

REFLECTIONS

EL RIO REYES CONSERVATION TRUST NEWSLETTER

Before My Time...

By Doug Cornelius, Board Director

FALL ISSUE 2012

Before my time the river ran free. In flood years it could become a mile wide. In normal years it would surge some in the winter, and then return to its main channels, having deposited rich silt throughout the river bottom. After several years of low water the river would get blocked in places with an overgrowth of vegetation. Then a big storm would come and bring the river back to life. She would drag trees down-river and plow her channels clear. When the trees came to rest a new habitat for fish and other creatures would be created, and the circle of life would continue.

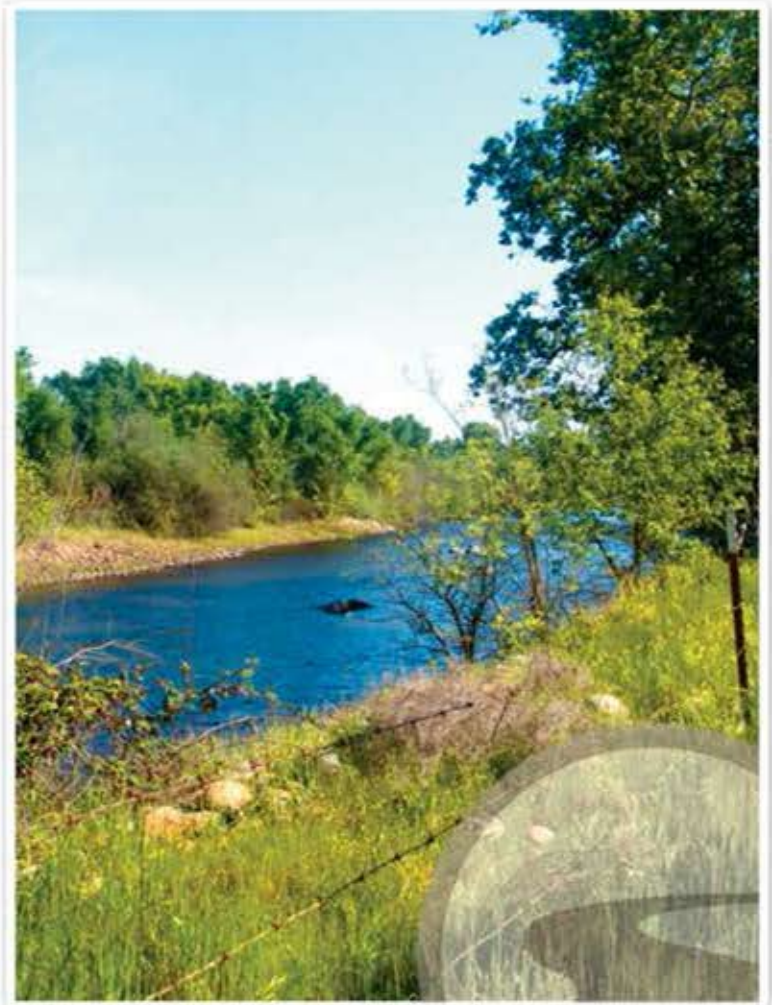
Then dams were built and her ebb and flow was controlled for the most part. Channels of the river were blocked and became farmland. But the heart of the river still had life.

I grew up working on the farms that thrived on the Kings River's rich soil. Wonderful fruit and nut trees, watermelon, grapes and all types of vegetables were grown there. Cattle and horse ranches were cared for with pride. It made me feel 'alive' to work on the land that was still so close to nature. No one farmed all of their land, and so riparian life near the river was often left fallow. People loved the land, and they loved hard work in this riverbottom area. Traditions were set and a way of life was defined. You did not destroy the land to make a one-time profit. You husbanded the land with the mind set that your children and theirs down the line would be able to live the life you did, and learn the values that come with living in nature. Everyone can think of cherished things that no longer exist... things that can never be brought back. That could be our beloved Kings River. The critical time is now.

Look what has happened to the San Joaquin River. People are now trying to 'restore' it. You can't. What is now called natural are open pits where gravel has been removed where oaks, sycamore trees and willow once grew. No longer are sloughs or brier patches present. The soul of the river has been taken for profit.

You husbanded the land with the mind set that your children and theirs down the line would be able to live the life you did...

We don't need to restore the Kings River. We need to keep it and our traditional way of life intact for the many generations to come. Behind a screen of trees often labeled "Native Plant Restoration Area" along the roads in the riverbottom are huge gravel mining operations.



Many more are planned. If we don't wake up and stop this now someone in the future will be trying to 'restore' the Kings River too.

The true value of the area is the riparian ground and the agricultural way of life. There are many other places to get gravel from that makes more sense. If you spend time here on this ground it will become a part of you, as it has me. To become a part of the effort that tries to maintain this river community way of life is a privilege for me.

I invite you all to join in this effort.

D. Cornelius



Conserving the Kings River for Future Generations

El Río Reyes Conservation Trust (El Río Reyes) is a regional California land trust whose mission is to safeguard the Kings River and its lands for future generations. Since our formation in 1999, El Río Reyes has concentrated on the challenging work of guiding land use decisions and establishing its authority to hold conservation easements along the Kings River. Only a limited number of our activities have been well publicized, but the impact this group has already had on the Kings River will help to safeguard the region's biological and cultural resources far into the future.

Over the last 13 years El Río Reyes has assisted other organizations achieve their conservation goals including the Blossom Trail Corridor Group, Friends of Jesse Morrow Mountain, Choinumne Native Americans, and the Friends of the Kings River. El Río Reyes Conservation Trust has also entered into cooperative agreements with the Fresno Madera Resource Conservation District, Kings River Conservancy, and Sequoia Riverlands Trust for various cooperative conservation and restoration projects.

The dedicated board of directors for El Río Reyes are all long-time residents of the Kings River area and have not only a love of this land and river, but understand the dynamic environment of the region. As pressure to develop the rich fertile lands around the river increases and land use issues continue to threaten the rural community and natural environment of the Kings River, El Río Reyes is the organization that is working to permanently protect the threatened farm and ranch lands surrounding the river.

Most recently, El Río Reyes has been accepted as a member of the California Council of Land Trusts. The Council works to build a strong, effective land trust community with the financial and policy resources to protect California's landscapes. This membership is a strong step forward in ensuring El Río Reyes' agricultural conservation easement program maintains the highest quality standards and works under best management practices for land trusts.

El Río Reyes has several families who are committed to protecting their land from development through a conservation easement. These properties boast agricultural, riparian and oak savannah habitat that are a treasure to us all. With your support, and in working with our conservation partners, we can protect these lands.

It is important that El Río Reyes Conservation Trust continue to pursue the task of protecting the Kings River. And, it must have public support in order to accomplish this task. The organization encourages everyone who shares a desire to ensure the sustainability of the Kings River agricultural lands and natural resources to learn more about El Río Reyes Conservation Trust, and to support its current and continuing efforts to conserve privately owned farm and ranch lands along its shores.

Please visit our website, www.elrioreyestrust.org, and "Like" us on Facebook, where you can learn about our work, and how you can get involved.



Become a Member of El Rio Reyes Conservation Trust Today!

Annual members are the backbone of the El Rio Reyes and provide unrestricted core resources that enable it to pursue its mission of safeguarding the Kings River and its lands for future generations. Your membership makes you a champion for conserving the Kings River and the conservation of its surrounding agricultural lands while ensuring that lands protected today stay protected in the future. Your membership deepens public commitment to conservation of our valuable resources.

All members receive our quarterly newsletter, email notifications, and invitations to special events to benefit the Kings River and its surrounding landscape. Members who participate at the Preservationist of the River level or higher will be included in special meetings and/or events with the board of directors and may participate in helping strategically guide the organization to provide the most lasting and sustainable benefits to the Kings River ecosystem.

Visit our website, www.elrioreyestrust.org, for a downloadable membership form and submit it with your membership donation check.

Annual Membership levels are:

- \$25 Student, age 25 or younger
- \$50 Individual
- \$100 Friend of the River
- \$250 Steward of the River
- \$500 Preservationist of the River
- \$1000 Conservator of the River

*Donations over \$1000 become members of our Heritage Circle.
All memberships are tax deductible to the extent allowable by law.*

News & Events

Please send us your email address so we can send you information regarding conservation projects, events and meeting dates.
contact us at: info@elrioreyestrust.org

October 16, 2012: Fresno Board of Supervisors meeting in the Fresno County Hall of Records, 9AM-2PM – Join us in supporting Friends of the Kings River regarding the Carmelita Mine project

Working for You, Working for the Kings River

Early in 2012, El Rio Reyes Conservation Trust began work with a local consultant, Davis Communications Group, who has a decade of experience working with conservation land trusts like El Rio Reyes. The goal in utilizing a consultant is to raise our profile among the Kings River community, with state and federal agencies who have grant programs for conservation easements, and with landowners who may want to use the tool of a conservation easement on their property.

The work of El Rio Reyes is a vital component to the long term health and sustainability of the lands along the Kings River and growing the organization's resources is essential to achieving El Rio Reyes' mission-driven work

AGRICULTURAL CONSERVATION

EASEMENT FACTS

- A voluntary agreement between a landowner and land trust to not develop the land in the future
- Property remains privately owned and managed by landowner
- Remains on county tax rolls contributing to local economy
- Does not require public access
- Can be donated or purchased





EL RIO REYES CONSERVATION TRUST

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Our Mission

SAFEGUARDING THE KINGS RIVER AND ITS LAND
FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS



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