

# 1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY





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The San Joaquin River Parkway Master Plan Update, presented herein and proposed for approval in 2017, describes the San Joaquin River Parkway (Parkway) as it exists today, presents conceptual plans for acquired Parkway lands, and presents policies, guidelines, and best management practices (BMPs) for continued acquisitions, improvements, and management.

The San Joaquin River Parkway is a planned 22-mile regional natural and recreation area primarily in the river's floodplain extending from Friant Dam to Highway 99, encompassing portions of both Fresno and Madera Counties. The adopted and proposed updated San Joaquin River Parkway Master Plan envision: a primary multi-use trail from Friant Dam to Highway 99 (22 +/- river miles); contiguous and continuous wildlife habitat and movement corridors; a regional, multifaceted parkway experience for visitors, consisting of river access, low-impact recreation, and conservation education; and functional regional conservation and restoration of habitat, the watershed, and ecosystems. The master-planned Parkway is a net benefit project that balances the natural resources conservation and recreation needs, and will provide a harmonious combination of low-impact recreation, natural and cultural resources conservation, and educational uses. The Parkway Planning Area covers over 22 miles of river corridor including the floodplain and adjacent bluffs under multiple ownerships.

The Parkway today includes public lands and improvements owned by the San Joaquin River Conservancy (Conservancy), City of Fresno, County of Fresno, State Lands Commission, California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW)/Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB), and Fresno County Office of Education, and those owned by the nonprofit San Joaquin River Parkway & Conservation Trust (River Parkway Trust).

The Conservancy is the lead agency responsible for preparing, approving, and implementing the San Joaquin River Parkway Master Plan Update. The Conservancy is an agency of the State of California. It was established by the State Legislature in 1992 to create the Parkway by: acquiring 5,900 acres from willing sellers; enhancing and restoring riparian, floodplain, aquatic, and other habitats, and conserving other natural and cultural resources on its lands; and developing and managing its lands for public recreational and educational use compatible with resource protection. The Conservancy may also assist other entities in conserving and improving their properties for the Parkway. The Conservancy is working to facilitate the development of the Parkway, cultivate public support, and secure its future. As of 2016, the Parkway consists of 2,595 acres acquired by the San Joaquin River Conservancy for Parkway purposes and over 1,250 acres of other public lands.

The Conservancy Board adopted the Interim San Joaquin River Master Plan and Environmental Impact Report (EIR) in December 1997. The core values and policies of the Parkway Master Plan have served the Parkway well, are being implemented cooperatively by the local agencies, and are proposed to remain largely unchanged.

This Update focuses on those elements of the Master Plan that are clearly out of date. The Master Plan Update and EIR have been revised to reflect regulatory changes; the San Joaquin River Restoration Program (SJR Restoration Program); practices, programs, directives, initiatives, and partnerships that have been

developed over the years; lands acquired by the Conservancy; and site-specific adopted and conceptual plans. Goals, policies, and mitigation measures that are not outmoded remain essentially as-is though some language has been changed to provide clarity to the intent. New goals, policies, and mitigation measures have been added to address new requirements, to clarify previous language, and to assist with the continued implementation of the Parkway. Implementation of the Master Plan Update will continue to expand, enhance, and protect riparian, wetland, and upland habitats; improve recreational and education facilities; and add to the region's economic vitality and public health.

The Parkway Master Plan Update is the Proposed Project analyzed in the accompanying Environmental Impact Report prepared in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act and to be considered for approval by the Conservancy Board in 2017.