

May 2020

TUOLUMNE RIVER VOLUNTARY AGREEMENT

THE FACTS

The Tuolumne River Voluntary Agreement (TRVA) is a comprehensive plan to manage water and natural resources within the Tuolumne River and its adjacent floodplains. The TRVA was designed as a more progressive, science-based alternative to a requirement set by the State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) to release large volumes of water known as “unimpaired flows” in the river. During the TRVA’s development, several misconceptions have arisen and are addressed here.

BOTH FLOW-BASED AND NON-FLOW MEASURES ARE NECESSARY

MISCONCEPTION ✕

Generating higher flows in the Tuolumne River is the only way fish populations can be enhanced.

FACT ✓

The fishery’s health depends on more than just the release of higher flows. While river flows are a vital component of fish health, so too are effective habitat improvements and active protection from predation. The comprehensive management approach contained in the TRVA, which includes innovative and beneficial measures, will help protect and enhance fishery conditions and critical water supply. The plan includes both flow-based and non-flow components:

- A variable flow schedule for every season of every water year type to meet in-river life cycle needs of native fish species, with ongoing monitoring and evaluation.
- Restoration and improvement of habitat for fish, including enhanced and increased in-channel and floodplain habitat, to enhance spawning, food web health, and fish-rearing conditions.
- Actions to control predators, including striped and black bass, that prey on salmon.

HABITAT ENHANCEMENT IS CRITICAL

MISCONCEPTION ✕

Habitat enhancement is being advanced instead of flows.

FACT ✓

The TRVA habitat enhancements are designed to work with additional flows. The TRVA acknowledges that in addition to adequate flows, fish need habitat to ensure adequate food, spawning and rearing conditions throughout their life cycles. Best available science and decades of monitoring and data specific to the Tuolumne River have indicated that a comprehensive approach that includes increased river flows, along with enhancements to habitat in and along the river and predation control, offer a superior management approach for supporting fishery health.

ENHANCED FLOWS PROVIDED IN ALL WATER YEAR TYPES

MISCONCEPTION ✕

The TRVA will not provide enhanced flows.

FACT ✓

Under the TRVA, increased flows will be available in all water year types, even the most challenging dry and critically dry water year types. These enhanced flows will result in just over 24,000 acre-feet of greater flows to approximately 110,000 acre-feet above current requirements.

FUNDING IS ASSURED

MISCONCEPTION ✕

State and federal funding will be required to implement the TRVA.

FACT ✓

The TRVA does not depend on state or federal grants, loans, taxes or fees. Accordingly, implementation can commence immediately. Implementation of the TRVA will be fully funded over its lifetime by the Turlock Irrigation District, Modesto Irrigation District, and San Francisco Public Utilities Commission (SFPUC), including investment by the Partners of \$83 million for specific habitat improvements.



SCIENCE PAVES THE WAY, ANCHORED BY GOOD GOVERNANCE

MISCONCEPTION ✕

The Voluntary Agreement alternative to the State Water Board's flow-based only requirement for managing key rivers and tributaries is based on inadequate science and flawed governance structures.

FACT ✓

The TRVA is built on best available science and decades of monitoring, data collection and multiple Tuolumne River-specific scientific studies. Under the TRVA, a new Tuolumne River Partnership will be formed to guide a spill management plan and habitat improvement program and to develop a capital fund and annual funding. The Agreement also provides flexibility and the ability to adapt quickly to changing conditions.

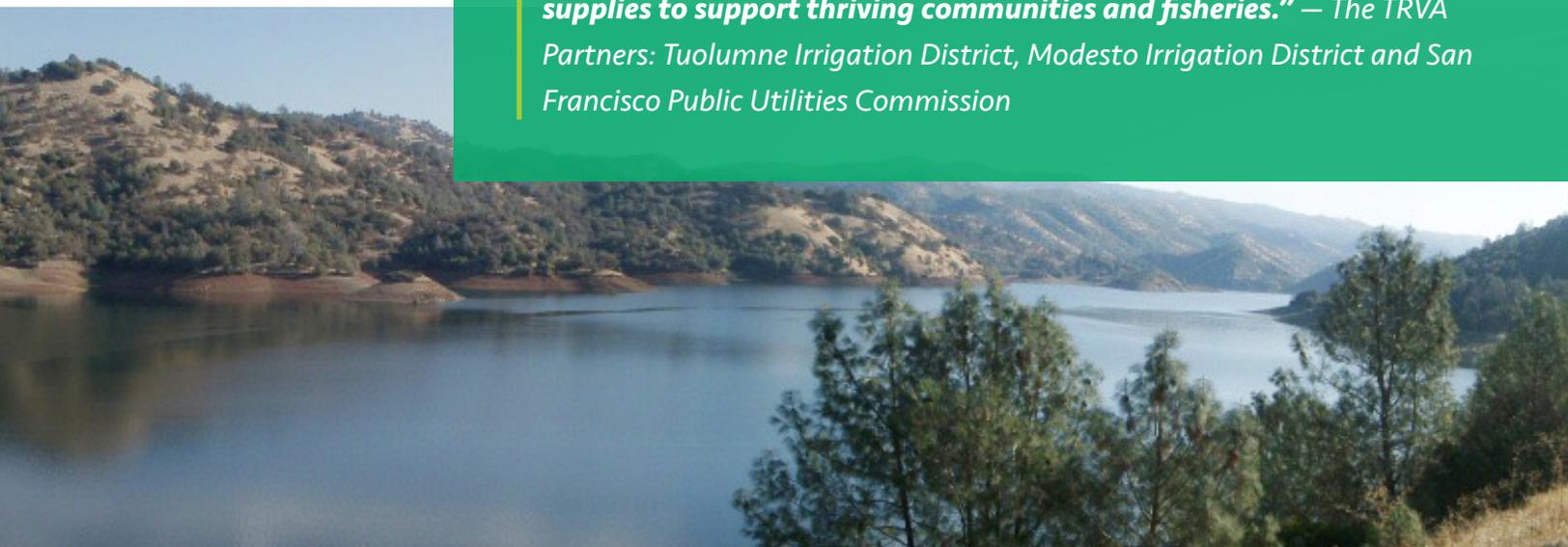
COLLABORATION AND INPUT HAVE BEEN ESSENTIAL

MISCONCEPTION ✕

The TRVA development process lacked sufficient public involvement.

FACT ✓

Development of the TRVA is the result of close collaboration and good faith discussions among the three public agency Partners and numerous stakeholders. The stakeholders have included federal and state agencies including the California Department of Water Resources and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, scientists, and environmental stewards. The TRVA is broadly supported by the TRVA Partners, along with more than 40 other public water agencies, government agencies, environmental stewards, agriculture, business and civic leaders.



“Grounded in solid science, the Tuolumne River Voluntary Agreement is a revolutionary approach to managing and balancing water supplies to support thriving communities and fisheries.” — *The TRVA Partners: Tuolumne Irrigation District, Modesto Irrigation District and San Francisco Public Utilities Commission*



IMPLEMENTATION CAN PROCEED WITHOUT DELAY

MISCONCEPTION ✘

The TRVA will require years of planning, permitting and construction before changes in flow will occur.

FACT ✔

Some preliminary design work has already commenced and upon the approval of the Agreement, implementation of the TRVA's management actions can begin immediately. It is in the best interest of everyone to improve Tuolumne River conditions for the fishery, water supply reliability, the local economy, and recreation. The Partners to the Agreement are committed to demonstrating how this voluntary approach, based on best available science, is superior to the traditional and more narrow regulatory approach.

PROPERLY MEASURING SUCCESS WILL BE CRITICAL

MISCONCEPTION ✘

The best way to determine the success of the TRVA is to show a doubling of the number of Fall Run Chinook Salmon returning to spawn each year.

FACT ✔

The State Water Board convened a nationally respected panel of scientists in 2018 to provide "biological goals" based on best available science to guide development of reasonable targets within the Bay-Delta Plan Update. The Panel noted that a salmon-doubling goal is NOT the appropriate measure because salmon population dynamics are subject to factors that occur outside the Delta and beyond the control of water agencies. The Panel concluded that the focus should be on a growing population of natural-origin salmon, including a positive trend in juvenile fish production.

The panel was chaired by the former Delta Lead Scientist, Dr. Cliff Dahm, and the findings were included in the report, "Developing Biological Goals for the Bay-Delta Plan: Concepts and Ideas from an Independent Scientific Advisory Panel," in April 2019.

TRVA PARTNERS

