Water Use in California

The new edition of the California Water Plan (Bulletin 160-13) was recently finalized by the California Department of Water Resources, including information on statewide water use in an average water year. The chart below shows how applied water is used in California. Water is managed in California for each of these important beneficial uses, which provides the quality of life we expect.

Irrigated Agriculture
This water produces food for consumption in urban areas while also providing terrestrial and aquatic habitat for a multitude of species.

In the Sacramento Valley, the applied water uses differ from the statewide figures. As the chart shows, water is managed for the mosaic of farms, refuges, fish and cities and rural communities.

Source: California Water Plan at: http://www.waterplan.water.ca.gov/cwpu2013/final/index.cfm
(Volume 1, pages 3-31 through 3-35 and Volume 2, page SR-65)
Water resources managers in the Sacramento Valley are actively implementing various multi-benefit programs and projects for the 21st century that “restores natural aquatic or riparian functions or wetlands habitat for birds and aquatic species, protects or promotes the restoration of endangered or threatened species, enhances the reliability of water supplies on a regional and inter-regional basis, and provides significant regional or statewide economic benefits.” – Proposition 68

The Sacramento Valley is a unique place. Bounded on the east by the Sierra Nevada and the west by the Coast Range, the Valley sweeps 150 miles from Redding to Sacramento.

A mosaic of beautiful, picturesque farmland, world-class wildlife reserves and thriving communities—interwoven with dynamic rivers and streams. Nowhere are natural and human resources more closely integrated and cared for than the Sacramento Valley.

The Sacramento Valley is a funnel that focuses water from the Sierra Nevada, Cascade and Coastal Range into a highly managed system that protects people from floods and makes water supplies available at the right time, with the same water serving multiple beneficial purposes for the natural and working landscape as it flows through the Valley.
Families have built farms and communities based on the Sacramento Valley’s unique blessing of water, soil and sun. Today, nearly two million acres of pastoral family farms—world renowned ricelands, nuts, fruit, tomatoes, fresh produce and irrigated pasture—propel the Valley’s economic engine. The Valley’s farmland is unique in the way it provides habitat and food for salmon and birds along the Pacific Flyway.

The home for California’s capital and more than 3 million people. Half of these people live in the Sacramento metropolitan area, with the other half sprinkled in rural communities throughout the Valley. The Sacramento Valley has a deep connection between the urban and rural areas that is reflected in Sacramento’s designation as America’s Farm to Fork Capital.

Four runs of salmon migrate and spawn in different parts of the Sacramento Valley, with the winter-run and spring run considered endangered. Every part of the water system has been re-managed and will continue to be modernized over time to improve conditions for salmon through active collaboration as part of the Sacramento Valley Salmon Recovery Program.

The Pacific Flyway is a resource of international significance. The Sacramento Valley has seven National Wildlife Refuges, more than 50 state wildlife areas and ricelands that serve as habitat for nearly 250 species. Water diversions for ricelands and refuges provide much-needed food and habitat for waterfowl, shorebirds and other species. The Flyway is heaven on earth for wildlife enthusiasts, naturalists and birdwatchers.

The forests and meadows in the numerous watersheds of the Sierra Nevada, Cascade and Coast Range that provide recreation and serve as the vital headwaters for the region.

Like a human fingerprint, California’s Sacramento Valley is truly unique. On the leading edge of ecological and economical sustainability, it’s also an exceptional place to live, work and raise a family. The Sacramento Valley joins together a world-renowned mosaic of natural abundance: productive farmlands, wildlife refuges and managed wetlands, cities and rural communities, and meandering rivers that support and feed fisheries and natural habitats. Through efficient management of the region’s water resources, the Sacramento Valley will continue to provide what’s essential to California’s future success and prosperity. Nourishment and sustenance from the fields, habitats for fish and wildlife, recreation and a special quality of life — the Sacramento Valley is home to all of this, and more.