

Landscape Scale Restoration through Local Implementation

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One driver for regulatory actions in California is declining salmon populations. While governmental agencies respond to their own mandates in efforts toward salmon recovery, local water users have been coalescing around the idea that they are uniquely suited to be stewards of their own watersheds and the species that inhabit them. Recovery of salmon populations in California has long been focused on flow: increased flow should result in increased population. This assumes that the additional water will overcome the infrastructure that prevents system habitat services. The opportunity is really to create that habitat functionality while maximizing the broad benefits needed from every drop of water.

In the Sacramento Valley, there is a commitment to “The Fix not the Fight” that provides a platform for groups to engage in dynamic complex solution-oriented collaboration. More than two decades of partnerships and stewardship in the Sacramento River watershed have set the stage for a bottom up locally driven process to address landscape scale improvements for the betterment and health of species recovery. And the most foundational, exciting, and unique result of this path: empowering landowners to engage in restoration across a watershed.

Lewis Bair, general manager of Reclamation District 108, one of the oldest reclamation districts in the state with flood protection and irrigation supply responsibilities, will highlight local engagement with State and Federal entities to develop an on the ground approach to species recovery. RD 108 is a signatory to the Agreements for Healthy Rivers and Landscapes and the fiscal agent for programs that empower landowners to engage in landscape scale solutions. Mr. Bair will highlight unique aspects of these program, including providing technical assistance to landowners to better understand possibilities of habitat improvement as integrated with existing land uses and operations.

Panel: California’s Agreements for Healthy Rivers and Landscapes: A Historic Approach to Integrating Flows and Habitat

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