

# UPPER SACRAMENTO, MCCLLOUD, AND LOWER PIT RIVERS REGIONAL WATER MANAGEMENT GROUP (USR RWMG)

**Scope:** Regional/Watershed

**Location:** California

## SCOPE:

- » Regional scope including the Upper Sacramento, McCloud, and Lower Pit watersheds
- » These watersheds represent the headwaters of the federal Central Valley Project in California, providing drinking water, agricultural irrigation, and industrial water to 2/3 of the state and environmental flows to the Sacramento River and the Sacramento-San Joaquin Bay-Delta
- » The group is made up of 16 member entities, including local jurisdictions, tribes, community groups, and environmental advocacy organizations
- » The USR RWMG's objectives are to:
  - Work together to more effectively and efficiently address resource issues in the region, and
  - Bring attention to the important work done by upper watershed stakeholders in protecting water quality and quantity for downstream users

## COLLABORATIVE FORMATION:

- » Foundational planning and relationship building took place with the development of the Upper Sacramento Watershed Assessment, completed in 2010, as well as other prior regional coordination efforts. During that effort, participants rallied in 2009 to begin the Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) planning process. This is a State-guided and funded process (though a competitive grant opportunity), though the effort is entirely grassroots. Part of the impetus for participating in the IRWM process is to become eligible for future funding, but the USR RWMG also sees this opportunity as an excellent organizing stimulus to further develop a formal collaborative approach to problem solving for water and natural resources challenges.
- » The USR RWMG planning effort was funded with State of California IRWM planning grant funds. Initial challenges included hurdles of communication and trust between specific stakeholders, as well as trust in the funding source (the State). These were overcome through the coordinated effort of stakeholders – through peer pressure, political leverage, and communication – and through a facilitated planning process. Success has brought additional positive interest in the group.

## MEMBERS:

### Jurisdictional Entities

- » City of Dunsmuir
- » City of Mt. Shasta
- » McCloud Community Services District

## CONTACT INFORMATION:

RWMG Secretary and Primary Contact:

River Exchange:

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Coordinating Council Members:

Statutory Authorities:

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Tribal Authorities

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## **Tribes**

- » The Modoc Nation
- » Shasta Indian Nation
- » Winnemem Wintu Tribe
- » Pit River Tribe

## **Private/Non-profit Organizations**

- » California Trout
- » McCloud Watershed Council
- » Pacific Forest Trust
- » The River Exchange
- » Siskiyou Land Trust
- » Western Shasta Resource Conservation District
- » Mount Shasta Bioregional Ecology Center
- » Medicine Lake Citizens for Quality Environment
- » Trout Unlimited

## **WATER CONCERNS:**

- » Legacy sedimentation from extraction industries, and potentially from catastrophic wildfire
- » Temperature and flow for endemic fish
- » Legacy mining contaminants (mercury, copper, and cadmium) in West Squaw Creek and Shasta Reservoir
- » Nutrients, low dissolved oxygen, and water temperature in the Lower Pit River
- » Groundwater and surface water are both considered by the USR RWMG, but there is much less known – and therefore greater future risk – associated with groundwater resources.

## **STRATEGIES:**

- » The USR RWMG stakeholders have identified a number of diverse strategies for managing the multiple complex issues in the region. These include strategies specific to the following:
  - Operational and Management Efficiency: increasing the work produced per each drop of water means that more can stay in the stream, the region is better buffered against climate change, and costs for communities go down.
  - Using Less Water: conservation results in financial savings for jurisdictional infrastructure, and also means that more water can be left in rivers for habitat uses.
  - Land and Water Stewardship: most of these strategies require collaboration between two or more entities, the result of which is a resource management style that ensures resource availability for multiple uses and for future generations.
  - Water Quality Management and Protection: water of higher quality can be made available for a broader number of uses.
  - Other strategies, such as flood management, economic incentives (such as accurate valuation of and payment for ecosystem services), and education diversify the management portfolio available to USR RWMG stakeholders and add flexibility and robustness to the region.

## RESULTS:

- » The planning process resulted in a comprehensive document that:
  - Prioritizes objectives;
  - Lists strategies for managing resources related to those objectives;
  - Prioritizes projects related to strategies and objectives; and
  - Identifies funding opportunities so that this collaborative effort – and implementation – may continue.
- » Thus far, the USR RWMG has been awarded a collaborative planning grant to continue in their efforts through 2014.

Histories and ethnographies of Indigenous Peoples of this Region were included in the Plan to acknowledge the unbroken thread that connects them to their historic lands and waterways and their unified belief that the water is for all life in and around the water. The overarching goal is perhaps unique in this state: “It is the goal of the RWMG, through this IRWM plan, to embody both the letter and spirit of the laws protecting the dignity, rights, sites and cultures of our region’s indigenous peoples, and recognize that clean, pure water is much more than a commodity, but rather a vital necessity for everyone within this region and on downstream.”

- » Best practices and lessons learned:
  - Communication – between stakeholders and between project team members and stakeholders – is absolutely key
  - Understanding and incorporating the needs and issues of the faces across the table are essential elements in building trust
  - Funding sources are key to maintaining organizational structure. Source regions may lack the financial resources available to downstream areas where water is delivered for economic benefit, and thus may have to depend on public or foundation support.