



# DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION

## WATERSHED CONSERVATION PROGRAM STUDY



A Sierra Institute researcher interviews a landowner in the Lower Mokelumne River watershed and discusses restoration projects on his property along the river. The projects were implemented through collaborative processes in the watershed and supported by the CALFED and DOC Watershed Programs.

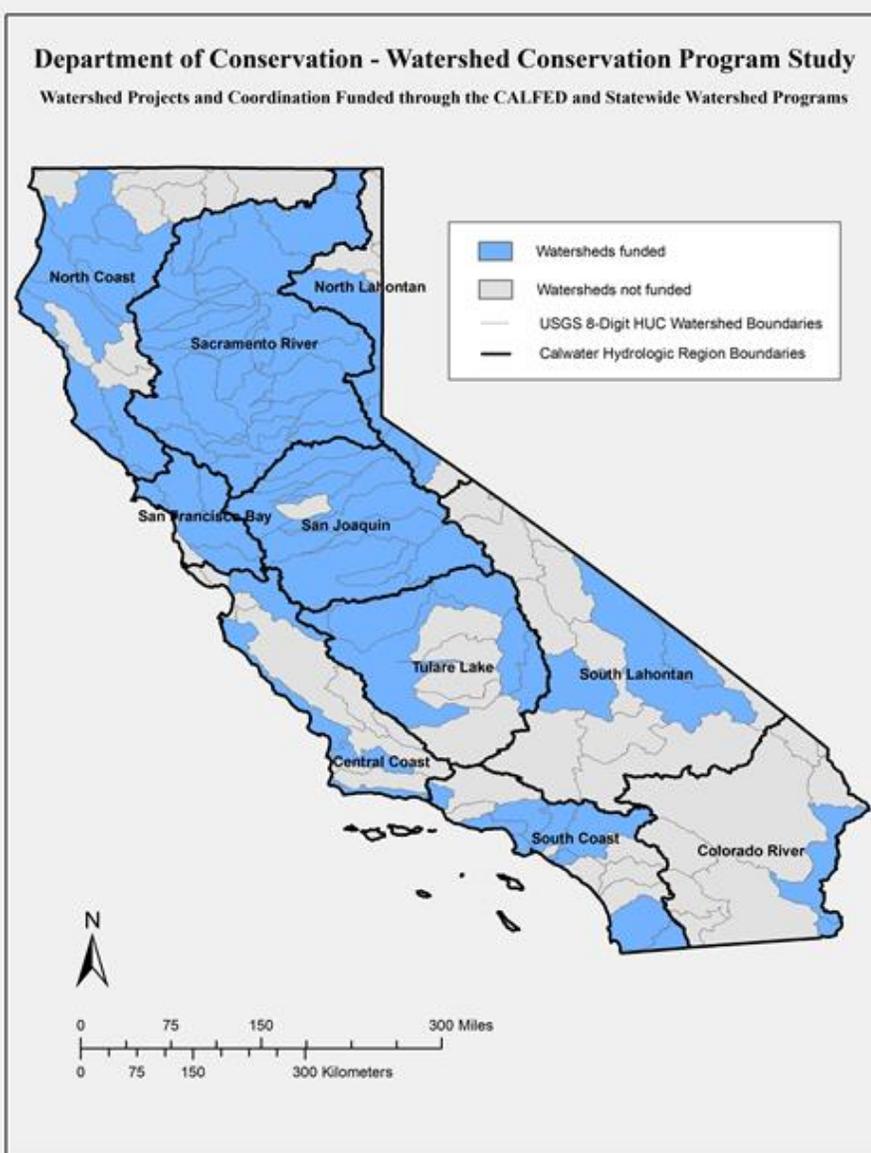
The California Department of Conservation (DOC) contracted the Sierra Institute to conduct a retroactive study of the Statewide Watershed Program, including the CALFED and DOC Watershed Programs. The programs have funded 171 watershed management project grants and 131 watershed coordination grants to numerous organizations and agencies across the state from 1998 to 2014.

With over three hundred grants issued throughout the Watershed Program, Sierra Institute has undertaken an in-depth case study approach with the goal of assessing a minimum of 30 project and 15 coordinator grants. The case study selection is purposeful, with criteria founded on percent of total funding by hydrologic region, representation from rural and urban watersheds, duration of projects, overlap of project and coordinator grants, and grant-recipient type. For this research, we take a qualitative approach, involving semi-structured interviews with diverse participants and stakeholders, as well as an analysis of grant documents and reports. To achieve a deeper understanding of the outcomes of grant initiatives, we are assessing the goals, if and how objectives were met, implementation, measures of success, and how the program could have been more effective.

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Through interviews we hope to capture stories of lessons learned, opportunities and challenges, local participation and collaborative efforts, environmental and social outcomes, and critical variables that contribute to success. Documenting and synthesizing these case studies will establish a valuable resource for watershed groups throughout the state to improve watershed management strategies and contribute to the adoption of best practices.

In the first year of the study, our research team compiled multiple databases containing grant information and reviewed relevant literature to inform the methodology and case study selection. Our research team has since conducted over one hundred interviews across 15 watersheds. We have drafted 12 case study reports that assess a total of 37 grants, including 18 project grants and 19 coordinator grants. Our assessment of coordinator grants has surpassed our minimum goal of 15 in consideration of the overlap of grants received by the same entity or in the same watershed. Our research and the production of a final report will conclude in June of 2018.



**The watershed coordination grants have received positive feedback on the utility of funding a coordinator in a watershed.**

**"The coordinator was a main pillar for the community to engage and especially important for these types of projects with the sheer amount of restoration that needed to be done," says an informant for the Battle Creek Watershed Conservancy case.**

**FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION WATERSHED CONSERVATION PROGRAM STUDY, CONTACT:**

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