American River Conservancy Water Quality Assessment: South Fork American and Cosumnes River Basins

American River Conservancy

Volunteers participate in a training session.

Award Amount
$96,700

Watershed
American and Cosumnes River Watersheds

County
Amador, Calaveras, El Dorado, Nevada, and Placer Counties

CALFED Region
Sacramento Valley Region

Legislative Districts
US Congress: 3 and 4
State Assembly: 4 and 10
State Senate: 1

Purpose

Improve stream monitoring analyses and watershed management decisions within the South Fork American and Cosumnes River Basins.

Project Goals

- Identify reference stream conditions within the study region.
- Determine the effect of water diversion on stream habitat quality.
- Facilitate the communication of information among regional water quality monitoring groups and public agencies.

Benefits to the CALFED Program

The South Fork American and Cosumnes Rivers support endangered anadromous fish populations and have been identified by the Ecosystem Restoration Program (ERP) as target watersheds for restoration activities. The visions for the American and Cosumnes Rivers include restoring an ecologically based streamflow plan, modifying floodplain and channel conditions, and supporting the development of locally sponsored watershed planning. This project supports those goals by identifying stream conditions that can be used as models for natural streamflows, natural ecosystem and channel conditions, and restored watershed functions. This effort also ensures long-term sustainability of local watershed activities by collecting baseline data and providing a clearinghouse for information exchange among groups.

Project Overview

The goals of the American River Conservancy (ARC) Water Quality Assessment are to improve stream monitoring analyses and watershed management decisions within the South Fork American and Cosumnes River basins. This is a three-part process.

Identify reference stream conditions. Reference streams are those that most clearly approximate natural conditions and that have been relatively undisturbed by human activity. Reference streams help determine best-quality habitat conditions to which watershed managers and conservation groups may compare stream conditions to make more informed land and water-use decisions.

Determine the effect of water diversions on stream habitat quality. There are 247 known water diversions within the Cosumnes River Basin. Prior to this project, no data existed that addressed the effects of water diversions as a point source disturbance to Cosumnes stream communities. Determining the effects of such diversions on stream health is assisting watershed managers and conservation groups to prioritize actions and decisions within this region.

Facilitate communication among regional water quality monitoring groups and public agencies. Several independent stream monitoring groups are working in the 5-county central Sierra Nevada foothills region, from Nevada County to Calaveras County. Prior to this project, the regional usefulness of data within these groups was limited by a dearth of easily comparable data and a lack of communication among groups. This project creates a data organization and distribution repository to facilitate dissemination of stream monitoring information among these central foothill monitoring groups.

Stream monitoring in progress.

Contact Information

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