



RIVER  
PARTNERS



***MOMENTUM***

2021 Annual Impact Report



2021  
IMPACT



2,000+

Acres of protected habitat restored for endangered and threatened species. **18,000+** since 1998



7

River miles restored. **200+** since 1998



450,000+

Native trees & vegetation planted. Nearly **4 million** since 1998



46,000+

Tons of greenhouse gases captured. **1+ million** tons since 1998



1+

Billion gallons of freshwater conserved. **10+ billion** gallons since 1998



\$15+

Million channeled directly to the communities where we work. **\$150+ million** since 1998



During this critical decade, we are doubling our pace of restoration and reforestation to build a resilient, thriving California.



Dear Friends:

People are talking.

This year, amidst so many sobering headlines, communities around the world have launched historic conservation pledges to protect biodiversity, adapt to our changing climate, and link the needs of humans and the health of our planet with unprecedented clarity. We are officially in the “decade of restoration” – a critically short period to lean into ecosystem recovery before it is too late.

River Partners’ 23 years bringing life back to California rivers uniquely positions us to turn those pledges into progress at a timescale that matters. Boots-on-the-ground action is where River Partners and our friends and partners deliver. We are growing to meet the challenge, in collaboration with others such as our Sacramento River partners, expanding habitat to raise the next generation of salmon, the Monarch Joint Venture, working to establish critical milkweed meadows for butterflies across their range, and many more.

In this report, we’ve collected stories from some of the people closest to the power of our work. My hope is that you can see yourself reflected in their perspectives and feel inspired by their enthusiasm. Thanks to YOU – our partners – WE are gaining momentum: River Partners is doubling our pace of restoring the resilient rivers, floodplains, water resources, and carbon-trapping forests that California, the nation, and world desperately need.

Quite simply, River Partners is committed to sharing our stories, so that we empower others to help. This year, we have been inspired by so many of you to dig deeper in our commitments and expand our aspirations. We are poised to launch thousands of acres of new projects and several creative new initiatives in the coming year from a strong foundation of respect for collaboration, a dedication to action, and a passion for solutions born from our real experience. It’s never been clearer that the future is ours to make. Let’s continue to share our work and our stories as we tackle river restoration together at a scale we’ve never seen before.

With gratitude,

*Julie Rentner*  
Julie Rentner  
President



Biodiversity Lifelines



HISTORIC FLOODPLAIN RESTORATION SETS PRECEDENT

We completed the largest public-private floodplain restoration in California history. The 2,100-acre Dos Rios Ranch Preserve expands critical habitat connections in the Central Valley, and serves as a leading model of resilient landscape recovery for wildlife and people.



58

priority species supported



RESCUING MONARCHS

We launched the largest coordinated effort in the West to save western monarch butterflies from extinction.



BRINGING SALMON BACK FROM THE BRINK

This year we reintroduced nurseries for endangered salmon along the Sacramento River that attracted Chinook salmon within days of opening.

Empowering Communities



PRESERVING TRADITIONS WHILE RESTORING RIVERS

We secured an authorization for California Native communities to cultivate and harvest traditional native plants on federally managed land.



SUPPORTING LOCAL COMMUNITIES DURING THE PANDEMIC

River Partners continued to safely employ local restoration workforces throughout the state to support individuals, families, and communities during challenging economic times.

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



The New York Times  
San Francisco Chronicle  
Los Angeles Times  
theguardian

Climate Resilience



PROVEN WATER & CLIMATE SOLUTIONS

This year our restored floodplains served as living laboratories at the forefront of natural water conservation and flood protection, attracting unprecedented public support for expanded research and restoration across the state.

PRESERVING CALIFORNIA'S GENETIC LEGACY

We are sourcing and cultivating plants and seeds at scale to safeguard California ecosystems in the face of climate disruption.



CAPTURING CARBON

We pioneered a tool to measure carbon stored in river forests, and launched an innovative partnership to sell carbon credits to finance land management.

Restoration Leadership



LEADING FROM THE FIELD

Policy is catching up to what River Partners has been doing for decades. Local, federal, and state leaders are making conservation a priority with initiatives like 30X30 — a promise to protect 30% of California's lands and coastal waters by 2030 — and they're looking to River Partners for innovative, multi-benefit conservation solutions.



GROWING THE NEXT GENERATION OF RESTORATION LEADERS

This year we expanded our paid summer internship program, providing diverse young scientists access to mentorship and field experience across the largest ecosystem restoration footprint in the Western U.S.







Planting milkweed rhizomes at the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area near Sacramento.

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## 30,000 Milkweeds Planted to Save Western Monarch Butterfly

**“We are pulling all actionable levers we can to save this species from an avoidable demise.”**

—Julie Rentner, quoted in the *Los Angeles Times*

This year, we launched the largest coordinated effort to save monarchs in the West, an all-hands push to protect a species that has declined by 99.9% since the 1980s. With a group of dedicated public agency and nonprofit partners, we planted nearly 600 acres of milkweed, essential to the monarch’s life cycle, as well as other monarch-friendly plants along rivers and streams in eight critical sites across California. River Partners is sourcing large quantities of additional seed and plants to add milkweed and other nectar-rich natives to existing and future restoration sites statewide, and expanding the science of native seed collection for monarch habitat.



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## Rabbits Rebound in Restored Habitat

Two decades ago, fewer than 300 riparian brush rabbits were clinging to existence in the San Joaquin Valley, the only place on Earth where they make their home. After years of effort to rebuild their habitat at our Dos Rios Ranch Preserve, populations are rebounding. This year we joined forces with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, and Oakland Zoo to help vaccinate the rabbits from a fatal virus so they can continue their journey toward recovery.

**“When you rebuild lost habitat for riparian brush rabbits, you are rebuilding habitat for whole suites of species and repairing whole ecosystems. Even though only 5% of the original riparian habitat remains in the Central Valley, these species continue to surprise us with their resiliency.”**

— Kim Forrest, Refuge Manager, San Luis National Wildlife Refuge Complex

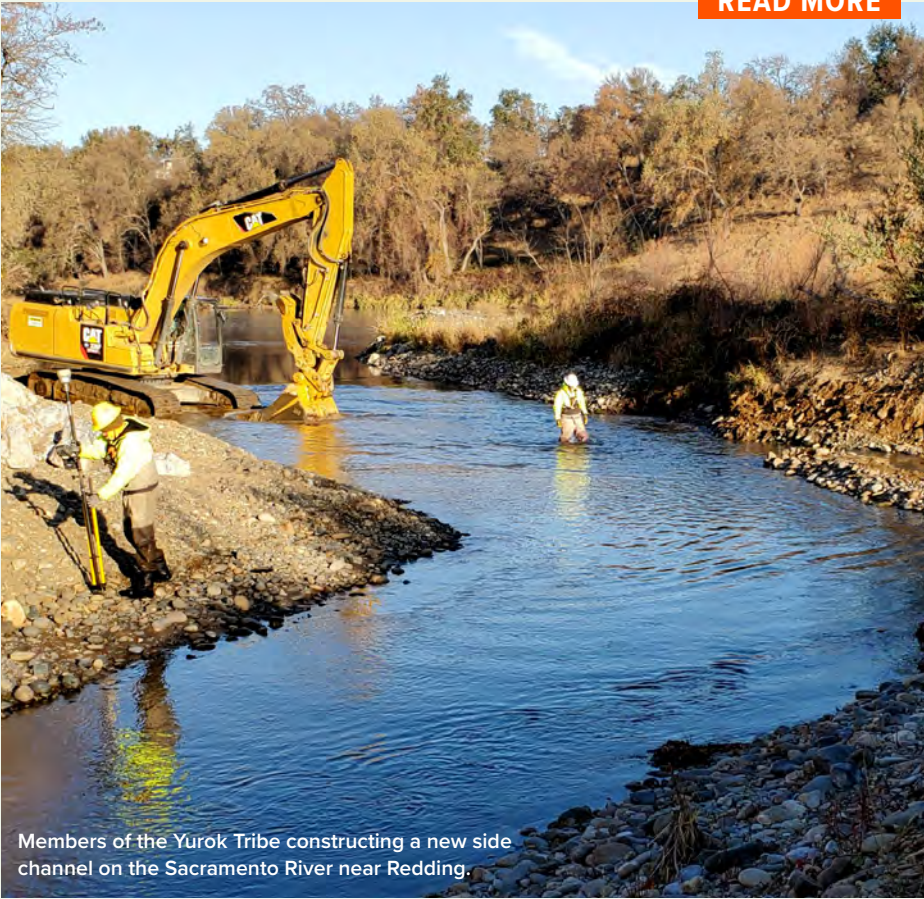
## Saving Salmon During Historic Drought



PHOTO: AARON MARTIN

Low water and lethal water temperatures during a summer that broke heat records is making life even harder for salmon already on the brink of extinction in many California rivers. With a coalition of allies, River Partners is restoring critical salmon habitat, including completing four side channels along the Sacramento River near Redding this year. Early monitoring returns are very encouraging: within weeks, adult salmon began spawning and juvenile salmon sought food and shelter in the restored channels. With major support from the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, six more side channel projects are underway, and we are helping other conservation organizations design and implement their own projects.

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Members of the Yurok Tribe constructing a new side channel on the Sacramento River near Redding.

**“Only a few weeks after project completion, I photographed adult Chinook salmon in the newly opened channels, accessing habitat built to protect and restore them.”**

—Aaron Martin, Habitat Restoration Biologist, Yurok Tribe

## FRONTLINE HEROES



**Eligio Hernandez**  
Northern California Field Foreman

**For 20 years, Eligio Hernandez’s work has kept the Sacramento River alive, supporting wildlife, insects, shade and clean water.** He has built a deep base of knowledge about how to successfully establish native trees, shrubs and grasses – and how to keep the weeds away. We are indebted to Eligio for his outstanding service, and his leadership of conservation field crews revitalizing our riverways.

**“I can’t imagine a more rewarding job than restoring our rivers. It’s an honor to work with my River Partners family to achieve that goal.”**

—Eligio Hernandez





# Healthy Rivers for a Thriving State

This year, River Partners put the last plant in the ground at the Dos Rios Ranch Preserve, below, our historic 2,100-acre restoration project at the confluence of the San Joaquin and Tuolumne rivers near Modesto. This \$46 million labor of love is a nearly decade-long effort that added more than 350,000 native trees and shrubs to the San Joaquin Valley along eight miles of river, created hundreds of good, green jobs, and boosted San Joaquin Valley communities’ resilience to droughts and flooding. As the largest public-private floodplain restoration project in California history, Dos Rios Ranch shows how the state can harness the power of healthy rivers to safeguard our ecosystems and communities in the face of a changing climate.

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“The Dos Rios project essentially is a shock absorber for the Central Valley’s flood system. And more of those are needed.”

—Bill Edgars, President, Central Valley Flood Protection Board



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## Reforesting Rivers, Trapping Carbon

River Partners has planted nearly 4 million native trees and vegetation since 1998 which pull over 46,000 tons of carbon-dioxide-equivalent greenhouse gases from the atmosphere each year. Leveraging our restoration projects as living laboratories for carbon capture, we joined forces with the California Waterfowl Association and Joseph and Vera Long Foundation to accelerate restoration of critical habitat while developing a first-of-its-kind carbon calculator to measure carbon storage in riverside forests. This year our partnership launched efforts to sell carbon credits on the voluntary market to help finance future restoration projects.

“River Partners works where rivers, communities, and carbon sequestration intersect, offering innovative outcomes that benefit nature and people. We can tap this value to incentivize and deliver more reforestation projects.”

— John Gunn, Executive Director, SIG-NAL, working with River Partners to introduce riparian restoration credits to California’s carbon markets

## Expanding the Climate Protection Workforce

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River Partners pairs our expert field crews with regional Conservation Corps to efficiently and effectively restore thousands of acres of habitat and prepare hundreds of young adults for environmentally-focused careers. River Partners is the single largest private employer of California Conservation Corps members in the state. Partnerships with the CCCs and other dedicated workforce development programs is a cornerstone of accelerating the pace and scale of restoration and building the workforce of the future, from the ground up.

## Living Laboratories for Water Conservation



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This year we initiated a pioneering study to map groundwater aquifers below River Partners’ restoration projects. Hydrogeophysicist Rosemary Knight’s lab at Stanford University will use technology never before deployed on restored floodplains to identify aquifers most receptive to recharge by floodwaters. Governor Gavin Newsom and Assemblyman Adam Gray championed this study to expand floodplains as climate-smart natural infrastructure for water storage and conservation.



PHOTO SAN JOSE MERCURY NEWS

“Rather than treating floods and droughts as two independent ‘problems,’ we are seeing a paradigm shift in California that couples these two problems to find solutions.”

—Dr. Rosemary Knight (left), Geophysicist, Stanford University

## FRONTLINE HEROES



### David M. Villarino

Director, Farmworker Institute for Education and Leadership Development (FIELD), and the Cesar Chavez Environmental Corps

**Founded by farmworker leader Cesar E. Chavez,** FIELD is committed to inspiring farmworkers and the rural workforce to gain economic self-sufficiency through social benefit enterprises.

“FIELD and River Partners are growing together to restore riverways, expand workforce development opportunities, and empower people to launch successful careers, businesses, and industries that strengthen our communities. We have a shared vision of a robust future for California.”

— David M. Villarino







PHOTO BY MICHELE RANIERI

## Reintroducing Traditional Ecological Knowledge to the Land

Native plants are a foundation of indigenous life and culture, but for Native peoples whose lives have centered around California’s rivers since time immemorial, these plants have become rare and difficult to access. This year, the California Indian Basketweavers Association (CIBA), Tuolumne Band Miwuk, and River Partners partnered to secure a first-of-its-kind use authorization providing tribal access to a new Native Use Garden in the heart of the San Joaquin Valley at River Partners’ Dos Rios Ranch Preserve. Integrating traditional planting practices into River Partners’ restoration designs will expand the cultivation of plants that provide the Miwuk – and one day, we hope, other indigenous groups – with ready access to the materials needed for traditional arts and cultural practices.

[READ MORE](#)

## Expanding Healthy, Community Space

This year River Partners joined communities in park-poor California regions to expand access to nature and healthy outdoor recreation. Our long-term management partnerships prioritize open space for people and connectivity for wildlife.

(right) This year’s reopening of Dutch Slough in Oakley, CA, will provide walking and hiking paths, as well as observation areas, across 1,200 acres in the heart of the San Francisco Bay-Delta.



CA DEPT. OF WATER RESOURCES

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## Growing the Next Generation of Conservation Leaders

A thriving California requires a restoration sector with the skills and experience to create a more sustainable, equitable future. This year we expanded our best-in-class Restoration Scholars program to empower student interns throughout California to build careers that revitalize our ecosystems and their communities.

**“I really want to learn more about ecosystems, both in the natural world and through the human perspective, so I can learn how we can make this place better.”**

– Vanessa Padilla, CSU, Stanislaus from Madera, CA. Vanessa is one of 10 paid summer interns selected from a highly competitive pool of applicants statewide in 2021.

[READ MORE](#)



## FRONTLINE HEROES



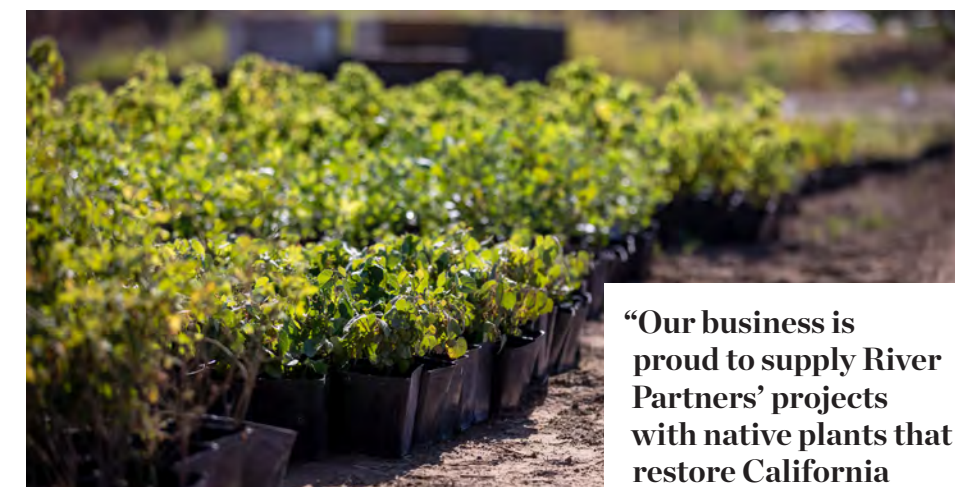
**Kimberly Stevenot**  
Northern Sierra Miwuk Tribe

**Traditional basketweaving is an essential part of keeping Native cultural traditions alive.**

As a founding member of the California Indian Basketweavers’ Association (CIBA), Kimberly Stevenot works to preserve, promote, and perpetuate basketweaving traditions while providing a healthy physical, social, spiritual, and economic environment for basketweavers.

**“When Dos Rios opened up, I cannot tell you of the relief and excitement that there was a gathering site close by for materials and foods used by many California Natives living here in the Central Valley.”**

—Kimberly Stevenot



## Strengthening Local Economies

River Partners relies on many regional and local businesses to revitalize our river corridors at a large scale. Through local hiring and purchasing, this year we channeled 99% of our budget to the communities where we work, continuing to expand California’s ecosystem restoration sector.

**“Our business is proud to supply River Partners’ projects with native plants that restore California landscapes, support and grow our local economy.**

—Zeb Puterbaugh, owner, Floral Native Nursery & Restoration in Chico, an expert and trusted partner in the propagation of native plants for habitat restoration





THANK YOU » To All of Our Partners & Supporters

COLLABORATIVES

Bank Swallow Working Group  
California Invasive Plant Council  
California Native Plant Society  
California Native Grasslands Association  
California State Parks  
Central Valley Flood Protection Plan—Conservation Strategy Advisory Committee  
Central Valley Joint Venture  
Central Valley Salmon Partnership  
Floodplains Forward Coalition  
Greater Battle Creek Working Group  
Lower Tuolumne River TAC  
Monarch Joint Venture  
Regional Flood Management Plan—San Joaquin Sacramento, Feather and Delta  
Riparian Mammals Technical Group  
San Diego Mitigation and Monitoring Program  
San Diego Pollinator Alliance  
San Joaquin River Partnership  
San Joaquin Valley Water Collaborative Action Program  
Society for Ecological Restoration in California  
Sonoran Joint Venture  
Water Solutions Network  
Western Yellow-billed Cuckoo Working Group

RESEARCHERS

California State University, Stanislaus  
Cal Poly San Luis Obispo  
Chico State University  
Lawrence Livermore National Lab  
Public Policy Institute of California  
San Francisco Estuary Institute

Santa Clara University  
Stanford University  
UC Davis  
UC Merced  
University of the Pacific  
US Geological Survey  
Washington State University

NON-GOVERNMENTAL

American Rivers  
Audubon California  
Butte Environmental Council  
California Indian Basketweavers' Association  
CalTrout  
California Waterfowl Association  
Chico State University  
Coro Northern California  
Downey Brand  
Ducks Unlimited  
Earth Discovery Institute  
ESA Associates  
Great Valley Seed  
Hicks Law  
Kern River Corridor Endowment  
Kern River Parkway Foundation  
MBK Engineers  
National Fish and Wildlife Foundation  
Natural Heritage Institute  
Pacific Gas & Electric  
Point Blue Conservation Science  
Sacramento River Forum  
Sacramento Valley Conservancy  
San Diego Audubon  
San Diego Natural History Museum  
San Joaquin River Parkway & Conservation Trust  
Sequoia Riverlands Trust  
SIG-NAL

Stanislaus Community Foundation  
The Nature Conservancy  
Talone Lake Conservancy  
Trout Unlimited  
Tuolumne River Trust  
Watershed Nursery  
Western Water Strategies  
Xerxes Society  
Youth Leadership Institute

INDIGENOUS TRIBES

Cachil Dehe Wintun  
Pala Band of Mission Indians  
Jamul Indian Village  
Tuolumne Band of Miwuk  
Yurok Tribe

FEDERAL AGENCIES

NOAA National Marine Fisheries Service  
US Army Corps of Engineers  
US Bureau of Land Management  
US Bureau of Reclamation  
US Environmental Protection Agency  
US Fish & Wildlife Service  
US Forest Service  
US Geological Survey  
USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

STATE AGENCIES

California Conservation Corps  
California Coastal Conservancy  
California Department of Fish and Wildlife  
• Restoration Leaders Committee  
• Fisheries Restoration Program  
Peer Review Committee  
California Department of Parks and Recreation  
California Department of Pesticide Regulation  
California Department of Transportation  
California Department of Water Resources  
California Environmental Protection Agency  
California Natural Resources Agency  
California Wildlife Conservation Board  
Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission  
Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Conservancy  
San Joaquin River Conservancy  
Water Resources Control Board

LOCAL AGENCIES

Butte County RCD  
Cache Creek Conservancy  
City of Bakersfield  
City of Chula Vista  
City of Fresno  
City of Holtville  
City of Oakley  
City of San Diego  
Colusa County  
Contra Costa RCD  
Contra Costa Water District  
East Stanislaus RCD  
FIELD Institute  
Glenn County RCD  
Greater Valley Conservation Corps  
Imperial Irrigation District  
Lower San Joaquin Levee District  
Modesto Irrigation District  
Reclamation Districts: 108, 784, 2011, 2028, 2037, 2092, 2110, 2137, 2140  
San Diego County  
Sweetwater Authority  
Sacramento Area Flood Control Agency  
Stanislaus County  
Sierra RCD  
Sutter Buttes Flood Control Agency  
Tehama County RCD  
Three Rivers Levee Improvement Authority  
Turlock Irrigation District  
Urban Corps of San Diego  
West Sacramento Area Flood Control Agency  
Yolo County RCD  
Yuba Water Agency

SUPPORTERS\*

**\$100,000+**  
Clarence and Anne Dillon Dunwalke Trust  
The Joseph and Vera Long Foundation  
Procter & Gamble, in partnership with Business for Water Stewardship  
The Water Foundation

**\$25,000-\$50,000**  
Ken Grossman and Katie Gonser  
The Lyons Family  
The Volgenau Foundation

**\$10,000-\$24,999**  
Elizabeth Schwerer and Kingston Duffie  
Molson Coors  
Susan and Thomas Newmeyer

\*July 1, 2020-September 30, 2021

\$5,000 - \$9,999

John and Barbara Boyle  
Jeanie and Marc Kahn  
Liz Hume and Jay Jacobs

\$1,000 - \$4,999

Justine Burt  
The Climate Ride  
Brad and Diane Craig  
Richard Edminster  
Jerry Fowler  
Ken Greenberg and Clara Gerdes  
Joanne Karlton  
Dave and Sharon Koehler  
Tom Lando  
Monroe and Carol Sprague

\$250-\$999

WZ Jefferson Brown  
Terrel Hutton and Tom Hicks  
Alexander Karolyi  
Maria Newman  
Julie Rentner and Chris Harrison  
Suellen Rowilson  
Irv and Nitsa Schiffman  
Jeff Thomas and Tessa Van Der Meijden  
Dawit Zeleke

\$100-\$249

Tad and Connie Alexander  
Carol Anderson  
Debra Bishop  
Margaret Burka  
Christina Curtis  
Ken Chapman  
Joe Countryman  
Larry Dacus  
Ramona Flynn  
Teresa Gunther  
Luise Havstad  
Carol Kopf  
Ed Larson  
Joel Manaligod  
Margaret Miller  
Barry Nelson  
Network for Good  
Audry O'Neil  
Ray and Jana Pingle  
Patricia Puterbaugh  
Rebecca Herring Reiner  
Mike Roberts  
Eric and Elaine Simmons  
Traci Soward  
Mieko Sunbury



“We are excited to support River Partners Bidwell-Sacramento River State Park Riparian Floodplain Habitat and Side Channel Restoration Project and learn from all project partners along the way as you work to realize tangible benefits for the region.”

—Virginie Helias, Chief Sustainability Officer, Procter & Gamble

This year, River Partners was delighted to be among the first grants Procter & Gamble awarded, in partnership with Business for Water Stewardship, for Sacramento River restoration to address water challenges in priority basins around the world.

Up to \$100

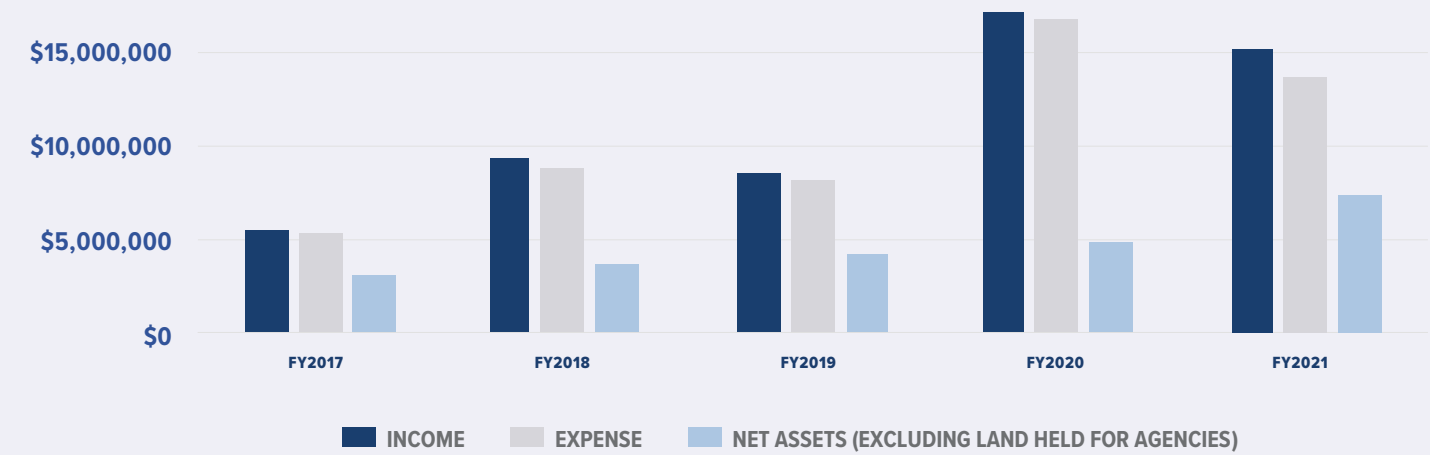
Carol Anderson  
Rebecca Auer  
Pauli Ayers  
Hazel Cabrera  
Scott and Raven Clemons  
Jerome Colwell  
Joanna Cucchi  
Teresa Detweiler  
Erfert Fenton  
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Hadel Productions  
Otto Holz  
Maire Hunt  
Lynn Terleski Katz  
Debbie Kinyon  
Betty Mello  
Lisa Mohan  
Anne Osborn  
Richard Paselk  
Robert Rakove  
Joel Schafer  
Connie Schmaljohann  
Gerald Snodgrass  
Richard Studley  
Lee Whitmer  
Charles Woods



“Restoration at Dos Rios Ranch Preserve is a great, galvanizing opportunity to expand environmental conservation in California for the benefit of nature, to combat climate change, and to expand equitable access. Projects like Dos Rios show us how to achieve 30X30 with multi-benefit projects that aid natural places and our communities.”

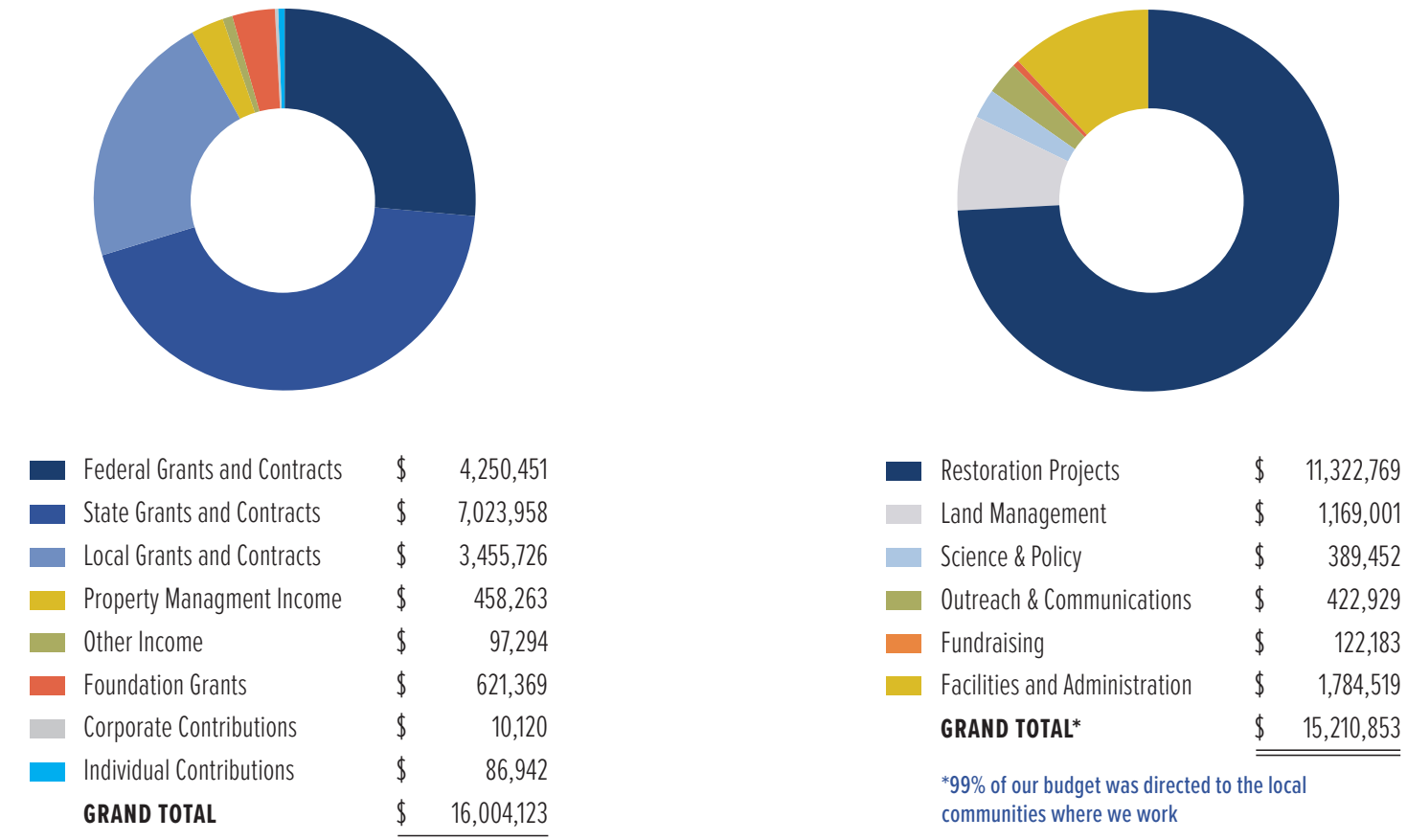
— Wade Crowfoot, California Natural Resources Secretary

FIVE YEAR FINANCIALS



2021 REVENUE AND EXPENSES

JULY 1, 2020 - JUNE 30, 2021 (UNAUDITED)



\*99% of our budget was directed to the local communities where we work

We invite you to invest in some of the most innovative and game-changing conservation efforts in the West. Your support goes directly to doubling our pace of restoration to permanently protect our freshwater ecosystems for future generations.

Make a Tax Deductible Contribution

We match every private dollar with \$10 in public investment in on-the-ground restoration and support for local communities. Every gift builds our capacity to continue our pace of growth over the next critical decade.

Endow Revitalized Rivers

Gifts of retirement funds, securities, estate bequests, real estate, or other assets can permanently protect and sustain imperiled wildlife, expand freshwater supplies, support productive farmland, and build strong, resilient communities.

Finance Our Impact

River Partners finances its own work – millions of dollars worth each year. A low-interest, short-term investment can increase our pace and scale today, and improve our ecosystems and communities forever.

IN MEMORIAM

Mary Lyons

1929-2021

River Partners board and staff mourn the loss of Mary Lyons, who along with her late husband Bill Lyons, Sr. received numerous awards for contributions to the San Joaquin Valley community. The family's conservation leadership includes recognition by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service for stewardship on their land that led to the removal of the Aleutian Cackling Goose from the endangered species list.

The Lyons family has partnered tirelessly with River Partners to shape the family's former ranchland, the 2,100-acre Dos Rios Ranch near Modesto, into the largest public-private floodplain restoration in California history. River Partners was honored to receive a gift from the Lyons family in honor of Mary Lyons to promote the recovery of fragile wildlife, including the riparian brush rabbit, western monarch butterfly, and migratory songbirds like the Least Bell's vireo that call the San Joaquin Valley home. River Partners applauds the Lyons family for their partnership in building a visionary new model of collaborative conservation in the Central Valley.



CA DEPT. OF WATER RESOURCES

Follow us:    

info@riverpartners.org  
(530) 894-5401







# RIVER PARTNERS

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Hayleé Ayers  
Mark Borges  
Michael Davies  
Ken Grossman  
Allen Hackett  
Mark Kimmelshue  
Dave Koehler  
Tom Lando  
Julie Rentner  
Suellen Rowilson  
Monroe Sprague  
Elaine Treviño  
Dawit Zeleke

River Partners envisions thriving rivers and floodplains that enrich surrounding communities, sustain abundant wildlife, support productive farmland, preserve freshwater resources and serve as the first line of ecological defense in a changing climate.

[riverpartners.org](https://riverpartners.org)

## HEADQUARTERS

580 Vallombrosa Avenue  
Chico, CA 95926

## COLUSA

433 Market Street  
Colusa, CA 95932

## SAN JOAQUIN VALLEY

3559 Shiloh Road  
Modesto, CA 95358

## CAPITOL

928 2nd Street, Suite 200  
Sacramento, CA 95814

## SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

2305 Historic Decatur Road  
Suite 100  
San Diego, CA 92106

**CREATING WILDLIFE HABITAT FOR THE BENEFIT OF PEOPLE AND THE ENVIRONMENT**