



REFLECTIONS

Upon a Delicate Treasure!

December 2003

Providing Stewardship for Kings River Lands

Your Town: Designing its Future

In June, 2003, the el Río de los Reyes en Reedley Conservation Trust, the Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program of the National Park Service, and the City of Reedley hosted Your Town: Designing its Future. Coined The Kings River Region: Navigating the Currents of Change, the three day workshop focused on the specific needs and issues of the Kings River Region, particularly the Kings River. Goals of the workshop were to:

- Re-vitalize the region's vision for the Kings River corridor below Pine Flat dam
- Inspire the work of community leaders and decision-makers on behalf of the region's rural quality of life and economic vitality
- Raise community awareness about, and teach skills to protect and capture the value of regional scenic resources
- Enhance the skill of participants in using design as a planning and problem-solving tool
- Help foster a strong, coherent regional identity among participating communities
- Identify regional assets and create a natural, agricultural and tourism strategy.
- Create or strengthen connections in the local network of agencies, organizations and individuals invested in the future of the region
- Trust to achieve its mission of building stewardship of the Kings River for conservation, preservation, restoration, agricultural and recreational use

The *Your Town Workshop* was organized so that each segment built upon itself: *Day One* focused on inspiring participants to think visionary in their planning efforts while grounding them about the history and current planning for the river and region; *Day Two* focused on Kings River greenway planning and graphic communication; and *Day Three* centered on scenic resource protection and developing regional strategies for rural tourism.

The learning session and participatory exercises on identifying scenic resources developed by the planning committee were excellent. Participants were asked to pho-

tograph places that were important to them. The photos were arranged on a river map and gave a visual context to the study area. Participants identified scenic resources such as outlying views, greenspaces, gateways to towns, river views, agricultural lands, and historic downtowns as well as scenic challenges. They brainstormed strategies to protect those resources with general plan policies like encouraging mixed use development downtown, creating ordinances for items such as a night sky ordinance, and specifying design guidelines and standards. Strategies for protecting those resources were excellent and really got the participants energized and enthused about their landscape and place.



Illustrating ideas for the Kings River

The two courses on greenway design and scenic preservation both were successful in teaching how to use design as a planning tool. The background informational sessions provided just enough information to be useful for the participants rather than too much that could have overwhelmed them. The fact that the exercises provides a real example on which they could transfer and experiment with this new knowledge was empowering for the participants.

Participants worked together on aerial maps to identify river access points, areas for low impact recreational activities, wildlife habitat, and aesthetic and scenic opportunities. The energy level was very high during this time and participants really enjoyed articulating their ideas visually rather than just verbally.

The exercise segments of the workshop, where partici-

their place, created a lot of synergy and were instrumental in building networks and community visions. It was reassuring to each participant to see that most ideas had common elements based on shared values. Due to this interaction, a regional solidarity emerged from the workshop.

The challenge will be taking the knowledge gained from the workshop and making the dreams come true

Kings River Clean-up

el Río Reyes Trust is coordinating a river clean up scheduled for Saturday, April 17, 2004.

The planned clean-up area stretches from Reedley Beach to Adams Avenue and further north if enough volunteers sign up.

It's amazing how much trash can accumulate along the river in a short period of time. Join us, as an individual or part of a group, in removing this eyesore along our river. The more people participating, the more we can accomplish and the easier it will be.

Contact Connie at 638-9617 to indicate sign up.



Pine Flat Dam

The Kings River — its many uses and the people who manage it

As the rivers of the world go, the Kings is a drop in the bucket. It is narrow, frequently gentle and hardly among California's longest. Yet, for the last 115 years, the Kings River has been used to irrigate as many as 1 million acres of the San Joaquin Valley.

Pine Flat Dam spans a narrow canyon that has long been considered a natural dam site. As early as 1850 a California survey made mention of it, however, it was not until 1947 that construction began. Seven years under construction at a cost of \$41,000,000 the completed dam was the realization of the plans and dreams of such visionaries as L.A. Nares and Charles L. Kaupke. They recognized early on that the water of the Kings River could be utilized to its maximum potential only if the effects of disastrous flooding and periods of drought could be managed.

The design and construction of the dam was the responsibility of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The original project purposes were flood control, water conservation and irrigation. Since completion, however, recreation and power generation have also been designated as project purposes. Operation and maintenance of the dam and lake project remains the responsibility of the Corps.

In June of 2002 Frank Fonseca became only the third project manager in the 49 years since the dam's completion. To meet his many responsibilities he relies on the skill and dedication of a diverse staff that includes dam operators, electricians, equipment operators, maintenance workers and park rangers. He is also supported by engineers and hydrologists in the Corps' Sacramento District Office and works closely with the Kings River Watermaster and the Kings River Conservation District staff.

The Corps primary responsibility at Pine Flat is the safety, security and operational readiness of the dam and reservoir. When the Kings River kicks up her heels and unleashes a large winter rain flood or a summer snowmelt flood there must be room behind the dam to store floodwaters and regulate the downstream flows to prevent flooding. Old bridge abutments stand as visible evidence today of pre-project flooding. They can be seen where the river flows under the Manning Avenue and Olsen Street bridges and also near Piedra where Piedra Road and Trimmer Springs Road meet. One of the largest floods ever recorded on the Kings River occurred in January 1997 and because of Pine Flat Dam there was minimal flood damage.

Water stored throughout the year is put to many uses. Irrigation is a very important one and critical to the economic success of the valley's farmers. Before it gets to them, however, the water is first used to generate electricity at the Kings River Conservation District's 155-megawatt power plant located at the base of the dam. More than 800,000 visits to the lake occur annually with fishing, pleasure boating, water skiing and camping topping the list of things people like to do when they come.

As you can imagine, providing flood protection, irrigation water, electric power and recreation opportunities for hundreds of thousands of people presents quite a challenge for the project manager and his staff. It's a challenge readily accepted and met with skill and professionalism by the men and women who work at Pine Flat Dam & Lake.



The Kings River



Pointing out the sights

Walks Along the Kings

How much do you know about the riparian environment along the Kings River? Would you enjoy the opportunity to go on a “river walk” with a docent? The el Rio Reyes Trust and the Reedley College Forestry/Natural Resources program will be teaming up to offer interpretive guided walks along the river in the spring of 2004.

Students studying environmental interpretation, accompanied by forestry instructor Kent Kinney, will lead two morning walks. This partnership with the el Rio Reyes Trust will serve both as an practical outlet for the students’ interpretive skills, as well as provide the public with a chance to experience two beautiful riparian areas.

Plans are being made to tour the Reedley College Farm area on Saturday, February 28. That walk will cover the east river bank from the Manning Bridge to the historic Poole’s Ferry crossing. A walk on Sunday, April 4 will provide visitors a first hand view of the Fresno County Kings River Greenbelt Park. Participants will be sure to see wildlife, as well as gain a perspective on the irrigation diversions that affect the lower river.

On each of the walks, the docents will highlight natural features, as well as changes that have occurred due to man’s influence. The docents will be happy to answer you questions. They will tailor the presentation to fit the age and interests of the participants. Parents are encouraged to have their children accompany them.

Participants should gather in the northwest parking lot of the college at 9:00 AM on February 28. The Kings River Greenbelt Park walk will start at the Byrd Slough Bridge on Piedra Road at 9:00 AM on April 4. The weather may be cool, and the walk may cover some slightly rocky terrain. Jackets and good hiking shoes should be worn. You should carry water and snacks, as well as binoculars and cameras if you wish.

Make plans now to enjoy these “Walks Along the Kings”.

Thousand Friends of the Kings

El Río Reyes is pleased to announce the launching in 2004 of the **Thousand Friends of the Kings River**. This is the first long-range plan for the financial stability of the activities of El Río Reyes Trust. The details of this program will be outlined for your review and consideration in the next newsletter; however, we are excited to share the concept with you now. The program is built on individual community and organization members who would commit to a tax-deductible donation of \$100 a year to El Rio Reyes Trust in support of its mission, goals, and activities. We know that it’s a tight financial time for everyone and we have truly appreciated your support in membership donations over the last few years. However to expand the long-term preservation activities and long-range planning for the utilization of the Kings River your financial support of this program would cost \$8.33 a month to become a partner in the **Thousand Friends of the Kings River**.



Bob Frisch Memorial Ride

El Río Reyes Trust hosted their fifth annual poker ride on Saturday, September 13, 2003. This fundraising event was started by Bob Frisch and it is fitting the ride be named for him after his sudden death last year. The ride started at the Reedley College Horse Unit. Forty-five riders from around the valley were lead by Kent Kinney and Mary Ann Barker on a four-mile ride along the scenic Reedley College trail adjacent to the Kings River.

On returning to the horse unit, a tri-tip barbecue lunch with all the trimmings was served to all riders. During lunch Gary Gragnani preformed his music and Bob Mayne gave his renditions of cowboy poetry. Also during lunch Kent Kinney talked about Bob and how much he is missed plus his hopes for the Kings River Trail. The great lunch ended with the “playing” of the best poker hand. Two pair, Kings and fours held by Connie Brooks of Reedley was the winner. Connie donated back the \$100 prize to the Trust. Thank you Connie!

Next year’s **Bob Frisch Memorial Ride** will be held on September 11, 2004.