

Putah Creek Council

History - Programs - Plans



Carrie Shaw, Executive Director



Putah Creek
Council

Lower Putah Creek Watershed



Inter-Dam Reach



CDFW Designated Wild Trout Stream



Lake Solano Park



Recreation



Lower Putah Creek

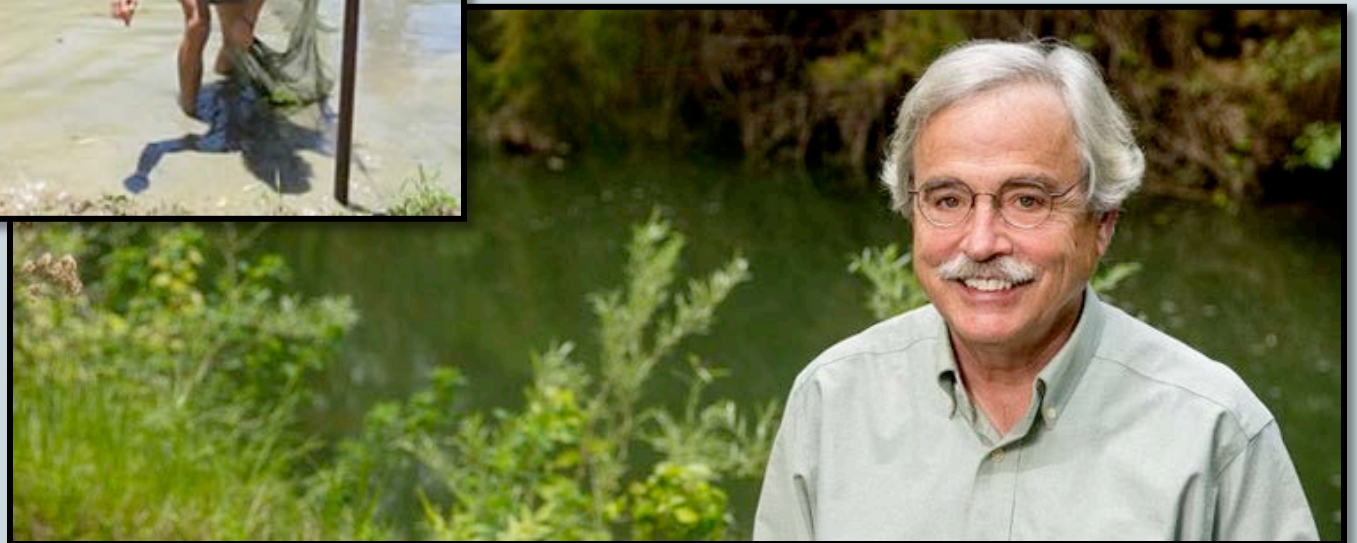


Winters Putah Creek Nature Park



U.C. Davis Putah Creek Riparian Reserve

Research and Recreation



City of Davis South Fork Preserve





Yolo Basin – Yolo Bypass Farming, Wildlife and Flood Protection



HISTORICAL PUTAH CREEK



Lower Putah Creek Flooding

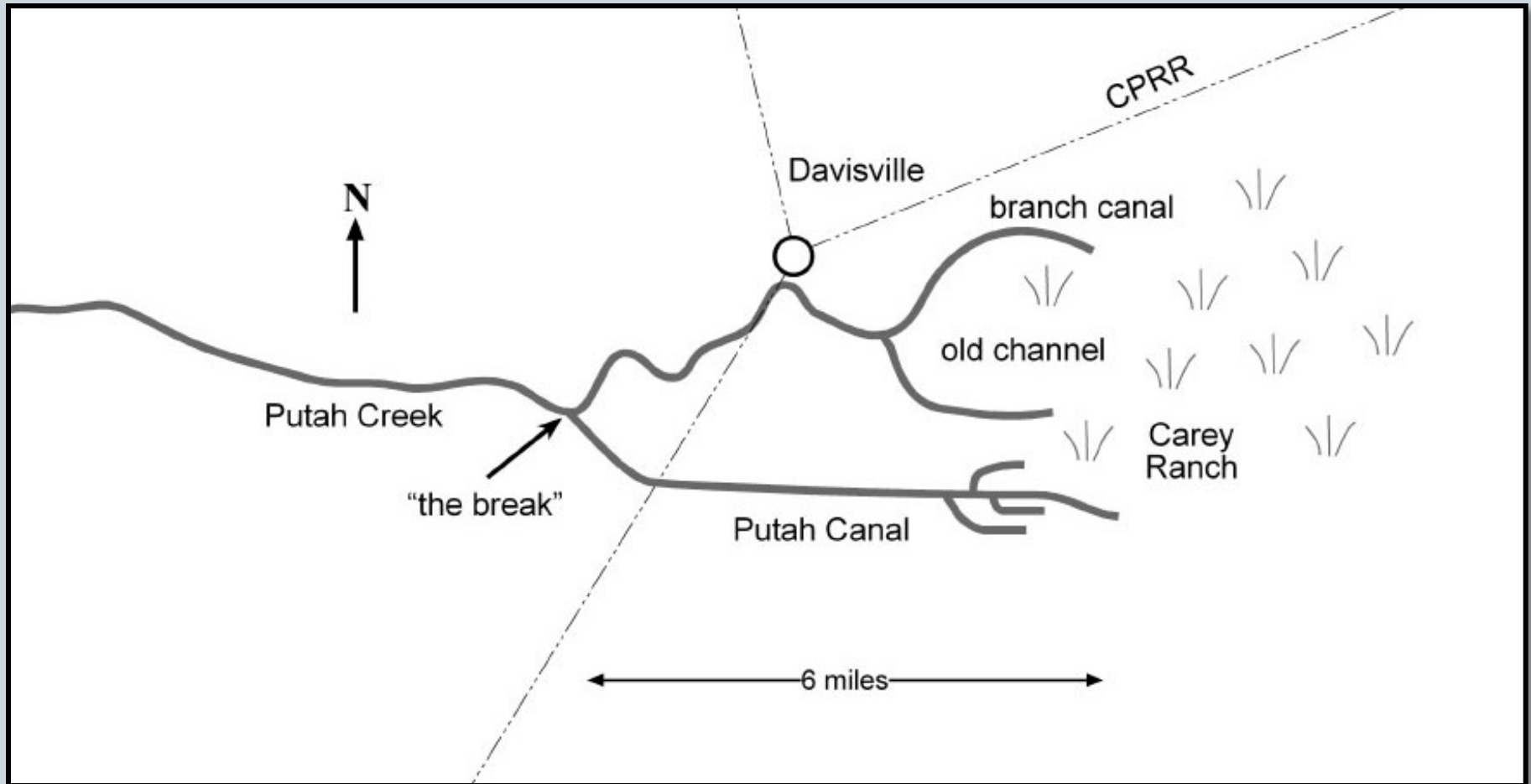
Pre-dam peak $\sim 50,000$ cfs



Impacts to Putah Creek

- **1855-1870** – “Reclamation” of Putah Sinks
- **1870s** – Creation of “South Fork” Putah Creek
- **1930s** – Winters Percolation Dam
- **1940s – 1950s**
 - Blocking of “North Fork” (UCD Arboretum)
 - Levee Construction
 - Channel Incision
- **1953-1953** – Construction of the Solano Project
- **1940s-1970s** – Gravel mining, Sewage Ponds
- **Dumping**
- **Non-native invasive plants**

Reclamation of Putah Sinks and Creation of the “South Fork”



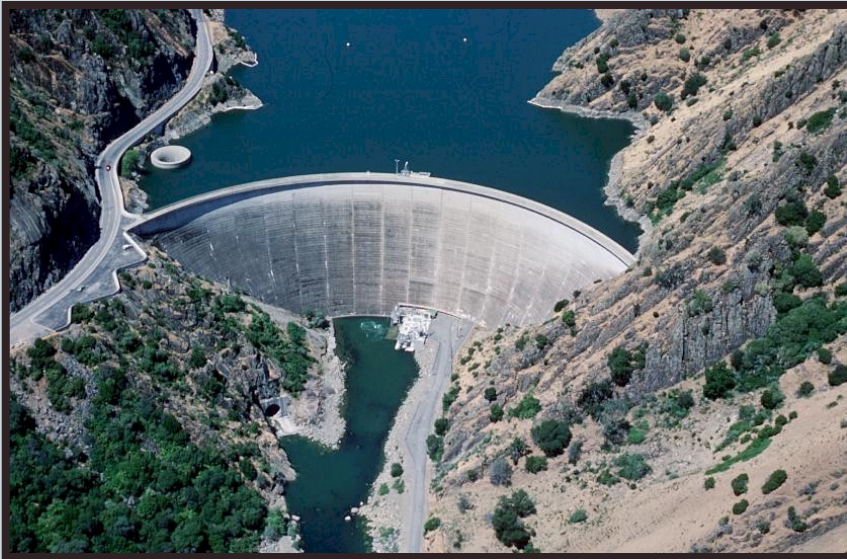
Winters Percolation Dam – 1930s



Present-Day View of “the Break” and U.S. Army Corps Dam



Solano Project – 1957



Gravel Mining



Dumping - “Detroit Rip-Rap”



Invasive, Exotic Plants

Himalayan Blackberry
(*Rubus sp.*)



Giant Reed (*Arundo donax*)

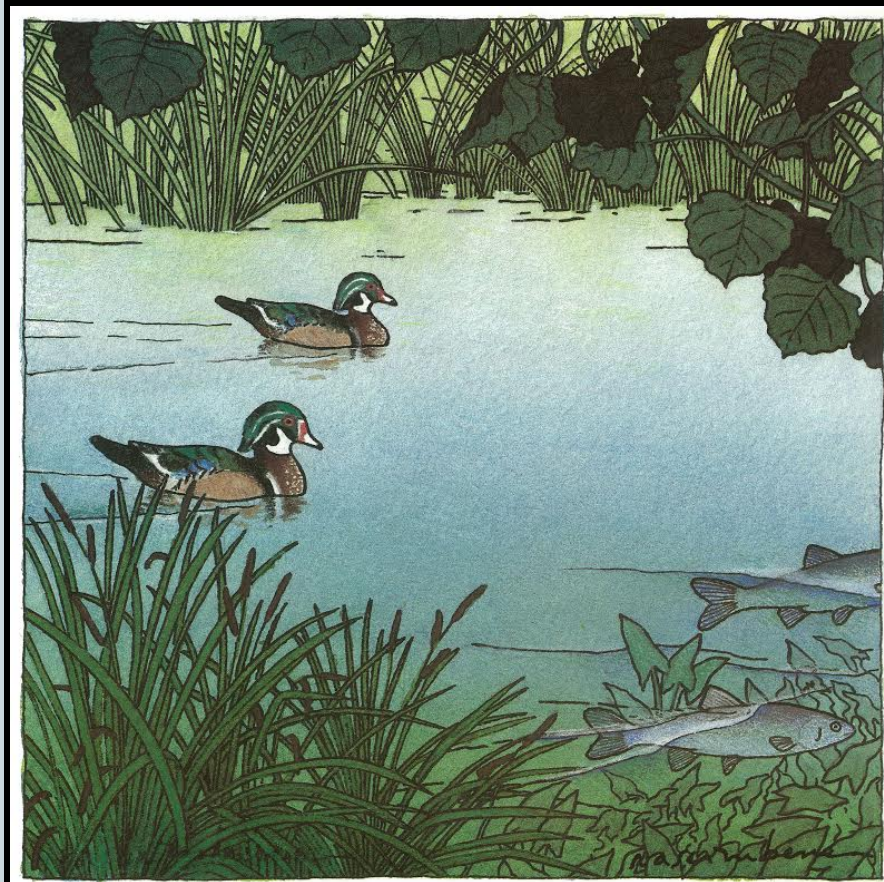
Invasive, Exotic Plants

Tree of Heaven
(*Ailanthus altissima*)



Eucalyptus Removal

HISTORY OF PUTAH CREEK COUNCIL



Putah Creek Council

Putah Creek Council Timeline

1988 - 2016

- **1988 - 1990** – The “Years of Innocence”
- **1990 - 2000** – The Litigation-Accord Years
- **2000 - Present** – Maturing as a Nonprofit

The “Years of Innocence”

1988 and 1989

- **February, 1988** – First meeting of Putah Creek Council
- **Putah Creek News** – Awareness and Appreciation
- **Outings and Tours** – Canoe Trips, Butterfly Walks, Bird Watching, Geology and Botany Field Trips
- **Stewardship** – Creek Clean-Ups and Acorn Plantings
- **Gathering Information** – scientific information about the creek and the contacting landowners



PUTAH CREEK NEWS

NEWSLETTER OF THE PUTAH CREEK COUNCIL

Vol. 1 no. 3

June/July 1988

BIRDATHON A BIG SUCCESS

We surpassed our most optimistic expectations and raised \$2,500 with the Davis Audubon Society/Putah Creek Council Birdathon. The birdathon, which involved six teams composed of 15 birdwatchers who try to find as many species of birds as possible in a 24-hour period. Prior to the big day they enlist the support of sponsors who pay a little or a lot for every bird species observed. According to Putah Creek birdathon rules, all birders had to confine their birding activity to Yolo County.

The largest sum, \$850.00 was raised by six birders from the "Putah Creek Group" (Sid England, Erich Marzolf, Bill Perry, Gwen Starrett, Rose Stefani, and Jeff Wilcox). They received the Flying Eagle Award for their outstanding contribution. Ted Beedy and Bruce Maxwell

SWAINSON'S HAWK SURVEY RESULTS

The Putah Creek Council survey on June 11th revealed a total of 20 Swainson's Hawk territories along the north and south forks of Putah Creek. The survey confirms our initial assessment of the creek as critical habitat for this threatened raptor. Putah Creek and adjacent Willow Slough are strongholds for Swainson's Hawks in the northern Central Valley; Putah Creek alone supports about 5% of the estimated population of Swainson's Hawks in the state. Twenty nesting territories is likely to be a conservative estimate; as many as 25 pairs may actually inhabit the Putah Creek area.

Eighteen volunteer birdwatchers, most of them Putah Creek Council and/or Davis Audubon members, conducted the survey. We gathered at



Stewardship



Awareness and
Appreciation

The Litigation Years

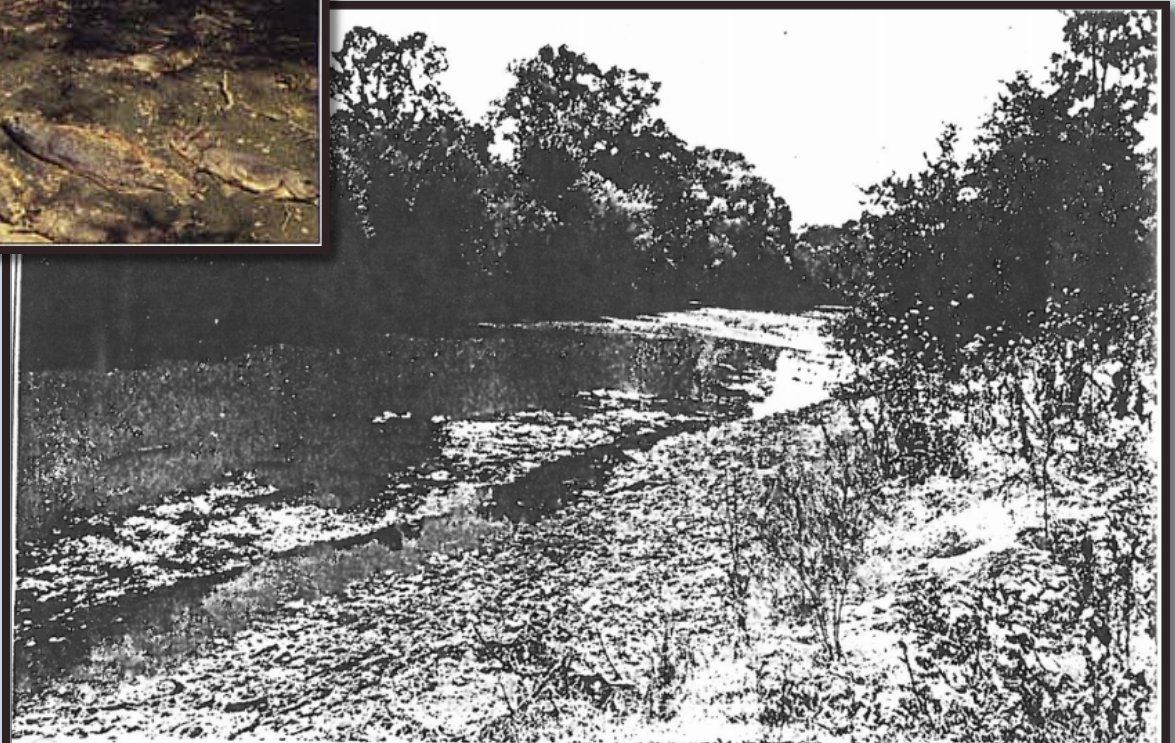
1989 - 2000

- **July, 1989** – Portions of the creek dry up for first time
- **1990** – Putah Creek Council becomes a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization (nonprofit)
- **1990** – Putah Creek Council files lawsuit
- **1993** – City of Davis and U.C. Davis join lawsuit
- **April, 1996** – Judge Park issues judgment
- **May, 2000** – Putah Creek “Accord”



Dead Fish at U.C. Davis Putah Creek Riparian Reserve

Davis Enterprise
July 12, 1989



Stream flows are down to a trickle or worse at the Putah Creek Reserve, southwest of Davis, where the Camp Putah summer program is held.
Davis Enterprise 7/12/89 Photo by Todd Hammond

Portions of Putah Creek parched

Putah Creek is a public trust resource

We must work to ensure long-term flow of water

EDITOR'S NOTE: Steve Chainey of Davis is a vegetation ecologist, natural resource consultant and chairman of the Putah Creek Council, a local conservation group with members throughout Yolo and Solano counties.

By STEVE CHAINEY

On a balmy afternoon in late June of this year, Putah Creek began to dry up in early summer for the first time in recent memory. Water diversion, ground water percolation, natural evaporation and transpiration by streamside plants all played a role in causing the summer trickle to disappear before reaching the lower 15 miles of the creek on its 30-mile journey from Monticello Dam to the Yolo Bypass.

No one noticed the once perennial creek bed, obscured by dense barrier forest and thicket, turn to thousands of fragments of baked mud supporting a mosaic of lifeless forms of aquatic life, including fish, crayfish and frogs embedded in the surface.

Thousands of terrestrial animals representing numerous species dependent on the creek for food and cover lost their habitat and many fled the area, exposing them to new dangers. Cottonwood, willow and boxelder trees closest to the water line immediately began losing color and vigor.

A local environmental tragedy occurred behind our backs, like a faint whisper unheard above the

din of our air-conditioned rooms, while diverted water for municipal, industrial and agricultural use flowed on demand, business as usual.

This was not just another natural calamity befallen our precious local resource by an unpredictable drought. Even the severe extended drought period of 1976-78 took a lesser toll on Putah Creek, with at least some flow supporting plant life well into late summer. Last year, a drier year with a hotter summer, experienced no such interruption of flow in the creek.

Over the past 1½ months, local newspapers have chronicled the events of the Putah Creek drought, including the much heralded and hard-won emergency "solution" to purchase 1,000 acre-feet of water from the Solano Irrigation District for \$25 per acre-foot (the equivalent cost of ground water pumping).

SID then sent the water in a pipe owned by the University of California from the diversion dam at Lake Solano to the midpoint of the creek where water seemed to be needed most critically to renew or sustain waning life along the creek.

Beginning on Aug. 4, a flow of 5 cubic feet per second (cfs) has entered the creek via the pipeline located a few hundred feet upstream of the Pedrick Road bridge (County Road 98). Within two days a thin ribbon of water was once again flowing on the most visible reaches

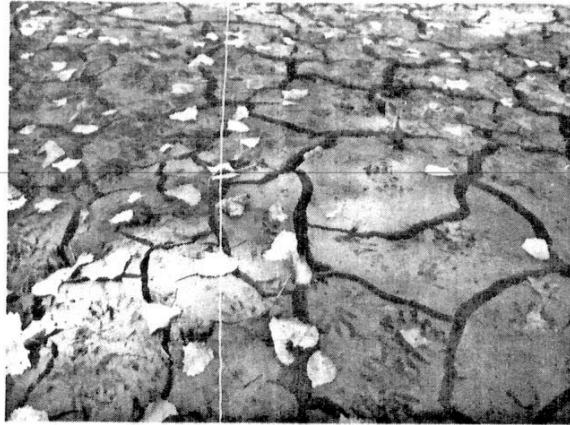


Photo by Alison Portello

Tracks in the mud

Raccoon tracks can be seen in the dry, cracked bed of Putah Creek upstream from the Pedrick Road bridge. The raccoons have been feasting on fish, crayfish and frogs that have died from lack of water.

of the creek south of Davis.

The emergency release of a small amount of water through the pipeline did not address two nagging possibilities — both of which are now sad realities to the wildlife and to the people who live and farm along the creek. First, 5 cubic feet per second is not enough flow to reach the lower several miles of the creek that has been without water for most of the last two months.

But even more distressing, several miles of densely forested creek upstream of the pipeline gradually trickled to a halt and has been without flow for three weeks now. If the pools along this reach dry out as well, a vital reproductive component of the fishery will be

lost and the best habitat on all of Putah Creek for the elusive wood duck and the rare and threatened Swainson's hawk will suffer irreparable damage.

The obvious question to ask is, what are we going to do now to save Putah Creek from continued decline of riparian habitat and loss of wildlife? The official answer is, unfortunately, nothing in the near future and certainly not this summer. The simple fact is the entire creek needs more water, its own water, to sustain life during the dry season.

But Putah Creek water has been made a commodity on the competitive water market and the riparian habitat of Putah Creek below the diversion dam is not a pay-

ing customer in the traditional sense. The creek and all its friends and residents stand last in line after municipal, industrial and agricultural customers of the Solano Project divert their normal yearly allocation, regardless of whether we are in a dry climatic cycle or not.

The inestimable value of Putah Creek to wildlife, native flora, aesthetics and passive recreational use apparently have no barter value and little clout under the present system of water allocation and stream management of Putah Creek by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation and the State Water Resources Control Board.

Although the Putah Creek Council supported and participated in the negotiations for the present (and now obviously inadequate) emergency solution, we are fundamentally and philosophically opposed to a future long-term settlement that includes the obligatory purchase of water at market rates to maintain stream flow at a minimal level to sustain existing riparian and aquatic habitat.

The doctrine of public trust, rooted in Roman law and interpreted broadly by many recent court decisions, holds that certain natural resources are the property of all and that the state has a duty to supervise the reasonable use of those resources for the benefit of all the people.

Diverting upstream water for the Solano Project to the point of induced premature drought downstream constitutes unreasonable and one-sided use to the public detriment.

Public trust values of Putah Creek include 30 miles, or about

2,000 acres, of unique remnant valley riparian habitat, local and regional groundwater recharge, riparian water rights for creekside farmers, irreplaceable natural beauty and use for open space recreation and nature appreciation. These public values existed prior to the construction of Monticello dam and therefore unbroken water flow in lower Putah Creek should be guaranteed by the state with minimal flow rates maintained outside the influence of Solano Project management for water marketing in the service area.

In general terms, Putah Creek Council is asking for your support of a long-term strategy for protecting the creek against death by drought that should include the following basic elements:

- Establish an absolute minimum flow rate (5 cfs, for example) that must be maintained at all lower bridge crossings, including Mace Boulevard, Old Davis Road, I-80, Pedrick Road and Stevenson's Bridge.

- Eliminate the optional dry year water release schedule for the Solano diversion dam, which has been shown to penalize one-sidedly the natural creek and farmers with riparian water rights on lower Putah Creek.

- Provide an option for interested parties to purchase additional surface water at wholesale rates to be used for future enhancement of riparian and wetland habitat along Putah Creek.

For more information or to join Putah Creek Council and receive "Putah Creek News" bimonthly, send your name and telephone number to P.O. Box 743, Davis, CA 95617, or call 753-7917, or 662-2655.

April, 1996 Judgment

- **Putah Creek**, in my opinion, *“is a treasure”* – Judge Richard Park.
- **Established environmental flows** for the first time.
- **50% more water** for Putah Creek, BUT
- **No flows for “anadromous” fish** – salmon and steelhead, STILL
- **Solano County** water interests appealed, so *four more years of negotiations*.



2000 Putah Creek “Accord”

- **Resident** Native Fish Flows
- **Anadromous** Fish Flows
- **Improved** Drought Flow Release Schedule
- **Formalization of the LPCCC** and Establishment of a Putah Creek Streamkeeper
- Habitat Restoration and Fish and Wildlife Monitoring **Funds in Perpetuity**
- **Landowner** Water Rights

Why Were We Successful?

1. The Law.

- The Public Trust Doctrine requires the state to protect the environment of its waterways and tidelands.
- Fish and Game Code 5937 requires dam operators to maintain fish below dams in “good condition.”

Why Were We Successful?

2. The Coalition. The Council, City of Davis and U.C. Davis formed a broad and formidable coalition.

3. Our Principles. Putah Creek Council is guided by the best available science. We never sought to exaggerate our case.

4. Our Supporters. Volunteer experts, landowners intimate with the creek, and community members who felt connected to the creek provided help and advice.

Why Were We Successful?

5. The Setting. Final resolution came from informal negotiations outside the adversarial limitations of a courtroom.

6. Changing Values. Solano County water interests saw the writing on the wall...

- **1992 – CVPIA** nudges the Bureau of Reclamation
- **1994 – LADWP** accepted protections for Mono Lake
- **1995 – CALFED** program to heal the Bay-Delta
- **1999 – San Joaquin River Agreement**



The Post-Litigation Years

- **2000** – Streamkeeper Hired
- **2001** – Putah Creek Discovery Corridor Cooperative
- **2002** – Putah Creek Council Hires Program Staff
- **2003** – Adopt-a-Reach Activities
- **2004** – U.C. Davis Hires Putah Creek Reserve Steward
- **2005** – Putah Creek Watershed Management Plan
Stream Biomonitoring, Habitat Restoration
- **2006** – Channel Realignment
- **2007** – CreekSpeak Presentation Series
- **2008** – Putah Creek Guidebook Published
- **2009** – Stewardship Program Expanded
- **2014** – Education Program Expanded

Streamkeeper – Rich Marovich



CURRENT ACTIVITIES, PROJECTS AND PROGRAMS



Putah Creek
Council

Education Programs

Salmon in the Classroom
Salmon in the Bypass



WaterWays

Water Use, Water Conservation
and Watershed Protection and Restoration



One Creek | Putah Creek

Summer Restoration Internship



Lake Solano Docent Tours



Stewardship Program Partners



**CREEK
WORKS**


Lower Putah Creek
Coordinating Committee

707-455-1107

<http://www.scwaz.com/water-supply/lpccc>



**Solano
Resource
Conservation
District**



**YOLO COUNTY
RCD**



CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF
FORESTRY & FIRE PROTECTION

**CAL
FIRE**

SINCE 1885



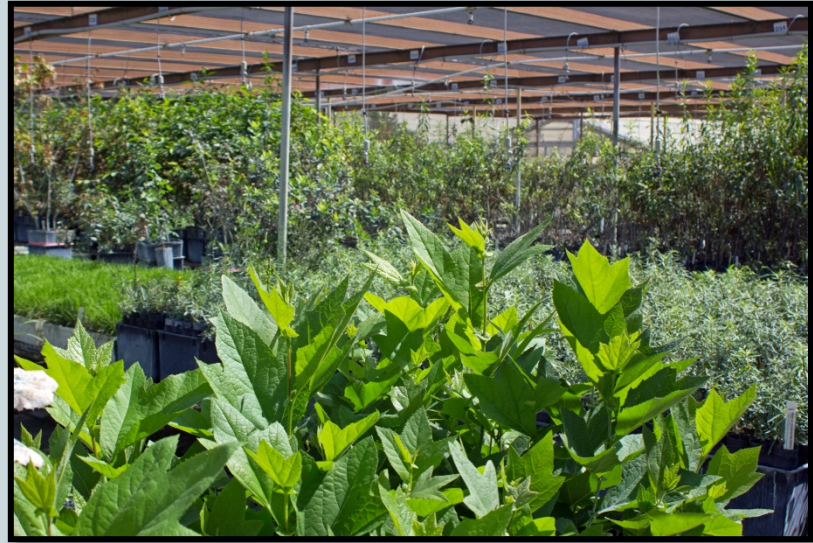
Solano
County Parks

Stewardship Team



Native Plant Nursery

Partnership of CALFIRE, LPCCC and Putah Creek Council



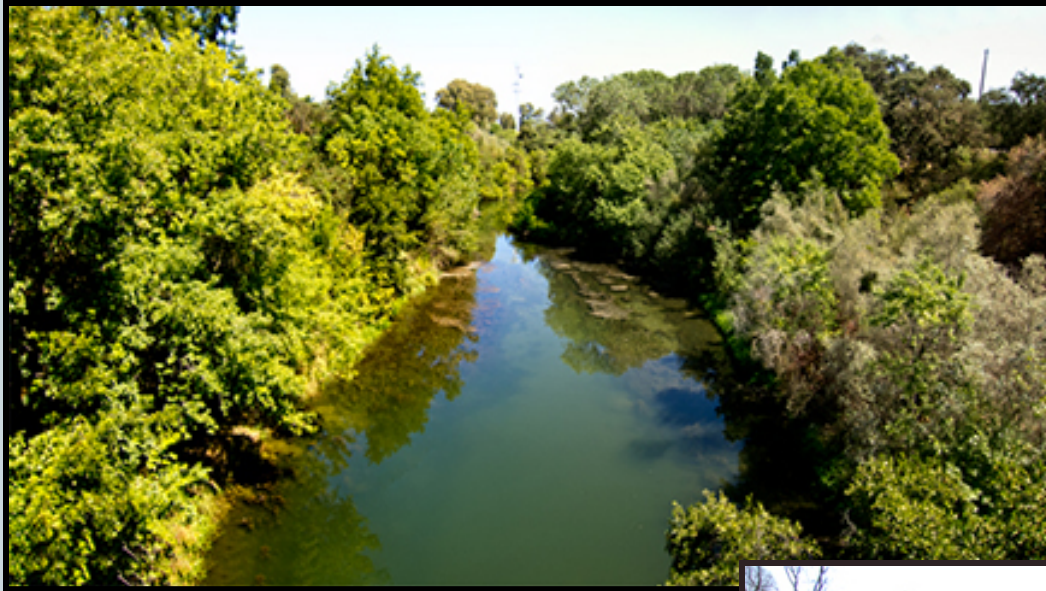
Native Plant Nursery



Putah Creek Cleanups



Restoration Projects



Winters Putah Creek
Nature Park

Before

Shortly After



WPCNP Current Conditions



5009-22RPS_6-16-15_KDavis

Erosion Control and Habitat Planting



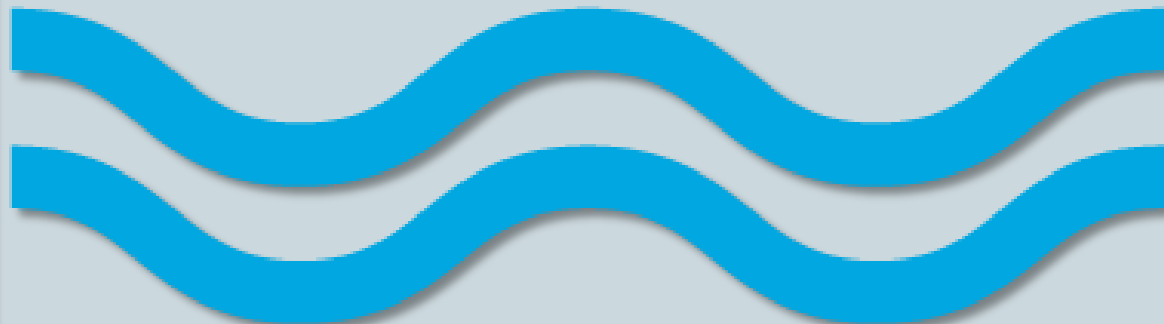
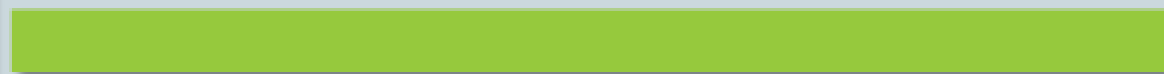
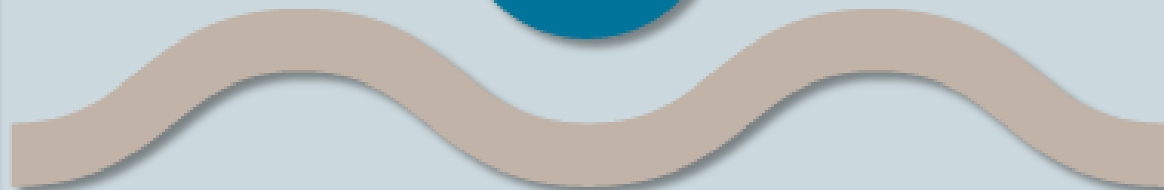
Fall-Run Chinook Salmon



Photos Courtesy of
Ken Davis



PROP 1



GOVERNOR EDMUND G. BROWN, JR.

WATER BOND 2014

RELIABILITY | RESTORATION | RESILIENCE

Thank You!

