



Sierra Valley Alliance

The Alliance of Leaders from Public and Private Sectors and Citizens

“Committed to the conservation of natural resources in balance with economic development and improvement of the quality of life in California”

The **Sierra Valley Alliance** (SVA) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting conservation of our natural resources in balance with economic growth and the improvement of life in our region. It is an organization dedicated to promoting cooperative leadership of Federal, State, and Local elected officials in concert with the private sector and community leaders.

Composition - The Alliance includes leaders from the public and private sectors from a region composed of Amador, Calaveras, Fresno, Madera, Mariposa, Merced, San Joaquin, Stanislaus, and Tuolumne Counties. Together these 9 counties would comprise the fifth largest state of union and home to the most productive agricultural region in the world. It is a region with untold natural resources including the “Crown Jewel of the National Parks” – Yosemite National Park. These are also the counties that are connected through the San Joaquin River with the rivers flowing from them including the Merced, Tuolumne, Stanislaus, Calaveras and Mokelumne Rivers

The charter members include United States Congressmen and California State Legislators from both parties. It is also includes members of the Boards of Supervisors from each of 9 counties. The Sierra Valley Alliance will also seek the involvement of others in the public sector including School Districts.

The private sector involvement would include participation in SVA programs by leaders from agriculture, food processing, manufacturing, high technology, and other industry.

Programs - The SVA will have three key programs: **Research, Education** and **Advocacy**

- **Research** - The Sierra Valley Alliance partners with Stanislaus State University to provide expertise and analysis guiding the organization. SVA believes it is critically important to have valid economic and scientific analysis in the development of its positions and programs. The Alliance will publish various research studies and papers on issues critical to the region. The SVA will also consult with independent research organizations such as Fish Bio and Stratacon in the development of it research projects. Fish bio is a fisheries and environmental consulting company based in Oakdale while Stratecon Inc. is an international strategic planning and economics consulting firm specializing in water.
- **Education** – The Sierra Valley Alliance will conduct educational programs and provide knowledge to public and private sector organizations to confront issues vital to the region. The research will also be communicated to policy makers throughout California and nationally to provide new perspective on the vital role our region plays in the state and nation and its connection to urban California. The organization will also make extensive use of social media and traditional news organizations.

- **Advocacy** – The SVA will empower leaders in the public and private sectors to be even more effective advocates of facts behind issues critical to the region. The organization will also promote its research and advocacy efforts to citizens who want to voice their support of the region and its contribution to the state and nation. It will also coordinate regional involvement in voicing support for public policy in the best interests of the region.

Background - The formation of the Sierra Valley Alliance was a direct result of poorly conceived and executed water policies advocated by the California State Water Resources Board. The decision of the California State Water Board to advocate and support policies that translate into a state take over of regional water resources created a huge coalition of leaders and citizens from throughout the 9 county region. These counties are along the rivers flowing into the San Joaquin River. The economic cost to the region of Water Board Plans are estimated in the hundreds of millions of dollars.

The impact of the SWB policies will impact every farmer, businessman, and citizen in the region. It impacts the water available for farms and water in the Sierra Nevada that is so vital to forestry and recreation. It reduces the water that provides for a vibrant eco system including Bald Eagles gliding majestically in the canyons and lakes of the region, and yes, even ironically the fish the board claims the policies will enhance.

The state proposal, also for the first time, brought rural counties such as Calaveras, Tuolumne, Amador, and Mariposa County together with larger populated counties in the valley to oppose the state. Thousands of citizens attend the SWB hearings. Following a meeting public officials in December 2016, it was determined that a permanent organization should be considered that would bring leaders together to create a regional strategy support sound policies and oppose bad ones.



Modesto State Water Board Hearing

The importance of a bipartisan effort was demonstrated when the California Congressional Delegation was successful in getting a new federal water law enacted that provides for long and short term solutions to the water resource challenges facing the state.

However, it became clear that a regional alliance would be important now to change the San Joaquin River Settlement Agreement (SJRSA) that has been a key driver of the State Water Board Policy. An initial prime focus of the Sierra Valley Alliance will be to support a significant change in the current SJRSA.

Conclusion

The purpose of this paper is lay out the purpose, composition, and programs of the Sierra Valley Alliance. It is important that this effort be broad based and represent the best interests of the region. We hope that this initial paper can serve as the draft of the long term development of a professional and comprehensive approach to the protection and enhancement of our region.

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**Bald Eagle on Lake Tulloch
 Stanislaus River**