

The River

The San Joaquin River and its principal tributaries—the Merced, the Tuolumne, and the Stanislaus—originate on the high slopes of the southern Sierra Nevada, and flow through the fertile San Joaquin Valley south of Sacramento. For millennia, the cool waters of these rivers sustained the southernmost runs of king salmon and vast wetlands that supported millions of waterfowl, herds of tule elk, and even grizzly bear.

Today, approximately four million people live in the San Joaquin watershed. These rivers support some of the most productive and profitable agriculture in the world, irrigating more than two million acres of arid land. The rivers also generate over 3,000 megawatts of hydropower, provide drinking water to over 4.5 million people (including the City of San Francisco), and support numerous endangered or declining species. From the headwaters, including Yosemite National Park, to the mouth at the San Fran-

cisco Bay-Delta estuary, these rivers support a thriving recreational industry that generates hundreds of millions in economic activity and includes world class whitewater rafting, bass tournaments, waterfowl hunting, and a native rainbow trout fishery.