



TULARE BASIN WILDLIFE PARTNERS
Creating Opportunities for Nature and People

Annual Report

2013

2013: Year of Drought

There's just no other way to begin an annual report about the driest year on record than to acknowledge the gravity of the situation. It's dry. And the impacts are far-reaching. But let's also look for the silver lining.

The State of California declared a drought emergency on January 17. Since then, the Tulare Basin Wildlife Partners (TBWP) and its partners have been working to ensure that all angles of the drought and its impacts are communicated. Of particular concern is the effect of the drought on migrating birds. We stand in solidarity with our friends at the Central Valley Joint Venture who developed [this summary](#) highlighting the importance of water to the Valley's wildlife refuges. Furthermore, [this letter](#) to the Governor is a call to action to maintain water deliveries to the millions of birds who nest, forage, and breed in the Central Valley's wetlands and refuges as they migrate along the Pacific Flyway.

The drought provides a challenging opportunity to us all, as Californians, to find innovative solutions to our water problems. These solutions must be integrated so that they provide multiple benefits to the equally important and competing demands for our limited water supplies.



Pixley National Wildlife Refuge (Photo by Niki Woodard)

TBWI Reports to the DOC

The TBWP sends quarterly reports to the California Department of Conservation. These reports summarize accomplishments and activities completed during the reporting period, as well as benefits to the watershed. Please click on the links below to read more.

- [11th Quarter](#) (November 19, 2013 - February 18, 2014)
- [10th Quarter](#) (August 19, 2013 - November 18, 2013)
- [9th Quarter](#) (May 19, 2013 - August 18, 2013)
- [8th Quarter & Year 2 Annual Report](#) (February 19, 2013 - May 18, 2013 / May 19, 2012 - May 18, 2013)
- [7th Quarter](#) (November 19, 2012 - February 18, 2013)

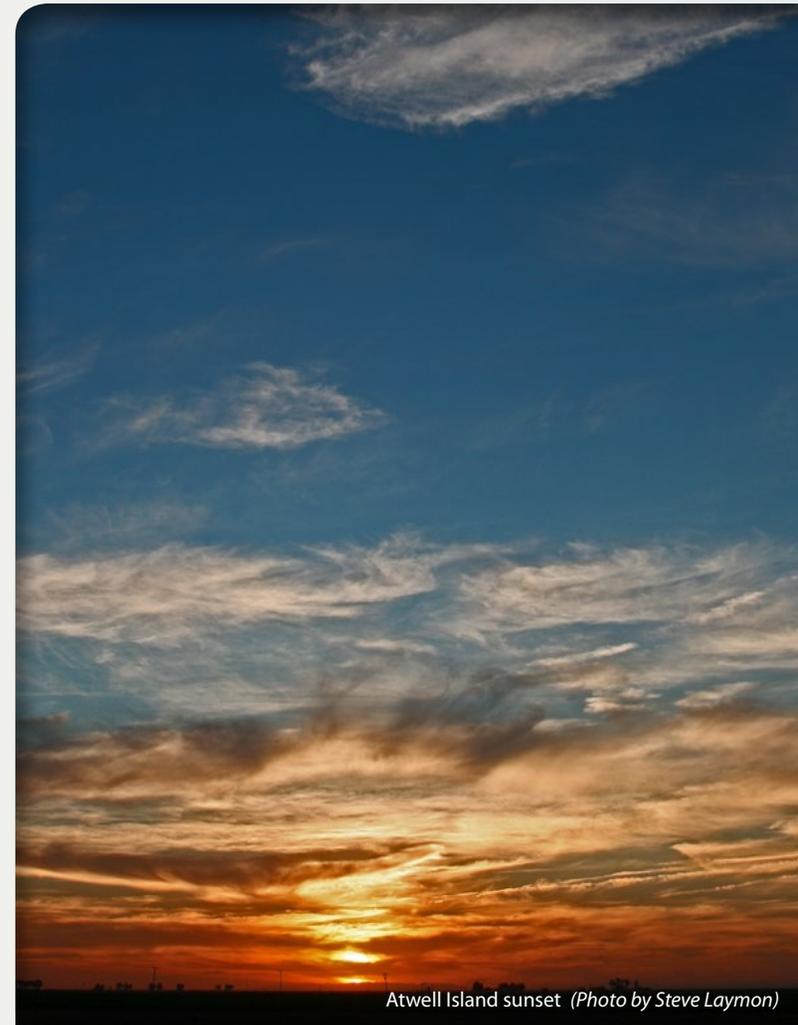
In an effort to help our partners identify and implement solutions in these dry times, the TBWP is seeking additional funding to continue efforts begun under the California Department of Conservation Watershed Program grant, set to end May 18, 2014. We will focus our next-phase efforts on delivering outcomes related to four TBWI objectives that have particular relevance to drought response, flood preparedness, and climate change adaptation: 1) identify environmental benefits that can be added to specific IRWM water projects, 2) identify funding sources for and increase the fundability of IRWM and other regional projects with environmental/watershed benefits, 3) coordinate with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to assist in the implementation of Wetland Reserve Program (WRP) and other NRCS programs, and 4) provide riparian and wildlife corridor concepts to assist IRWM (and other partner entities) integrate climate change adaptation and sustainability strategies into IRWM (and other partners') water projects.

Additional funding will allow the TBWP to continue its work with a focus on implementing "on-the-ground" projects that provide for groundwater replenishment, storm water management, and regional water supply self-sufficiency.

The sustainability and prosperity of California's future must prioritize both economic and environmental outcomes. We have much work to do, and we accept the challenge to work smarter and work harder. Onward!

2013 Accomplishments and Activities

- 1.** TBWP and the TBWI Watershed Coordinator worked with the Westside Resource Conservation District (RCD), multiple state and federal agencies, and private landowners on a pilot project along Salt Creek. The “West Hills Conservation Project” evaluates capacity limitations of creeks and streams from the Sierra watershed and the West Hills onto the San Joaquin Valley floor — limitations resulting from encroachment by development, invasive species, and sedimentation.
- 2.** TBWP, the TBWI Watershed Coordinator, and several agency and individual partners worked on developing solutions for managing flood flows on the White River through the Allensworth Ecological Reserve (ER) and surrounding communities. The goal is to protect and aid in the recovery of upland threatened/endangered species (including Tipton’s kangaroo rat, blunt-nosed leopard lizard, and San Joaquin kit fox) on the reserve, while also protecting communities.
- 3.** TBWP and the TBWI Watershed Coordinator helped gain an additional \$200,000 from the Bureau of Reclamation for the Pixley Conservation Project, funded through a CVPCP grant awarded in 2012, bringing the total amount of funding to \$648,000.
- 4.** TBWP and the TBWI Watershed Coordinator partnered with Angiola Water District and state and federal agencies to begin scoping and advancing a flood management project that would convert a large ranch on the former Tulare Lake bed to a storage basin. The project would provide flood protection for local communities, water supply benefits for wetlands and farms, and climate change adaptation strategies.
- 5.** TBWP and the TBWI team continue to work closely with community leaders, the Bureau of Land Management, and nonprofit groups like Self-Help Enterprises to improve water quality and supply, and enhance education and recreation opportunities in the southwestern part of Tulare County. Funding for the TBWP’s activities in rural communities is provided by BLM and Southern California Edison.
- 6.** TBWP hosted two Tulare Basin Working Group meetings in 2013. Its spring tour in May took participants to several NRCS Wetland Reserve Program conservation easements in and near Alpaugh, including BLM’s Atwell Island Project. The fall meeting, held in October in Fresno, convened a large and diverse audience to review and build awareness about the San Joaquin Valley Greenprint project — a regional data collection and mapping effort that can enhance collaboration
- 7.** TBWP launched a major website upgrade to the Tulare Basin Wildlife Partners website — www.tularebasinwildlifepartners.org — at the end of 2013. The new site makes valuable information and resources about the Tulare Basin more accessible.



Atwell Island sunset (Photo by Steve Laymon)

Looking Ahead

The TBWP/TBWI launched a new collaborative effort — Watershed Connections — to convene upper and lower watershed managers and stakeholders to better manage the health of the watershed as a unit. The initial meeting, held on February 25, focused on: identifying watershed/landscape-level issues, identifying/reviewing current watershed and conservation science, and sharing information about current resource management/conservation/stakeholder groups and how they are addressing key watershed issues.

[Read more >>](#)

TBWP is launching the Land Use and Natural Resource Integration (LUNRI) program in 2014, thanks to a \$19,000 grant from the Fresno Regional Foundation, awarded at the end of 2013. Through the LUNRI program, the TBWP will work with county planners to better integrate natural resource stewardship into urban and rural growth strategies. The goal is to advance resource-efficient, compact communities that avoid urbanizing key natural resource areas like groundwater recharge zones, wildlife corridors, and prime farmland.

[Read more >>](#)

TBWP launched the *Rural Communities Resource Center* in the spring of 2014 to enhance its commitment to serving rural, disadvantaged communities in the Tulare Basin. The online portal aims to equip rural community leaders and resource managers working in rural communities with the information they need to conceptualize, plan and implement multi-benefit projects that improve quality of life in the San Joaquin Valley's rural and often disadvantaged areas. Funding for the RCRC portal was provided by the Pacific Gas and Electric Company.

Congratulations to Bob Shaffer



Bob Shaffer, CVJV 25th Anniversary (Photo by CVJV)

Bob Shaffer retired from his position as Coordinator of the Central Valley Joint Venture (CVJV) on March 3, 2013 after more than 30 years of federal service. He is renowned for his leadership, effectiveness, and good humor. Ruth Ostroff – formerly Assistant Coordinator, CVJV – now serves as Acting Coordinator, CVJV. We are grateful to Bob for his dedication to conserving migratory bird habitat in the Central Valley. We are also grateful that Bob will continue to serve as an Advisor to the TBWP Board of Directors.



Elizabeth Palmer (NRCS), Jihadda Govan (BLM-Bakersfield), Carole Combs (TBWP) at the TBWG Spring 2013 meeting and tour. (Photo by Niki Woodard)

Tulare Basin Opportunities

The TBWP recently checked in with partners and stakeholders to evaluate our efforts and seek feedback on the challenges and opportunities facing integrated resource managers in the Tulare Basin.

Of course, water is on everyone's mind right now, but the survey results point to some more instructive and nuanced guidance.

About 50% of respondents indicated that there is great opportunity in the region for (in order of ranking): 1) habitat restoration, 2) groundwater replenishment, 3) improving drinking water conditions, and 4) improving coordination between upper and lower watershed managers and consumers.

While respondents didn't overwhelmingly indicate "great opportunity" for improvements in the political process, the majority (two-thirds) of respondents indicated that there is "some opportunity" for better advocacy to elected officials (state and federal) about opportunities in the Tulare Basin, as well as *some opportunity* (56% of responses) for increased coordination with local officials on land use planning, smart growth, and natural resource sustainability.

[Read more >>](#)

Some Words About Flow: The Tulare Valley

California's painful drought has called widespread attention to the subject of water in our state—not only its finite supply and our precarious relationship with the volatility of its supply, but also water quality, storage, conveyance, and competing demands, among other aspects of California's complicated water situation.

But there is one aspect of water that is fairly straightforward. It flows. Water flows through natural channels to nourish the land and living creatures who depend upon it.

Amid the clamor of drought concern, TBWP Board President and College of the Sequoias professor, Rob

Hansen, calls our attention back to the sobering nature of water: how and where it flows, and why watersheds define our sense of place.

Rob regularly gives community presentations and teaches his students about the flow of our region's water – from the headwaters of the Sierra Nevada down to its historic drainage destination, the former Tulare Lake. Few people recognize the life-sustaining journey that water makes, and how it connects us all, geographically.

The Central Valley is really three distinct valleys, and here in the southern portion of that great Valley, we reside in what is more appropriately called the Tulare Valley.

According to Rob, "Pretty much since California has been studied and mapped, there's a clear recognition that everything south of the San Joaquin River is a separate watershed from the San Joaquin River to the delta."

And residents south of Fresno down to Bakersfield should be darn proud of that!

Rob points our attention to Gerald Haslam's book, *The Great Central Valley*, which quotes from a 1888 handbook for settlers to the region: "Tulare Valley is better watered, better timbered, and has a more universally level surface than the San Joaquin River. All Tulareans should cooperate in giving the name of their great

Water links us to our neighbor in a way more profound and complex than any other.

~ John Thorson

valley a wide and honorable notoriety, leaving the inhabitants of the San Joaquin to look out for the name and fortune of their portion of the state."

Perhaps it's time for Tulare Valley to embrace, celebrate, and protect the features that distinguish it from the San Joaquin and Sacramento valleys.

The Tulare Valley is home to what was once the largest freshwater lake west of the Mississippi, and in the wettest years, one could actually travel by boat from that historic lake all the way up to the San Francisco Bay.

Though the lake is no longer there, its memory lives on through the efforts of private duck clubs and federal and state agencies who provide wetland habitat for the many species whose life is sustained by this watershed and this distinct valley that unites us all – in years of both drought and flood.

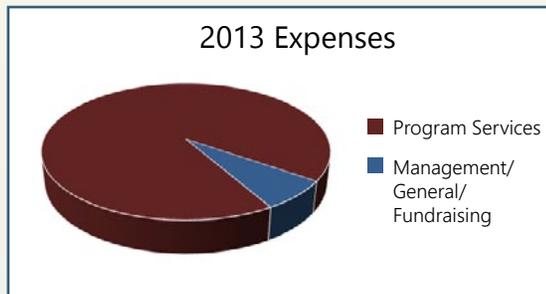
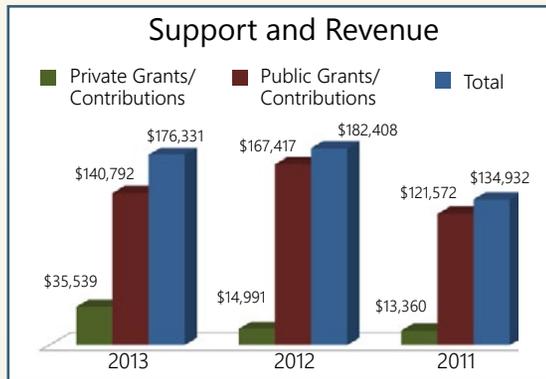
Like blood flowing through veins to nourish our bodies, water flows through rivers and streams and aquifers to nourish the life of its watershed.

It's all about a sense of place.



WRP Wetlands in Alpaugh, CA (Photo by Niki Woodard)

2013 Financial Statement



Assets	2013	2012	2011
Cash	\$44,417	\$37,849	\$47,768
Accounts Receivable	\$35,409	\$32,032	\$33,325
Other Assets	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total Assets	\$79,826	\$69,881	\$81,093

Liabilities	2013	2012	2011
Accounts Payable & Accrued	\$30,705	\$30,002	\$29,619
Notes Payable	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total Liabilities	\$30,705	\$30,002	\$29,619

Net Assets	2013	2012	2011
Net Assets	\$49,121	\$39,879	\$51,474

TBWP is deeply grateful for the investment the following individuals, organizations, and companies made to land and water conservation, restoration, and education projects in the Tulare Basin. Contributors in 2013 include:

Federal and State Agency Grants & Cooperative Agreements

- U.S. Bureau of Land Management, Atwell Island Program, Bakersfield Office
- U.S.D.A. Natural Resources Conservation Service, Wetland Reserve Program
- CA Department of Conservation Watershed Program

Foundation Support

- Fresno Regional Foundation

Corporate Contributions

- Southern California Edison/Edison International
- Pacific Gas and Electric Company

Individual Donors

- John Austin, Kings-Tulare Combined Federal Campaign
- Carole Combs
- Jihadda Govan, Central California Combined Federal Campaign (*pledged*)
- William Loudermilk

- David Mitchell
- Richard Moss
- Thomas Stanton
- Roll Giving/Paramount Farms
- The Wildlife Society, San Joaquin Valley Chapter

Services & In-Kind Contributions

- Conservation Strategy Group, LLC
- Pine, Pedroncelli & Aguilar, Inc.
- Provost and Pritchard Consulting Group, Inc.
- Tech Soup



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Cover photos: John Greening, John Greening,
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Tulare Basin Wildlife Partners is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit that facilitates the engagement of partners, funders and stakeholders in multi-benefit projects to promote ecological and economic health, sustain our agricultural heritage and enhance the quality of life in the Tulare Basin for current and future generations.

The Tulare Basin Wildlife Partners work to provide opportunities for conservation, water management and wildlife as land use continues to change in the Tulare Basin. With its work, TBWP hopes to sustain the qualities that define the region's unique character:

- Natural areas with native plants & animals
- Diverse & unique wildlife
- Opportunities for clean air & water
- Family farms & ranches
- Recreational & educational activities

TBWP is the go-to organization in the Tulare Basin for providing integrated land and water management solutions that balance nature, agriculture and the economy. Your partnership in conserving the Tulare Basin will ensure that future generations continue to benefit from the unique natural qualities of this special place.

A copy of the latest financial statement and registration filed with the Registry of Charitable Trusts may be obtained by contacting the Tulare Basin Wildlife Partners. Contributions are deductible to the extent allowed by law.

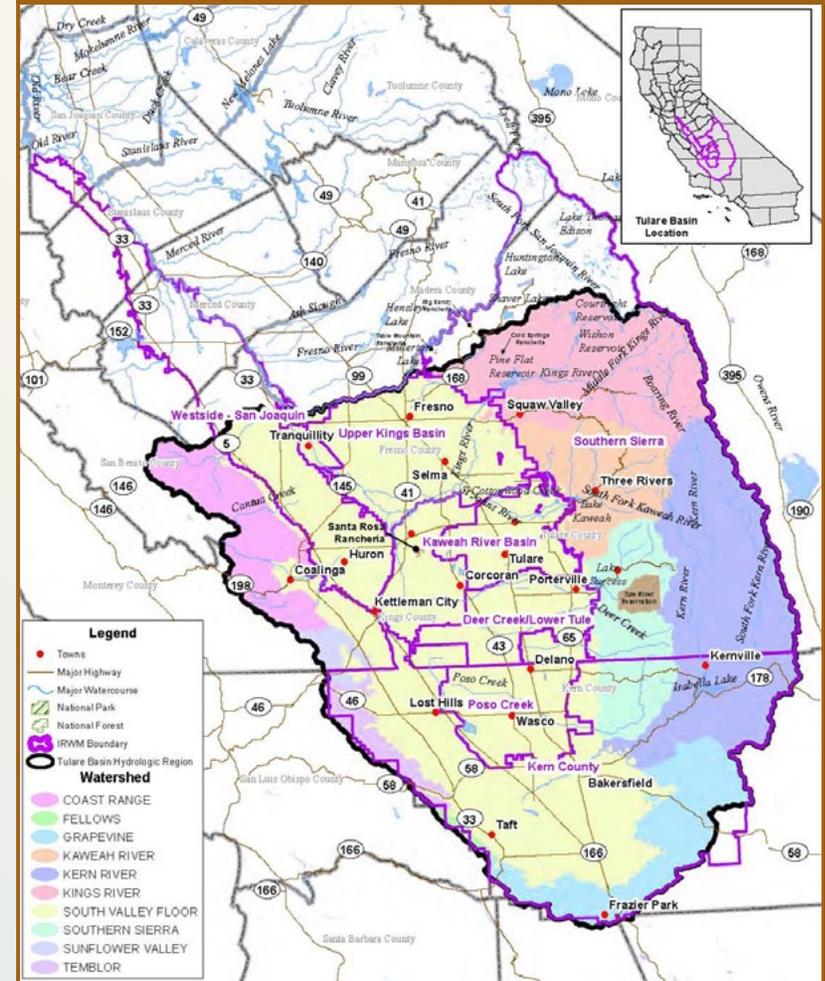
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TBWI/TBWP Project Area



Source: Department of Water Resources