The Delta's Largest Natural Reservoir - The Sierra Nevada

Sierra Nevada Conservancy

- Created in 2004: via AB 2600, the Laird-Leslie Sierra Nevada Conservancy Act.
- Mission: To initiate, encourage and support efforts that improve the environmental, economic and social well-being of the Sierra Nevada Region, its communities and the citizens of California.
- Implement Proposition 84 Grant Program to improve watershed health.

Sierra Nevada Facts

The Sierra Nevada features beautiful landscapes, habitat for animal species and destinations for recreation:

- Covers 25 million acres and 25% of California;
- Is home to almost ½ of California's plant species and 60% of animal species;
- Hosts more then 50 million visitors per year;
- Includes the highest peak in the contiguous US, Mt. Whitney at 14,496 ft.; and,
- Removes more carbon from the air per forest acre than the Amazon forest.

www.SIERRANEVADA.CA.GOV

Sierra Nevada Benefits

The Sierra Nevada is the state's primary watershed:

- More that 60% of the state's developed water supply;
- All or part of the drinking water for 23 million people;
- Major source for agriculture;
- Urban water source, e.g.;
  - San Francisco → 85% from Tuolumne watershed
  - East Bay → 90% from Mokelumne Watershed

- Half of the inflow to the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta;
- Supplies 15% of California's energy needs from hydroelectric power generation.

Area of Origin

- Sierra Watersheds serve as a natural reservoir, storing water for a variety of downstream users.
- Sierra water is a principal source for the State Water Project, Central Valley Project, numerous municipalities, irrigation districts and the delta.

Economic Contributions of Sierra Nevada Forests

- Value of water, energy, wood products from our forests.
- Benefits of healthy forests to local communities, the state, and the nation.
- Upstream management impacts these contributions.

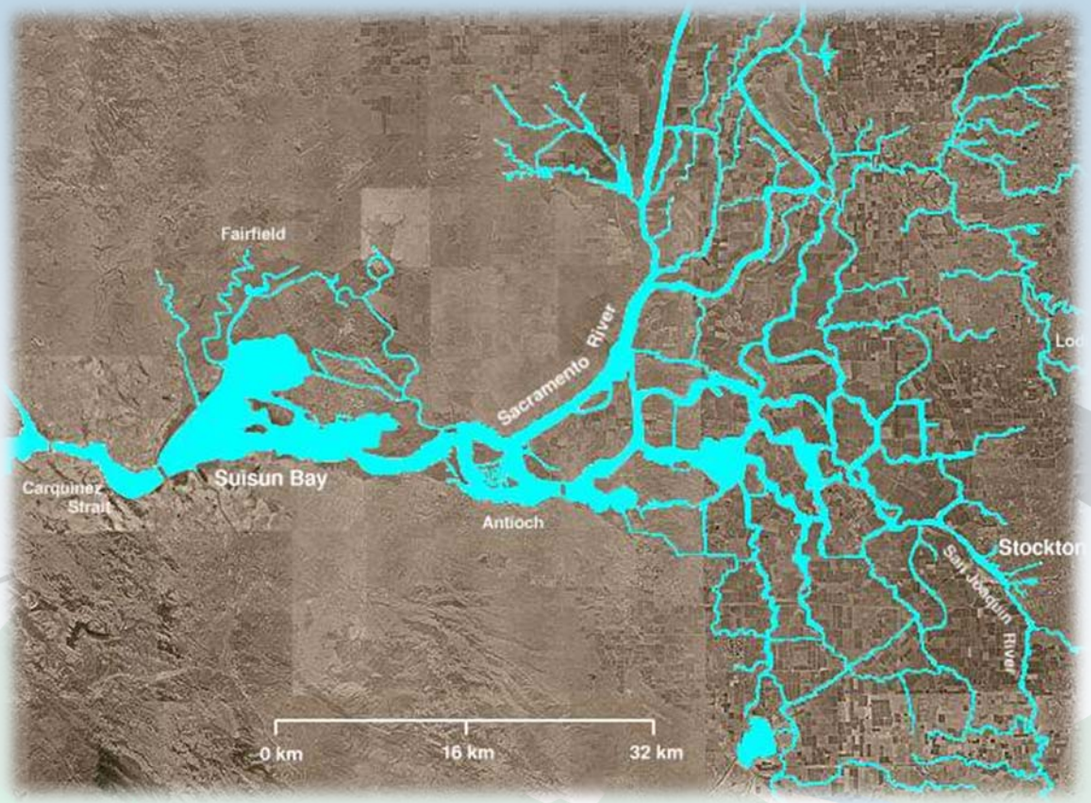
“Ecosystem Services”

How can we better quantify the ecosystem services and benefits that flow from Sierra watersheds?

- Mokelumne Watershed Project
- Natural Capital Project

The Delta Connection

- Without the Sierra Nevada, the Delta is big giant salt marsh,
- Without the Sierra Nevada there is no solution to the issues confronting the Delta,
- Ignore the Delta-Sierra connection at your own risk.



Ongoing Challenges

Restoring forest and watershed health is a foundational element essential for the state's water quality and water supply. Much of the Sierra is at severe risk of fire, made worse by the warming climate. Unhealthy watersheds have a variety of impacts:

- Water Quantity
- Water Quality
- Habitat
- Carbon Storage
- Air Quality
- Recreation

Opportunities

- The Sierra Nevada Region should be a topic included in all discussions concerning water planning in the state.
- Investment and policy decisions regarding meeting the state's water needs should consider, at a minimum:
  - Restoring Forest Health;
  - Reducing Risk of Catastrophic Fire;
  - Restoring Watershed and Meadow Function; and,
  - Conserving Land to Protect Key Benefits.