



Winter Edition 2007

REFLECTIONS

Upon a Delicate Treasure!

Safeguarding the Kings River for future generations.

In Our Back Yard

By David Cehrs

Preservation of riparian habitat is a goal of conservationists. In the central San Joaquin Valley the San Joaquin River has had much positive activity in the last two decades: including the purchase of adjacent, riparian property by the San Joaquin River Parkway and the water release settlement for salmon runs on the river, spear headed by the Natural Resources Defense Council. Yet, both of these are post-development projects, with many natural areas already lost to anthropogenic encroachment. The San Joaquin

If the Jesse Morrow mine is approved by the Fresno County Board of Supervisors, the south facing slope will become a giant staircase and the mountain will be lighted all night!

River, its adjacent flood plain, and the surrounding terraces (the adjacent areas at the tops of the cliffs adjacent to the flood plain) have been disturbed by development, housing within the flood plain and along the terrace cliff edge, and gravel excavation within the channel and the adjacent flood plains. This has greatly reduced, eliminated, and divided natural riparian habitats.

To the south of metropolitan Fresno something similar is about to happen on the Kings River.

Currently the Kings River and its floodplain is one of the more pristine rivers in the San Joaquin Valley. Housing development has not yet encroached to the extent seen on the San Joaquin in the Fresno area nor has gravel mining yet decimated the river bottom. But this might change in the very near future.

The Vulcan Materials aggregate operation just south of Highway 180 at the Kings River, between Centerville and Minkler has recently been granted a conditional use permit (CUP) allowing their sand and gravel extraction operation to expand from some 200 acres to over 600 acres.

Yet this may be the tip of the iceberg. Three miles downstream another gravel operation, CMI, is applying for a new CUP to extract gravel in the Sanger river bottoms of the Kings River. CMI had a previous CUP approved by the

Bob Frisch Memorial Ride

By Connie Krahn



El Río Reyes Conservation Trust will host its ninth annual poker ride on Saturday, September 13, 2008. The ride will originate at the Reedley College Horse Unit. Registration will start at 9:00 A.M. and at 10:00 A.M. the riders will begin a scenic guided tour on Reedley College's Kings River Trail. A tri-tip barbecue lunch with all the trimmings will be served when the riders return.

Take time out of your busy schedule and join in

the ride and a great lunch.

Pre-registration by September 10th — \$30.00

Registration on the day of the ride — \$35.00

Please make checks payable to: el Río Reyes Trust,
P.O. Box 1339, Reedley, CA 93654

Fresno County Board of Supervisors with the caveat that the operator must rebuild all the bridges, which kept the operation shut down; they are trying again. And an international cement operation is also trying to open a crushed rock operation on Jesse Morrow Mountain.

If these operations succeed in expanding and opening it will allow the others to plead their case before the Fresno County Board of Supervisors for exemptions and fairly soon all these operations and more will be in business.

The San Joaquin River sand and gravel source has been nearly mined out and the development community, housing developers, business developers, and CalTrans (which is interesting considering that we are in a non-attainment air quality basin), all need a close, continuous

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In Our Back Yard *(Continued from page 1)*

source of sand and gravel for their ever increasing demands for concrete and foundation materials. They are all now looking to the Kings River for this new source of aggregate. The Kings aggregate source is actually a larger volume of sand and gravel than was present within the San Joaquin flood plain as it is wider and much deeper. Because of this there is a potential for the Kings River bottom, from Highway 180 south to the Reedley narrows, to be-

What impact will this increased heavy industrial activity have on the health of the locals, and how will it effect the entire valley?

come one continuous aggregate operation leaving 150' deep ponds dissected by narrow dikes.

This mining would be a disaster for any remaining riparian habitat adjacent to the Kings River. There are still some areas of native habitat next to and near the river channel with more of the adjacent property in agricultural operations. This entire river corridor just begs for preservation prior to decimation. Preservation may be accomplished by the purchase of adjacent properties, the acquisition of conservation ease-

ments, or changes in zoning; but for any of these to occur we need time. And we may not have much of that.

It is now time for our local environmental movement to try to preserve the Kings River riparian habitat before it has been decimated or lost as happened with the San Joaquin River. We will need all of your comments and help to influence and convince both the Planning Commission and the Fresno County Board of Supervisors to reject the mining expansions planned within and near the Kings River. But a major part of our problem is that since tax cuts have become derigueur there is no more Federal or State money filtering down to the counties leaving the counties to acquire their own operational and infrastructure money.

The easiest source of this money is now from development fees, so counties are now reluctant to stop or slow development plus they are in competition with each other for this development and their fees.

So, when extraction and development projects come before the Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors we need your help, in writing and in person, to influence these bodies with regard to the preservation of a native riparian habitat in our back yard.

Gravel Mining Developments

By **Kathy Omachi**

In 2007 the board of directors began its active involvement in the issue of gravel mining in the Kings River Region. The following activities have been initiated:

- Reviewed and submitted written comments and concerns on the Vulcan Mining Project EIR and Unclassified Conditional Use Permit application to the Fresno County Planning Commission.

- Development of a community long-range planning workshop regarding the Kings River Region.
- Provided public comments to the Fresno County staff and consultants on the Vulcan Mining Project's public hearing.
- Developed and presented a Community Planning Workshop held at Reedley College.
- Developed and chaired the Citizen's Taskforce on Gravel Mining. Taskforce partnerships involved various community organizations and concerned individuals (six months of meetings).
- Coordinated taskforce presentations before the Fresno County Planning Commission (two sessions) on the Vulcan Mining Project EIR and Unclassified Conditional Use Permit application.
- Reviewed and submitted written comments and concerns on the Calaveras Final Supplemental (amended) EIR (FEIR) and Unclassified Conditional Use Permit.
- Filed an appeal to the Fresno County Board of Supervisor's on the Planning Commission's approval of the Vulcan Mining EIR and Unclassified Conditional Use Permit.
- Coordinated taskforce presentations during the Vulcan Mining appeal.
- The Fresno County Board of Supervisors, on a 4 to 1 decision, upheld the Planning Commission's approval of the Vulcan Mining EIR and Unclassified Conditional Use Permit. El Rio Reyes Conservation Trust Board of Directors met with several concerned citizens and moved forward to file a lawsuit against the Fresno County Board of Supervisors on their action regarding the Vulcan Mining EIR and Unclassified Conditional Use Permit. In partnership with the community member, El Rio Reyes Conservation Trust raised funds to hire Mr. Mooney of Davis, California, a CEQA experienced attorney. A lawsuit was filed.
- Presentations were made before the Fresno Planning Commission on the Calaveras Mining applications. The Planning Commission held the first hearing with public testimony and a decision was postponed. The second hearing was held and the commissioners only received public testimony after El Rio Reyes Conservation Trust and the Citizen's Taskforce requested time to address issues presented by staff. A decision was again postponed. A third hearing was to be held on February 7th was postponed at the request of the applicant. A fourth hearing was held on March 6th and the community again presented testimony. The Fresno County Planning Commission voted 6 to 3 to deny the Calaveras Mining Application. An appeal was filed with the Board of Supervisors.
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- After a postponement on April 8th, the Board of Supervisors on May 20th postponed action on the appeal indefinitely. The supervisors previously requested a "field" trip to go look at the Goodfellow Bridge and its roads prior to this date. They have also changed their policy so that they can now talk to citizens regarding issues before them.



El Río Reyes Conservation Trust

Safeguarding The Kings River For Future Generations

El Río

September 17, 2007

Reyes

Dear Friends,

Trust

The Fresno County Board of Supervisors has recently approved an environmental impact report and conditional use permit for the Vulcan Materials Company Sanger-Centerville Aggregate Mining Operation Expansion. The mitigation measures for this project are not consistent with the Fresno County General Plan and State regulations. This action sets a dangerous precedent for future land use in the Kings River bottom and poses a serious threat to agriculture, wildlife habitat, air quality, traffic safety, and the quantity and quality of water in this area.

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El Rio Reyes Conservation Trust and concerned residents of the Kings River bottom are initiating legal action to compel the county to follow state CEQA and SMARA guidelines and require the proper mitigation measures. This action will require significant funds. The El Rio Reyes Conservation Trust is, therefore, respectfully requesting financial donations to support this endeavor. Please be as generous as you can. We have a unique opportunity to establish a precedent that will give direction to mining operators, county planners and elected officials in all future aggregate mining decisions in this area.

El Rio Reyes Conservation Trust will acknowledge your donation in a letter containing our federal tax identification number and provide you with updates on this action.

Thank you for your support of El Rio Reyes Conservation Trust and your help in conserving and protecting the Kings River area natural resources. If you have any questions, please call (559) 638-9617.

Respectfully,

Connie Krahn, President

Please accept my contribution of: \$1000 \$500 \$300 \$100 Other \$_____ to help El Rio Reyes Conservation Trust conserve the Kings River bottom and protect its resources.

____ You may use my name as a supporter. ____ Please keep my support confidential.

El Rio Reyes Conservation Trust is a non-profit 501 (c) (3) public benefit corporation.

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