Sustainable Conservation

CULTIVATING ABUNDANT WATER

PARTNERING WITH FARMERS ON REGIONAL WATER SOLUTIONS

THE CHALLENGE

California is facing intensifying water supply problems.

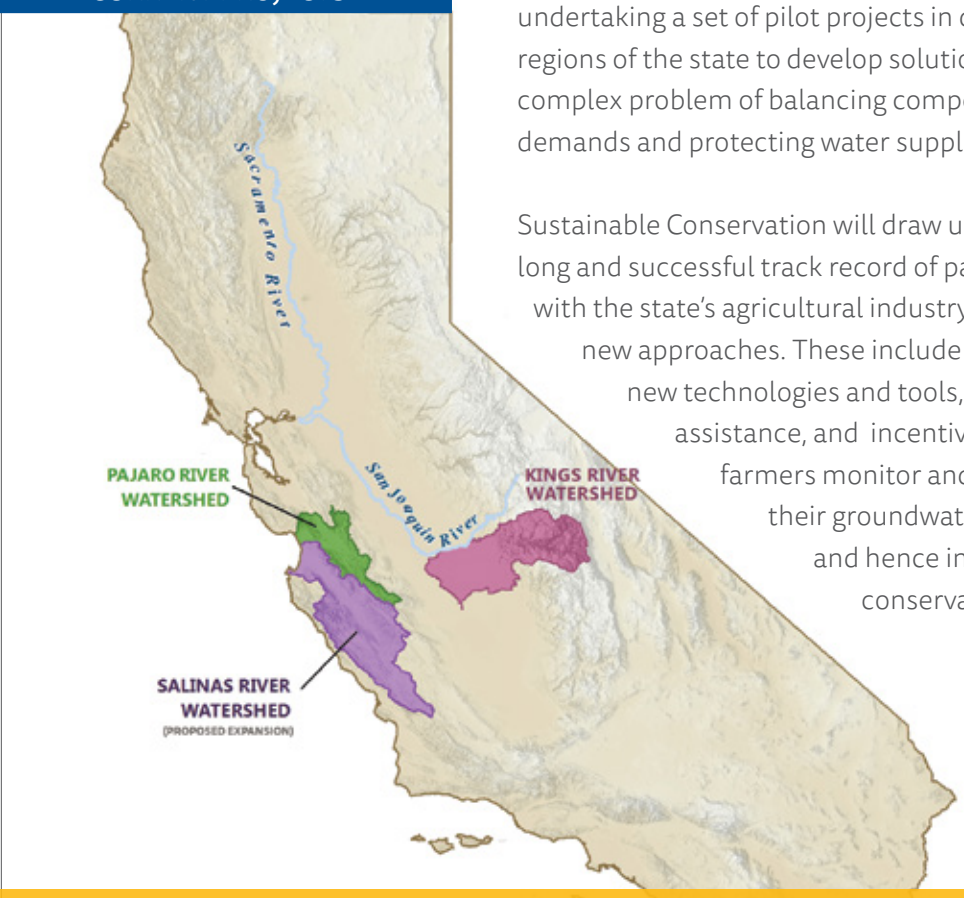
The supply of fresh water – both from rivers and streams, as well as from the ground – is diminishing due to overuse and inadequate storage. Large volumes of groundwater are extracted to grow crops and support communities. Current rates of groundwater pumping, however, are not sustainable, as we're taking much more than we can replenish.

THE SOLUTION

With partners, Sustainable Conservation is launching pilot projects to test the potential for a statewide effort to improve regional water management so farmers have sufficient water to grow their crops, communities have clean drinking water supplies and nature has enough clean water to support our state's incredible wildlife. We'll do this by undertaking a set of pilot projects in different regions of the state to develop solutions to the complex problem of balancing competing water demands and protecting water supplies.

Sustainable Conservation will draw upon our long and successful track record of partnering with the state's agricultural industry to test new approaches. These include deploying new technologies and tools, technical assistance, and incentives to help farmers monitor and manage their groundwater use and hence increase conservation.

CURRENT PROJECTS



In priority areas across California, Sustainable Conservation is partnering with industry, government and conservation leaders to develop incentives to boost water availability in ways that keep farming viable.

DESIRED OUTCOMES

- Develop cost-effective ways to recharge groundwater on a large scale
- Help save nearly 5 trillion gallons of fresh water each year in Santa Cruz County alone – what more than 37,000 households of four use annually
- Halt harmful saltwater intrusion along California's coast to protect farming's groundwater supplies
- Develop water-stewardship strategies that can be applied across California and beyond

MEASURING EFFECTIVENESS

- Recruiting up to 30 farmers for each of our initiatives
- 80% or more of participating farmers achieving or exceeding:
  - water conservation or groundwater recharge targets
  - cost savings targets

Our efforts will establish effective approaches to managing water that sustain rural and urban communities throughout California, prevent water-related conflicts which have intensified in recent years and maximize local water supplies.

OUR STRATEGY

Sustainable Conservation will partner with agricultural producers, scientists and conservation groups to promote practices, technologies and incentives that conserve and protect our waters. We are targeting those regions where the overuse of groundwater is most pressing, and where we have strong partnerships with local farmers and private landowners.

KEY COMPONENTS

BUILD PARTNERSHIPS

Build and expand partnerships with key stakeholders in priority regions, including with farmers and agricultural trade groups, conservation leaders, and local and regional water districts to encourage participation in solutions that result in multiple water-quantity benefits.

DEVELOP BENEFICIAL PRACTICES AND TECHNOLOGIES

Develop and expand new and existing practices and technologies that help farmers conserve water. For example, irrigation systems that enable farmers to balance surface water and groundwater use. Also, provide education and technical assistance to ensure solutions are implemented and maintained effectively – and establish a monitoring system to ensure farmers' conservation efforts have a measurable impact.

PROMOTE INCENTIVES

Working with project partners, develop a suite of incentives for participating farmers to conserve water resources. This includes analyzing the cost of participating in groundwater recharge programs and the potential of volume-based water pricing as a way to motivate farmers to use less water.

KEY PARTNERS

Driscoll's ONLY THE FINEST BERRIES

Leads the industry in promoting water quality and conservation.

RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT OF SANTA CRUZ COUNTY

Provides regional leadership, technical assistance and landowner outreach in Santa Cruz County.

KRCD Kings River Conservation District Reliable resources for the Valley

Helps oversee groundwater recharge efforts in the Kings River basin.

Sustainable Conservation

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