



SACRAMENTO COUNTY
AMERICAN RIVER
PARKWAY PLAN 2008



County of Sacramento
Municipal Services Agency
Planning and Community Development Department



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Project Management Team staff and UCAC members at the final Update Citizen's Advisory Committee Meeting on June 19, 2006.



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However, because of their relatively low cost and secondary environmental benefits, biotechnical treatments may be widely applicable as preventive measures.

Bank Re-grading

Bank re-grading reduces erosion potential by lessening the steepness of the upper slope and reducing the weight of the slope over the toe of the bank. Although this may create more stable conditions for plantings, impacts are generally high because of the need to disturb existing vegetation and recreational facilities at the top of bank. Bank reconstruction repairs erosion damage with more erosion resistant soil material and is generally most useful in combination with other measures.

River Training Structures

River training structures, such as weirs and dikes, are designed to reduce flow velocities along the bank by pushing flows toward the center of the channel. These structures are adaptable for working around in-stream woody material, although access for construction and keying the structures into existing banks is difficult if the banks are steep and well vegetated. Such structures may raise navigation and recreational safety concerns and would need to be carefully designed to minimize or avoid any safety concerns. Hard points are used to harden bank lines at specific points or intervals to address isolated areas of erosion or bank failure. These structures may produce a more stable bank line if several are used in combination with vegetation.

Non-Structural Methods

Erosion can also be reduced by employing non-structural methods such as removing or relocating structures that are generating erosion or may be subject to erosion-related damage, or increasing the conveyance capacity of the channel in the vicinity of the area of erosion.

WILD AND SCENIC RIVERS ACT

INTRODUCTION

The 23-mile portion of the American River that extends from below Nimbus Dam to the confluence with the Sacramento River has been designated as a Wild and Scenic River under both the State and Federal Wild and Scenic Rivers Acts. The river has a broad channel with riparian vegetation along the banks and is located within the American River Parkway corridor. River flows in this segment are affected by Folsom and Nimbus Dams and impacted by other man-made intrusions at several points along the river.

STATE WILD AND SCENIC RIVER SYSTEM

The California Legislature passed the State Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (WSRA) in 1972 (PRC Section 5093.50-5093.70). The legislature said that it was the State's intent that "certain rivers which possess extraordinary scenic, recreation, fishery, or wildlife values shall be preserved in their free-flowing state, together with their immediate environment, for the benefit and enjoyment of the people of the State." The lower American River was included in the State Wild and Scenic River System in 1972 when the State Act was passed.



FEDERAL WILD AND SCENIC RIVERS SYSTEM

The Federal Wild and Scenic Rivers Act was passed in 1968 and set forth a policy that certain selected rivers possess outstandingly remarkable values (ORVs): scenic, recreational, geologic, fish and wildlife, historic, and cultural. The Act set forth a policy that would preserve these rivers, or sections thereof, in their



Looking downstream from the Lower Sunrise Area.

free-flowing condition to protect water quality and preserve the outstandingly remarkable values. The lower American River was designated in 1981 by Cecil Andrus, Secretary of the Department of the Interior, under Section 2 (a)(ii) of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. Designating the lower American River under the Federal Wild and Scenic Rivers Act results in a prohibition of Federal construction, assistance, or licensing of water projects adversely affecting the characteristics qualifying the river for the national system. The National Parks Service is currently the federal administering agency that has been delegated to make such consistency determinations for the lower American River.

WILD AND SCENIC RIVER PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT FOR THE LOWER AMERICAN RIVER

Management and Administration

The County of Sacramento has the principal responsibility for administration and management of much of the American River Parkway, as guided by the American River Parkway Plan, although the small portions of the Parkway that are part of the Folsom State Recreation area or are owned by the federal government are administered by the California Department of Parks and Recreation or by federal land managers.

Prepared under the authority of the *Urban American River Parkway Preservation Act* (PRC Section 5840-5843), the American River Parkway Plan is the management plan for the American River Parkway.

In 1977, the Resources Agency of the State of California finalized the State wild and scenic river management plan for the lower American River. The lower American River Waterway Management Plan incorporated the Parkway Plan adopted by the Sacramento County Board of Supervisors in April 1976 and the Sacramento City Council in September 1975. In his transmittal letter to the Governor, the Secretary of Resources noted that this management plan was “the second in a series of plans being developed for California’s Wild and Scenic Rivers.” He then further noted:

The basic thrust of the lower American River plan is to give State support and concurrence in the plans which have been adopted and are being implemented by the City and County of Sacramento. The plans by the City and County provided the basis for the State’s plan and have been made an integral part of the State’s plan.



The Parkway Plan continues to serve as the management plan for the lower American River under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, providing management guidance and direction for state departments and agencies, as well as local governments, in carrying out their responsibilities under the State Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, as well as the *Urban American River Parkway Preservation Act*. State departments and agencies, as well as local governments, also must to ensure that their actions are consistent with their responsibilities under the State Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.

The lower American River is also a state-managed federal 2(a)(ii) wild and scenic river. Management of this national wild and scenic river by Sacramento County is consistent with Federal law since these rivers “are to be permanently administered as wild, scenic or recreational rivers by an agency or political subdivision of the State...” Sacramento County is a political subdivision of the State of California.

Although Federal administrative responsibilities are limited for 2(a)(ii) rivers, the American River Parkway Plan is also intended to provide guidance to the Federal wild and scenic river managers in carrying out their responsibilities under the National Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. Federal land managers also retain management authority for federally owned lands within the Parkway.

At the time of adoption of this Plan, the National Park Service is the agency responsible to ensure that the protections under Section 7(a) of the federal Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (USC Title 16, Chapter 28), regarding the protection of Wild and Scenic Rivers from the harmful effects of proposed water resources projects, including modifications to the bed and banks of the river, are consistently applied on these rivers. The WSRA prohibits the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) from licensing the construction of hydroelectric facilities on designated rivers and prohibits other federal agencies from assisting in the construction of any water resources project that would have a direct and adverse effect on the values for which a river was designated. The WSRA also includes a standard that governs water resources projects below or above a designated river.

The types of water resources projects most commonly occurring on these rivers include road construction and reconstruction, bridge construction or replacement, bank armoring, and gravel extraction from riverbed or banks. Typically, projects subject to Section 7(a) will be triggered by a permit issued by the Army Corps of Engineers under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act or Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act. Section 7(a) may also be triggered when a project is identified as impacting a designated Wild and Scenic River in the California Department of Fish and Game’s Lake and Streambed Alteration (1601) permit application.

Corridor Boundaries

The American River Parkway plan establishes boundaries for the Parkway.

As noted in the Wild and Scenic Rivers Reference Guide developed by the Interagency Wild and Scenic River Coordinating Council, “establishing a boundary for a wild and scenic river is an important step in delineating the area which will receive the greatest effort in resource protection.” Consistent with that general principle, the principal focus of wild and scenic river management plans are on the management of lands and waters within the boundaries of a wild and scenic river.

The 1977 State lower American River Waterway Management Plan determined that “[the] Planning Area for the designated Wild and Scenic River portion of the lower American River is the same as the planning boundary shown on the Sacramento County American River Parkway Plan.”



Boundaries adopted by the State wild and scenic river managers for joint state/federal rivers also generally serve to delineate the federal wild and scenic river corridor.

The Parkway Plan continues to serve the function of defining the wild and scenic river management corridor.

Classification

The lower American River has been classified as a “recreational” river in the state and federal wild and scenic river systems. Recreational rivers are defined as rivers “readily accessible by road or railroad, that may have some development along their shorelines, and that may have undergone some impoundment or diversion in the past.” Development plans for wild and scenic rivers must be consistent with a river’s classification.

Extraordinary Values or Outstandingly Remarkable Values of the lower American River

In order to be eligible for inclusion in the State Wild and Scenic River System, a river must “possess extraordinary scenic, recreational, fishery or wildlife values. Similarly, “certain selected rivers of the Nation which, with their immediate environments, possess outstandingly remarkable scenic, recreational, geologic, fish and wildlife, historic, cultural, or other similar values” are eligible for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River System.

The extraordinary values of the lower American River are its recreation and anadromous fishery. These values were identified as outstandingly remarkable values by federal wild and scenic river managers in 1980, serving as the basis for the acceptance of the lower American River by the Secretary of the Interior.

Recreational

The entire area designated by the WSRA is located within the American River Parkway and contains several major developed parks along with parallel bike, pedestrian and equestrian trails. The river provides opportunities for swimming, boating, fishing, and other day-use activities. In 1983, the river was determined to accommodate 250,000 recreation days of rafting and some 2.5 million recreation days for all uses of the river and corridor. It also provides a relatively pristine atmosphere from surrounding urban development. One of the compelling reasons for the lower American River’s recreation “outstanding remarkable value” was its status as a public parkway. Therefore, consistency determinations under Section 7 (a) of the federal Wild and Scenic Rivers Act may consider the direct and indirect effects of water resources projects on the bike, hiking or equestrians trails, or other Parkway recreational uses.

Fishery

The lower American River supports an important anadromous fishery including Chinook salmon, steelhead trout, striped bass and American shad. Resident rainbow trout are present in the upper segment and a warmwater population of largemouth bass, various sunfish and catfish comprise the rest of the fishery. Salmon and steelhead both naturally spawn in the river and are released from the Nimbus Hatchery.

