

An aerial photograph of a winding river in a valley. A road follows the curve of the riverbank, and a dam or levee structure is visible in the distance. The water reflects the sky, and the surrounding landscape is a mix of green grass and bare trees.

What's at Stake?

The importance of protecting
water resources in the
Sacramento Valley

If you ask anyone who lives, works or has spent time in the Sacramento Valley, they will tell you that it is an exceptional place, unlike anywhere else in the world. One reason is because we manage our water resources efficiently so everyone in the Valley can benefit from them. It is only by effectively managing this essential resource that we will be able to secure a future for us all.

The stakes have never been higher. If water is redirected away from Northern California, there is no way of estimating the long-term negative effects on our environment and economy.

Unfortunately, we do not have the luxury of time to take a wait-and-see attitude. Now is the time to stand by our convictions and present a clear assessment and defense of what water means to the Sacramento Valley.

Here's what's at stake.

Photo: Brian Baer



Protecting our future

The Sacramento Valley is essential to the long-term vibrancy and vitality of the state of California and its citizens.

Not only does food produced by California farmers in the Sacramento Valley feed millions of Californians, it is enjoyed by people around the world and contributes to the health of California's economy.

Twenty-five million people depend on the Sacramento River watershed for their water. That's more than two-thirds of the state's population.

Through the efficient use and management of water, more clean energy is being produced with minimal impact on the environment.

More healthy food and clean energy is being produced with minimal impact on the environment.

The life source of the Sacramento Valley is water. Since the 1840s, families have built farms and traditions based on the quality of water found here. Today several million acres of family farms power the Valley's economic engine. More than 11,000 farms contribute almost \$3.5 billion to California's economy, providing farm and farm-related jobs for nearly 53,000 people.



Conserving our resources

Farmers are some of the most innovative people you'll find anywhere. By using systems that recirculate the water used to irrigate crops and developing crop varieties that use less water, farmers have dramatically reduced water usage. Here's just one example: Over the last 30 years, Sacramento Valley rice growers have reduced the amount of water they use by 20 percent while producing nearly 30 percent more rice.

By incorporating innovative management and irrigation techniques, water is being used more efficiently to grow more crops and generate more clean energy than ever before.

There's nothing wasted with our water. Consider the Shasta Dam power plant, the largest hydroelectric generating plant in California. It generates more than two billion kilowatt-hours of electricity per year. That's enough power for over 300,000 homes. Once the energy has been generated, the water returns to the river to be used again by birds, fish, farms and people. Now that's efficiency.

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Providing nature's sanctuary

A mosaic of beautiful, picturesque farmland, world-class wildlife reserves and thriving communities, there is no other place like the Sacramento Valley.

You won't find another region in the state that has been able to as effectively integrate the economic benefit of managing the environment. Not only do the rice fields provide a dependable source of income for farmers, surrounding communities and related industries, they also provide an essential

natural habitat for migrating waterfowl that would otherwise cost up to \$2 billion to acquire and restore, with an additional \$35 million annually to maintain.

Pasturelands, row crops and tree crops provide for a picturesque and tranquil landscape, a signature of the Sacramento Valley.

The Sacramento Valley is heaven on earth for wildlife enthusiasts, naturalists and birdwatchers. Each year, approximately seven million waterfowl



Photo: Gary Kramer

migrate through the Pacific Flyway. The Valley's six national wildlife refuges and abundance of meandering rivers provide a safe haven for 50 percent of California's threatened and endangered species including winter-run and spring-run salmon, steelhead trout and many other fish species.

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As fish migrate from the Sacramento Valley to the ocean and then return several years later, they face a variety of hazards, most of which are outside of the Sacramento Valley. To increase salmon populations throughout the state, more than \$1 billion has been invested in the Sacramento River basin by improving the migratory corridor through habitat restoration, flows, harvest restrictions and other large-scale measures.



Like a human fingerprint, California's Sacramento Valley is truly unique. On the leading edge of ecological and economical sustainability, it's also an exceptional place to live, work and raise a family. The Sacramento Valley joins together a world-renowned mosaic of natural abundance: productive farmlands, wildlife refuges and managed wetlands, cities and rural communities, and meandering rivers that support and feed fisheries and natural habitats. Through efficient management of the region's water resources, the Sacramento Valley will continue to provide what's essential to California's future success and prosperity. Nourishment and sustenance from the fields, habitats for fish and wildlife, recreation and a special quality of life—the Sacramento Valley is home to all of this, and more.



For more information on the Northern California Water Association, please visit our website at www.norcalwater.org.

Cover photo: Brian Baer

