

Tuolumne River Trust
Strategic Planning
2018-2022

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Introduction

The Tuolumne is a world class river. Beginning in Yosemite National Park, the Tuolumne winds through the great meadow that bears its name. The river then cascades down the slopes of the Sierra Nevada over waterfalls and through valleys carved in the last Ice Age. Flowing out of the golden foothills, it meanders through the Central Valley where valley oaks arch from its banks. There it joins other rivers to form the San Francisco Bay Delta, the largest estuary on the west coast of the Americas, producing an explosion of biological diversity.

Over its 162-mile journey the Tuolumne is the lifeblood of communities from the Sierra to the Sea. It connects the fly fisher in Yosemite, to the farmer in Modesto, to the thirsty family in San Francisco, to the salmon fisher in the Pacific. Millions depend on the Tuolumne for clean drinking water, the food we eat, and the electricity that powers our homes and businesses. Visitors come from around the world seeking adventure in the Tuolumne's rugged waters.

A rich assortment of wildlife and plants depends on the Tuolumne. The river is home to the largest historic population of native fall-run Chinook salmon in the San Joaquin Valley. The mixed-conifer forests of the headwater region support a great diversity of trees, plants, and animals, including American Marten, Great Grey Owl, California Spotted Owl, Pacific Flycatcher, and many others. The watershed's forests also help maintain high quality water and sequester carbon.

Our own dependence on the Tuolumne has come at a high price. Today, nearly 60% of the river is diverted for human use. Today, on average only 20% of the river's natural flow remains in the river and is dedicated to the environment. Diversions from the river provide water to more than 2.7 million people in the Bay Area and beyond and to 200,000 acres of agricultural land in the Central Valley. The dams and diversions that take this water, combined with a host of other human activities since the Gold Rush, have taken a heavy toll on the river. They have blocked access to upstream spawning areas for salmon, decreased in-stream flows, changed the river channel, removed gravel spawning beds, reduced riparian vegetation, and introduced non-native plants and animal species.

Reduced flows have had a particularly devastating impact on salmon and steelhead and the rich web of life they support. In the last ten years the Chinook salmon population declined from 18,000 individuals to just a few hundred. They are on the brink of disappearing from the Tuolumne altogether. The Chinook are now listed under the Endangered Species Act as a Species of Concern, and steelhead are listed as Threatened.

The forested headwaters have also been degraded through decades of logging and fire suppression. The iconic forests that have for decades provided clean water and sequestered carbon are now succumbing to catastrophic wildfire, pests, and drought. In 2013 the Rim Fire contributed as much carbon to the atmosphere as produced by over 2.5 million cars in an entire year. Post-fire erosion clogged powerhouses and degraded the normally clear Tuolumne River water, while the most severely burned areas lost their seedbank and are unlikely to regrow a forest without extensive human intervention.

Pollution from urban areas, industrial sites, suburban sprawl, and agriculture has also degraded the Tuolumne's water quality. More than 35 years after the Clean Water Act established a national goal for our waterways to be safe for swimming and fishing, that goal remains elusive on the lower Tuolumne.

Climate change and more frequent droughts are certain to further undermine the river's health by shrinking this already limited resource. Climate models forecast warmer winters in general, with higher elevation snow line and more precipitation falling as rain. The snowpack is therefore anticipated to be smaller, with snowmelt occurring earlier in the year, leading to longer, warmer summers. Furthermore, modelers also anticipate more extreme precipitation swings between deeper droughts and more intensely wet winters with more severe

floods. This will require greater care with management of our water resources for the environment and for people. Only with committed, enlightened stewardship of the river and watershed through restoration of forests, meadows, floodplain habitat, and flows can we reduce these threats to create a landscape more resilient to change.

Mission

The Tuolumne River Trust is the voice for the river. We protect and restore the Tuolumne River and its watershed for present and future generations.

Vision

We seek a healthy and vibrant river that is:

- Teeming with fish and wildlife
- Safe for drinking, fishing and swimming
- Welcoming for rafting, kayaking, and other river sports
- Held in trust as a refuge for our children and grandchildren

We want every person who benefits from the Tuolumne to know that their food was grown from its water, their tap water comes from it, their wild salmon were hatched in its gravels, and their backpacking, fishing and rafting trip depends on its health.

How We Work

We promote stewardship of the Tuolumne through:

- Education, community outreach and adventures
- Collaboration with a diverse array of stakeholders
- Grassroots organizing to demonstrate public support for our work
- Advocacy before Federal, State and Local agencies
- On-the-ground restoration projects

With offices in Sonoma, Modesto, and San Francisco, the Trust's staff, Board and Advisors, along with our volunteer base and engaged residents, have put down roots throughout the watershed to continue to build the capacity needed to achieve our Vision.

Accomplishments

Since our founding in 1981, the Trust has made remarkable progress toward our Vision. In 1984 the Trust won Wild and Scenic designation for 83 miles of the Tuolumne River. In the 1990s we halted plans to dam the Clavey River, and played a major role in winning higher flows for wild salmon in the Lower Tuolumne. In 2008, we won a five-year effort to defeat a plan by the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission to divert up to 50% more water from the Tuolumne River than the Bay Area takes today. In 2012 we protected the 1,600-acre Dos Rios Ranch and in 2013 the adjacent 500-acre Hidden Valley Ranch. From 2008 to 2018 we promoted policies and programs that helped the Bay Area reduce water consumption by 30%. Since we first began habitat and river restoration in the early 2000s, we have involved thousands of volunteers who have planted tens of thousands of trees and plants, restored dozens of miles of stream and river and hundreds of acres of meadows, improved

dozens of trail miles, removed invasive weeds, and improved wildlife habitat at the Big Bend Restoration Project, the Dos Rios Ranch, and in the Rim Fire burn area. Since our founding, the Trust's extensive education programs have also taught tens of thousands of schoolchildren and adults about the river, what it provides to their communities, and how to preserve and protect the Tuolumne's irreplaceable offerings.

TRT Culture

The Trust prides itself on being a well-rounded organization made up of talented, resourceful, energetic, and supremely dedicated people who love the Tuolumne. We are well-respected in the community because we are a truly watershed-wide organization that believes in collaborating with diverse groups of people to find workable solutions for the river. We are dependable, both fiscally and scientifically, and committed to implementing strategies that deliver results. By fostering strong personal connections to the river we are building enduring public support for stewardship of the Tuolumne.

Purpose and Use of this Plan

This Plan provides a blueprint for how the Tuolumne River Trust will fulfill our vision and achieve our goals, consistent with the science of river and watershed restoration. It serves as the organization's compass and a foundation for annual work plans, budgets, funding proposals, and outreach materials.

Strategic Planning Process

This Plan is the culmination of steps taken in early 2018 by the Tuolumne River Trust's Strategic Planning Committee, comprised of Board members, Advisors, and the Executive Director. Activities included information gathering and individual interviews with all Board members, all Staff, and a subset of Advisors to create a situation analysis; a day-long workshop for Staff, Board members and Advisors; a half-day workshop with Staff; and final review, comment, and adoption by the Board.

Goals for 2018-2022

1. Unite, educate, and empower diverse communities to actively support watershed restoration and protection from the Sierra through the Central Valley to the Sea.
2. Build a strong coalition of political leaders and broad-based community support that results in laws, policies and funding mechanisms to achieve:
 - 50% unimpaired flows,
 - compliance with Clean Water Act (CWA) standards,
 - restoration of 200 acres of floodplain habitat, and
 - 2,000 salmon returning on average to spawn annually as progress towards a longer-term goal of 38,000 salmon returning on average.
3. Develop and implement a watershed-wide restoration plan and restore 5,000 acres in upper Tuolumne and 200 acres in lower Tuolumne.
4. Assemble the staff and volunteer resources and ensure active and robust board engagement needed to advance our goals.
5. Raise funds sufficient to achieve this plan.
6. Build financial and administrative policies and infrastructure to ensure sound fiscal and administrative management.

Goals and Objectives – By 2022 we will:

Goal 1. Unite, educate, and empower diverse communities to act in support of the river’s restoration and protection throughout the watershed from the Sierra through the Central Valley to the Sea.

- Create connections to the Tuolumne River by developing and increasing activities, e.g. river/watershed events, online/digital info, etc. Ensure each activity has an educational component and, where appropriate, an activist component.
- Increase and improve physical access to the river (e.g. remove Dennett Dam, create boat launch, trails and bridges, Wards Ferry whitewater takeout, Meral’s Pool Put-In) and support Modesto, Waterford, Ceres, and Stanislaus County to develop parks along the lower river.
- Decrease social and economic barriers to river access.
- Provide educational programs for all ages to create a knowledgeable and empowered grassroots base of support now and in the future.
- Research opportunities to provide local employment through connection and restoration programs.
- Create measurement tools to evaluate and report reach and effectiveness.

Goal 2. Build a strong coalition of political leaders and broad-based community support that results in laws, policies and funding mechanisms to achieve: 1) 50% unimpaired flows, 2) compliance with CWA standards, 3) restoration of 200 acres of floodplain habitat, and 4) 2,000 salmon returning on average to spawn annually as progress towards a longer-term goal of 38,000 salmon returning on average.

- Continue to make a strong case for 50% of unimpaired flows in both the dam relicensing and the Bay Delta Plan update processes through robust science, grassroots support, political advocacy, and potential litigation.
- Employ a politically connected Central Valley Organizer (CVO).
- Implement/advance other initiatives that support this goal, including Dos Rios Instream Flow Dedication, SFPUC decision regarding adding permanent customers, SFPUC Adaptive Management Plan for O’Shaughnessy Dam, Plan Bay Area Update.
- Support the implementation of the new FERC license and Bay Delta Plan.
- Facilitate upper watershed restoration by building capacity and financial support for projects and managing restoration work.
- Collaborate with other organizations to broaden support, capacity, and technical expertise on watershed and forest restoration.

Goal 3. Develop and implement a watershed-wide restoration plan and restore 5,000 acres in upper Tuolumne and 200 acres in lower Tuolumne.

- Finance development of the restoration plan.
- Complete implementation of current restoration projects.
- Identify and secure funding to develop and implement additional restoration projects.

Goal 4. Assemble sufficient staff and volunteer resources and ensure active and robust board engagement needed to advance our goals.

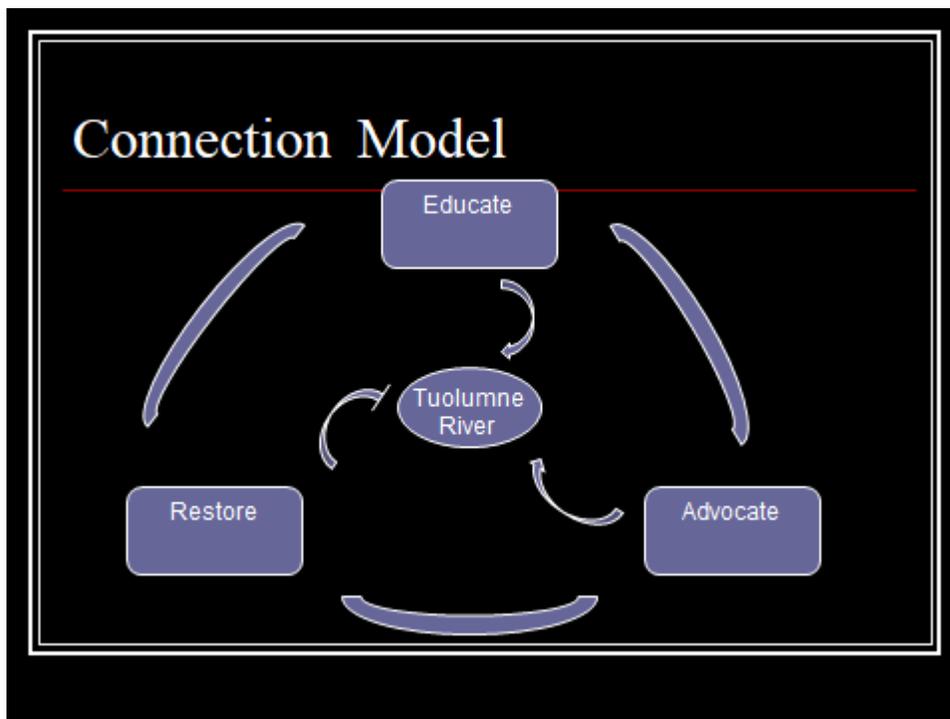
- Support existing staff to promote longevity and minimize turnover.
- Identify staffing needs to achieve organizational goals.
- Review and update board policies and board membership goals and recruit new board members and advisors towards those goals.
- Develop a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion plan for board adoption.

Goal 5. Raise funds sufficient to achieve this plan.

- Develop and implement an organization-wide fundraising plan to achieve the goals of this plan and continue TRT on a desired funding trajectory.
- Organize fundraising events.
- Develop and implement an organization-wide communication plan to enable fundraising and program success.

Goal 6. Continue to build financial and administrative policies and infrastructure to ensure sound fiscal and administrative management.

- Utilize appropriate tools needed to support organizational goals.
- Ensure TRT has capacity and expertise required to ensure sound administrative and financial management.



This model shows how the education, advocacy and restoration work of TRT connects people to the Tuolumne River and to the work of TRT.