

Projects Aligned with *Healthy Rivers and Landscapes Program* Producing Results

ACWA has long supported the Healthy Rivers and Landscapes (HRL) Program as the preferred pathway for updating the state's Bay-Delta Plan for the Sacramento River and its tributaries, as opposed to an approach based solely on a percentage of flows.

Previously known as the Voluntary Agreements, the HRL Program includes habitat enhancement projects coupled with more water for fish and wildlife, managed in a collaborative, science-based manner. It is supported by federal, state, and local water leaders and represents a modern and holistic approach to improving the Bay-Delta ecosystem and water supply reliability.

The State Water Resources Control Board is expected to approve an update to the Bay-Delta Plan in the near future. However, many projects called for

under the HRL Program have already been completed or are underway and delivering measurable results, increasing the potential for recovering healthy fish populations.

Three projects that are part of the HRL Program are outlined below.

Tuolumne River Mainstem Channel Restoration Upstream of Old La Grange Bridge Project

With this project, Modesto Irrigation District (MID), Turlock Irrigation District (TID), and the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission (SFPUC) provided more than 7.5 acres of mainstem restoration, more than 2.5 acres of floodplain habitat and more than 50,000 cubic yards of spawning gravel. These actions are expected to result in a five-fold increase of trout and salmon habitat upstream of Old La Grange Bridge.

Spawning habitats were created by cleaning, washing, and returning gravel originally removed from the river during the Gold Rush to the lower Tuolumne River in the form of riffles and gravel bars. In addition to the creation of spawning habitat, large wood features and boulder clusters were added to increase in-channel habitat complexity and diversity.

The project began in June 2024 and was completed four months later in mid-October. The total cost of the project was estimated at \$7.8 million, which includes a grant from the California Department Fish and Wildlife, along with MID, TID and the SFPUC's self-funded commitment of \$2.3 million. The project was successfully completed under budget and is an example of the multiple restoration projects included in the districts' and SFPUC's HRL Program work.



Middle Creek Gravel Project

The Middle Creek Gravel Project was completed in the winter of 2024 with cooperation from Sacramento River Settlement Contract partners: Glenn-Colusa Irrigation District, Reclamation District 108, Sutter Mutual Water Company, and River Garden Farms, as well as the Tehama-Colusa Canal Authority. The gravel injection created critical spawning habitat for salmon south of Keswick Dam.

Lower American River Salmonid Habitat Enhancement Program

The American River Salmonid Habitat Enhancement Program is an ongoing program created to address habitat reduction and fisheries decline in the lower American River.

Program objectives consist of increasing the quantity and quality of spawning and juvenile rearing habitat for fall-run Chinook salmon and Central Valley steelhead. This ongoing effort is made possible by continued collaboration between the Sacramento Water Forum, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, and U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (as part of their Central Valley Project Improvement Act Habitat Restoration Grant Program). Since its inception in 2010, this program has created more than 30 acres of spawning beds, 1.2 miles of side channels, and has placed 92,000 cubic yards of spawning gravel.

For more information about the HRL program, including background and a timeline, visit acwa.com by scanning the accompanying QR code. ♠

Opposite page: The Tuolumne River near the Old La Grange Bridge.
Photo courtesy of Turlock Irrigation District

Above: A crew installs a “rockwad” along the Sacramento River to help provide juvenile salmon and trout refuge against larger predators. Learn more about this project and others by using the QR code below. *Photo courtesy of Sacramento River Settlement Contractors*

