



VALLEY LAND ALLIANCE

Nonprofit 501(c)3 Organization

Our mission is to Educate and Build Alliances to protect our uniquely productive California Central Valley Farmland.

FALL/WINTER 2022

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WATER DECISIONS ARE CONSEQUENTIAL



Dos Rios Ranch Preserve

HISTORIC FLOODPLAIN RESTORATION

Dos Rios Project Background PDF—
from their website riverpartners.org

Dos Rios Ranch Preserve, Newest State Park – River Partners newest project.

Open space and cool, shaded riverway access are nearly entirely out of reach for local communities in this region, which has the fewest parks of any region in the state. The lack of public greenways has an impact on residents' quality of life, economic prosperity, and health outcomes throughout the Central Valley, which produces food for the entire country. This year, California State Parks designated Dos Rios Ranch Preserve as the state's newest state park, the first in 13 years. Over a decade, restoration of Dos Rios Ranch has grown jobs and supported the local economy by channeling \$40 million in competitive grants and revenue back into local communities and creating hundreds of well-paying green jobs. After restoring 1,600 acres at Dos Rios Ranch the completed restoration permanently conserved 285 acres of riverside forests at the neighboring

These formerly flood-prone fields, which border the farming community of Grayson in Stanislaus County, have become the newest addition to the San Joaquin River National Wildlife Refuge, one of the valley's largest contiguous restored habitat areas.

River restoration is especially important for indigenous communities in California, whose cultures revolve around native plants and ecosystems. Dos Rios Ranch has collaborated with California Native partners to establish a Native Use Garden, which will include sedge, deergrass, dogbane, and other native plants for basketmaking and other cultural purposes. They obtained federal authorization for permanent Native use of the Garden, establishing a new model for increasing indigenous access to restored landscapes critical to cultural survival. "Resorted riverways offer a path forward for communities and landscapes in need of renewal. We are combining efforts with River Partners to improve the quality of life for our residents and our area." —Lilia Lomeli —Gil, Co-founder, Grayson United Community Foundation in Stanislaus County.

River Partners newest project: Restored floodplains in Stanislaus County provide flood safety, water conservation, carbon storage, wildlife habitat, and open space—climate solutions that benefit all Californians.

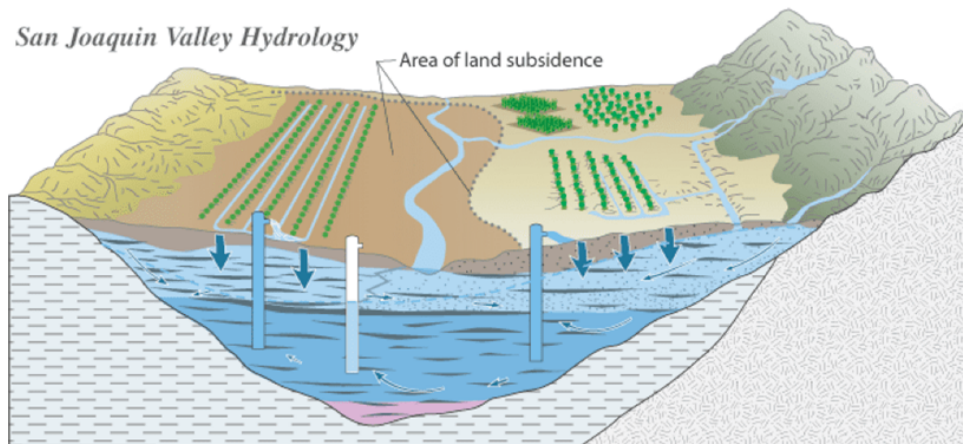
Where to find us

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VLA Is Watching

San Joaquin Valley Hydrology



Since the Californian Golden Age of dam construction, researchers at Lawrence Livermore National Labs have lately shown how much more our aquifers depend on surface flows. Lawrence Livermore scientists were able to demonstrate that in premodern periods, river flows accounted for around 26% of groundwater in the San Joaquin Valley using radioisotopes and noble gases that are naturally occurring in the environment. At the moment, they make up 47%.

Picture courtesy of River Partners from riverpartners.org

Merced River Highlighted in Recent Watershed Climate Studies

—Study, information and pictures by Department of Water Resources

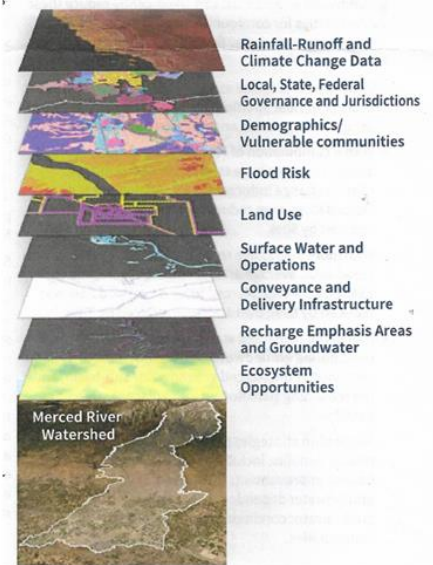
A main issue about this philosophy is that most people don't know the facts its no secret that the planet is in dire straits and finding solutions to deal with climate change can seem intimidating. When strictly addressed by individual industries, the growing climate risk will be intractable. Particularly in fragile areas like the San Joaquin Basin, climate change adaptation and the intensification of extreme events necessitate novel levels of integrated project planning, implementation, and operation. The Merced and Tuolumne Rivers' watershed climate studies were carried out by the California Department of Water Resources for this reason.

The Watershed Studies have shown that at the watershed scale, methods like Flood Managed Aquifer Recharge (Flood-MAR) and Forecast Informed Reservoir Operations (FIRO) can effectively reduce vulnerabilities in the face of climate unpredictability. In the San Joaquin Basin, it is anticipated that they can simultaneously replenish aquifers, lessen our danger of flooding, and enhance our ecosystems.

Key findings from the completed Merced Flood-MAR watershed studies are:

- 600% increase in peak flood flows in the Merced River
- 20% increase in average annual groundwater overdraft within the basin
- 10% fewer months with depth to groundwater less than 30 feet, impacting groundwater dependent ecosystems
- 8% reduction in end-of-irrigation-season average annual storage in Lake McClure
- 7% increase in agricultural water demand from higher temperatures.

Watershed Studies Integrate Data and Analytics



Flood-MAR Taking a Headwater to Groundwater Approach

Requires Big Collaboration,
Agency Alignment &
Sector Co-Management

Example
Strategies & Projects

What a brilliant idea!

The Merced study also shows how headwater in groundwater adaptations for multisector watershed management can considerably lessen these risks for communities and terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems.

The impact of climate change on various water sector's infrastructure and systems is evaluated in each study using a risk-based methodology, requiring cooperation from those local water sectors, including reservoir owners and operators. These studies' integrated vulnerability and adaptation approach, which is both cost-effective and information rich, is positioning state, local, federal, and tribal stakeholders for cooperative water resource management in the basin.

BURROUGHS

FAMILY FARMS

Register or Sponsor at [Regenerative Almond Field Day – Burroughs Family Farms](#)

Burroughs Family Orchards is hosting the 2nd Annual Regenerative Almond Field Day!

This event is a two-day learning opportunity that convenes together farmers, industry leaders, researchers, policymakers, healthcare managers, funders, activists, educators, students, and others working toward a healthy and truly regenerative food system.

Schedule:

Tuesday, Feb 21st

- Tour Burroughs Family Orchards
- Hear from leaders in Regenerative farming
- Enjoy a delicious locally sourced dinner

Wednesday, February 22nd

- Tour and explore the orchards with demonstrations
- Learn and connect through farmer-to-farmer panels
- Hear research updates from experts in the field
- Enjoy meaningful conversations over a nourishing and delicious lunch

February 21-22, 2023

Welcome newly elected representatives! We are excited to partner in any way we can to make our world a healthy and prosperous world for everyone. Collins' work is a great model for our newly elected leaders. He started almost 50 years ago at a time before Climate Change was a dire reality, before Smart Growth was a thing. Now we have data and studies that support his foresight. Read on below to see the amazing example of leadership shown by Collins. Article taken from the Sun Gazette and Sierra2theSea.com, Credit goes to John

How One Person Can Make a Difference!

VISALIA – Greg Collins dedicated his entire adult life to preserving, presiding and promoting his home, the city of Visalia.

The community gathered at this last city council meeting on Nov. 21 to thank him for his 31 years of service on the city council spanning over 47 years. Collins has served three stints on the council, initially from 1975–1991, then 2005–2009 and again from 2011 until 2022. He served as mayor from 1987–1991. During that time, he used his expertise in city planning to shape Visalia into one of the most well-maintained cities in California. His focus on quality-of-life issues

Collins top 10 things his career, spanning over six decades, has taught him.

1. Leave the city better than you found it
2. Treat the city like it is your home.
3. Drive the city once per month for perspective.
4. Promote ways for people to get together.
5. Think outside the box.
6. Push staff to be great and not just good.
7. Be a good listener
8. Compliments about the city are about the staff and not about you as a council member.
9. You are not judged by how your best neighborhoods look but by how your most disadvantaged neighborhoods look
10. Avoid partisan politics.

balanced the economic desires for slow or rapid growth and ensured every area of town, every project in all types of zoning had an attention to landscaping, water use, curb appeal and local character. When Collins was first elected to the council in 1975 he was the youngest elected official in Visalia at just 22 years old. Shannon O'Dell, the longtime city clerk for Visalia, said the council did not welcome Collins at first, but

“After 31 years of service, it's evident Greg had a great passion for Visalia.”

COUNCIL MEMBER
BRETT TAYLOR

“There is a reason we don't look like Fresno and Bakersfield, and you were a big part of that.”

- Mike Olmos

soon came to appreciate his planning expertise. It was Collins, now 69 years old, who spearheaded the city's 1978 General Plan, which stopped growth along Mooney Boulevard at Packwood Creek, a move credited with holding urban sprawl at bay for two generations.

“He was not well loved by the development community,” former Visalia city manager Mike Olmos said. “Greg knows this, and it was not a secret.”

“I knew this guy had his own style and a trailblazer”

- Mike Olmos

Olmos worked with Collins prior to his election to the council. The two men were planners with the County of Tulare and Olmos recognized early on that Collins looked at projects, the city and himself from a different perspective than others. Olmos recalled when Collins was prepared to do a public presentation but was sent home after wearing a plaid jacket, pants with vertical stripes and a tie with horizontal stripes.

His unique style earned him the nickname “4-1” Collins because he routinely objected to the traditional notions of bigger is better, all business is good business, and if your community isn't growing, it's dying. Instead, Collins pushed for in-fill projects, concentric growth patterns to keep downtown as the center of the city, and that quality of life is just as vital as economic development in the prosperity of a community.

Mayor Steve Nelsen, the longest tenured councilmember next to Collins, often found himself on opposite sides of issues from Collins but their discussions were always respectful. The two elder statesmen of the council served on the Mid Kaweah Groundwater Sustainability Agency together tackling one of Valley's most dire issues. Nelsen touted Collins as a champion of water sustainability, conservation and public works planning.

For the full article visit <https://thesungazette.com/article/visalia/2022/11/29/last-roll-call-for-collins-on-council/>

Scan the QR code below to listen to our Audio Tour or look for signs on Highway 140 between Merced and Mariposa County line.



PRESERVING DOWNTOWN AND SMART GROWTH

Visalia's population was just 30,000 when Collins first served on the council in 1975 and today stands at 150,000 upon his retirement. While growing five times over is significant, Collins' efforts to manage growth has helped Visalia maintain its small city feel while still reaping the benefits of being Tulare County's economic hub.





Welcome to Our Newest Board Members!



PEGGY HSU Board Member

After decades away, Peggy recently moved back to her hometown of Merced, eager to reconnect with the community and support sustainability-related issues in the region. She studied design and architecture in graduate school, then ran a product design company for over ten years. In doing so, she saw first-hand the heavy toll that manufacturing and consumerism takes on the environment, so she closed her business to redirect her energy towards more purpose-driven work. She moved to Amsterdam, where she worked for an international NGO and consulted for a sustainable fashion marketplace. She recently returned to Merced to be closer to family and to raise her kids away from the stresses of big city life. Inspired by her time in Amsterdam and by the importance of active transportation for a more sustainable future, Peggy is also a member of the Merced Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Commission.

RUSS SPEER Board Member

Russ was born and raised in Oakland, California. He attended UC at Berkeley and UC at San Francisco. Russ is a retired orthodontist who has always had a strong environmental consciousness. Russ moved to Merced in 1999. He is working on many aspects of environmental restoration, both in the US and international. His focus is on restoring healthy soils and hydrology to degraded lands - agricultural, forest, and urban. He believes that once desiccated landscapes are hydrated and sufficient biomass has been allowed to flourish, severe weather events will become a thing of the past. Along with being on the board of the Valley Land Alliance, Russ is on the Leadership Team of Biodiversity for a Livable Climate (bio4climate.org), a Principal at EcoRestoration Alliance (ecorestorationalliance.net), and a Co-Founder of Water Holistic West (waterholisticwest.com).

Thank You for
your support!

We wish to thank all of you who have supported us with your memberships and contributions.

Your contributions allow us to educate people and policy-makers in our community. VLA is grateful for the support from John and Nancy Cassidy Family Foundation, an Advised Fund of Silicon Valley Community Foundation.

Thanks to our Board and other volunteers which put in many hours to make our world a better place to live.



If you'd also like to be a donor fill out the form below. No gift is too large or too small.

Valley Land Alliance
PO Box 102
Cressey, CA 95312

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Check here if you wish to remain anonymous _____

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