



## Case Study

# A PARTNERSHIP EVOLVES AND A MANAGEMENT AGREEMENT IS RENEGOTIATED COSUMNES RIVER, CALIFORNIA, U.S.A.

*New conservation priorities fuel a need to renegotiate roles and responsibilities to advance targeted outcomes.*

The Cosumnes River is one of the Nature Conservancy of California's flagship projects. The story of the project also provides an interesting time-lapse snapshot of the changes in the Nature Conservancy over the last thirty years.

The Conservancy began its involvement in the area by buying and managing discrete parcels of land for a "nature preserve." During the first decade of the project, the Conservancy began to collaborate with a number of partners, including public agencies, local counties, other non-profits, agricultural interests and academic institutions. In 1994, this group of partners embarked on an official Cooperative Management Agreement (CMA) that set the course for an expansion of acres, policy work, agricultural collaborations and riparian forest restoration advancements. Today the Preserve is comprised of approximately 60 properties adding up to 45,859 acres of wildlife habitat and agricultural lands owned by seven land-owning partners.

Ten years later, after much reflection, the partners embarked on another iteration of the CMA. Roles and responsibilities of the partners within the project had been changing – sometimes obviously, sometimes imperceptibly. All partners wanted to revisit project strategy, renegotiate roles and responsibilities, plan for the future and make changes accordingly.

In 2008, the many discussions about the need to reevaluate the project reached fruition. The partners produced a new Cosumnes River Management Plan, through a stakeholder process facilitated by a consultant. The Plan describes how the Preserve will be managed over the next 10 years, and how current roles and responsibilities of the partners will evolve. The primary goal of the CMA is cooperative management of the Preserve as a single ecological unit for the protection, restoration, and maintenance of the quality and diversity of two rare communities in California—the valley oak riparian forest and the freshwater seasonal wetlands—and their associated wildlife habitat values.

The Conservancy will be accelerating its work in science-based habitat restoration and water policy innovations, and other partners will increase acquisition and management responsibilities.

By adaptively managing the Cosumnes River partnerships over time, and renegotiating both specific responsibilities and larger aspirations, the project provides a model of how biodiversity and migratory flyways can thrive in the most highly developed agricultural economy in the world.

To learn more about the Cosumnes River Management Plan, visit  
[http://www.cosumnes.org/about\\_crp/CH%201%20-%202.pdf](http://www.cosumnes.org/about_crp/CH%201%20-%202.pdf)

## 6.A. Why Should We Consider Renegotiating