbook (Handbook) to guide riparian habitat management along the river (Sacramento River Advisory Council 1998). The Handbook includes a set of principles and guidelines, as well as recommended actions. It has been updated periodically to reflect current activities of entities involved in management of the river.

Following the development of the Handbook, a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) was signed by most entities involved in management activities along the river, including the Boards of Supervisors of all affected counties. The MOA signatories agreed to work within the principles and guidelines in the Handbook as they coordinate voluntary restoration efforts along the Sacramento River, and to support the formation of a nonprofit organization (NPO) made up of landowner and public interest representatives from each county and resource agency representatives. The NPO was formed in 2000 as the Sacramento River Conservation Area Forum (SRCAF). The principles, guidelines, and actions contained in the Handbook and supported by the MOA are referred to throughout this document as the SRCAF program.

The Nature Conservancy (TNC), through its Sacramento River Project, is an active participant in implementation of the program envisioned in the Handbook. TNC is also aware that the restoration of native habitats along the Sacramento River represents a modification of the existing Sacramento Valley landscape, and is not occurring in isolation. Actions being stimulated by the Handbook are a key component of a much larger ongoing effort by federal, state, and local agencies and organizations to reduce flood damages and enhance ecosystem function throughout the Central Valley and

Sacramento–San Joaquin Delta regions, and to ensure adequate water supplies for all Californians in the twenty-first century. Any such landscape-level land use modification will have various effects on the social and economic wellbeing of diverse individuals and agencies, resulting in a number of measurable social and economic benefits and costs.

OBJECTIVES

This socioeconomic assessment, funded under a 2000 CALFED environmental restoration program grant, was prepared to generally define and broadly communicate the economic consequences that may result from the establishment of a riparian corridor along the Sacramento River between Red Bluff and Colusa. The Handbook states that the overall goal of the management program for the Sacramento River Conservation Area is to “preserve remaining riparian habitat and reestablish a continuous riparian ecosystem along the Sacramento River between Redding and Chico” and to “reestablish riparian vegetation along the river from Chico to Verona.” This goal is supported through the collaborative efforts of agencies, counties, organizations, and landowners that work together under the umbrella of the SRCAF program and follow the principles and management guidelines developed in the Handbook for habitat restoration. Although this study was not sponsored by SRCAF, it was undertaken to examine potential third-party impacts associated with riparian restoration programs within the Sacramento River Conservation Area.

Riparian habitat and restoration activities occur within a corridor of the river defined in the Handbook by the inner river zone guidelines (IRZ). Because lands along this portion of the river are highly erosive and prone to flooding but have value as habitat, the corridor is considered potentially suitable for returning to natural riparian processes. The IRZ was generally defined as the area where the river has been over the past 100 years and is likely to be over the next 50 years. The IRZ may also include some limited, or managed meander. Because questions have been raised about the exact delineation of the IRZ, the boundary for this study has instead been established on the basis of historic flooding and the existing flood control levees along this section of the Sacramento River. This study area is slightly larger than the IRZ, and only addresses lands between the cities of Red Bluff and Colusa, where restoration programs are primarily focused. The estimated 42,543 acres of land within this study area include both public and privately held lands, with agriculture (mostly orchards) being the primary human use of the private lands. For the purposes of this analysis, the term *riparian corridor* defines an anticipated 30,000 acres of riparian habitat within the study area established by preserving remaining habitat and continuing riparian restoration programs.

This study has sought to identify potential economic costs and benefits to counties, landowners, and the general public of acquiring and restoring lands within the riparian corridor. It provides information to better understand how socioeconomic conditions could change in 30 years as riparian protection and restoration programs are implemented. The information has been developed as a tool to support the ongoing planning and subsequent decisions regarding riparian habitat–related projects. The

approximately 100-mile reach of the river being analyzed is located within Glenn, Colusa, Butte, and Tehama Counties, California.