



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 13, 2023

Agencies to advance historic Tuolumne River salmon habitat restoration program with leading California nonprofit

Program commits more than \$80 million for fish and wildlife habitat improvements

The Modesto and Turlock Irrigation Districts (MID and TID) and the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission (SFPUC) are teaming up to design and implement a collaborative, holistic habitat restoration program along the lower Tuolumne River to improve the health and long-term recovery of the fishery and local communities it serves. MID, TID and the SFPUC are self-funding the \$80 million program.

The joint effort demonstrates the power of public-private partnerships in making critical, lasting improvements to ecosystem and community health along California waterways like the Tuolumne River. The agencies recently chose the leading California riverway restoration organization, River Partners, to lead planning and restoration efforts for the multi-year effort.

Over the next 12 months, River Partners will design a series of restoration projects along the lower Tuolumne River and its floodplain from Don Pedro Reservoir downstream to the San Joaquin River that will improve conditions for salmon and other native aquatic species. By 2030, project partners aim to develop 77 acres of suitable salmon rearing and floodplain habitat and add approximately 100,000 tons of gravel in specific river reaches for optimal salmon spawning and rearing.

River Partners will lead a multi-disciplinary team of biologists, ecologists and other technical experts, including Applied River Sciences (formerly McBain Associates), in the restoration planning and design needed to implement the comprehensive program.

MID, TID and the SFPUC chose River Partners for its long track record of innovative and effective river and floodplain restoration throughout the Central Valley and across the state, which has earned the organization numerous honors for its on-the-ground impact. Since its founding in 1998, River Partners has restored nearly 20,000 riverside acres across the Central Valley and beyond in over 20 watersheds. Its portfolio of successful projects includes creating interconnected, thriving floodplains that sustain wildlife and habitat, support Valley agriculture, preserve and replenish freshwater resources and enhance surrounding communities.

“MID is proud of our continued stewardship and commitment to the Tuolumne River and our communities that rely on it,” said MID General Manager Jimi Netniss. “We’re eager to begin this partnership with River Partners given their rich knowledge of our watershed and impressive track record of success in procuring, designing, permitting, constructing and monitoring habitat improvement projects across California. Building upon decades of collective stewardship and Tuolumne River-specific science, together we can deliver a robust and impactful program.”

“We’re making significant investments and partnering with renowned experts to put years of discussions, scientific-based planning and river studies into action and accelerate momentum in implementing our unwavering commitment to a successful habitat restoration program,” said TID General Manager Michelle Reimers. “We’re excited to continue the ongoing stewardship of the Tuolumne River – improvements that our community will see the benefits of for generations to come.”

“We’re proud to collaborate with River Partners, the irrigation districts, and others on the Tuolumne River to restore habitat and make improvements that will benefit salmon and other native species,” said Dennis Herrera, General Manager of the SFPUC. “We’ve always been willing to do our part to further protect natural habitats, including in times of drought. We and the districts have committed to self-fund millions of dollars in habitat improvement projects, as well as ensure more water for the Tuolumne, even in dry years.”

“River Partners believes creating a thriving future for California's natural resources, ecosystems and people requires deep commitment with diverse public and private partners,” said River Partners President Julie Rentner. “That’s why we’re excited to partner with the unique alliance of MID, TID and the SFPUC who are working proactively to restore the lower Tuolumne River and achieve real, lasting benefits for species on the brink and vulnerable communities. Our hope is that this partnership and its impact will serve as a model for effective collaboration and results along other California rivers and communities.”

Undertaking such important and timely work provides an opportunity to strengthen existing and build new relationships with organizations and people who share a common vision for continuing to improve the health of the Tuolumne River. MID, TID, SFPUC and River Partners are excited to embark upon this historic commitment of Tuolumne-specific funding, science and stewardship.

###

Media Contacts:

For Modesto Irrigation District, contact Melissa Williams | melissa.williams@mid.org | 209.526.7390

For Turlock Irrigation District, contact Josh Weimer | jmweimer@tid.org | 209.883.8361

For the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission, contact John Cote | jcote@sfwater.org | 415.417.9319