



Tuolumne River: Agriculture and Ecology

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Apart from being an excellent spot for rafting and kayaking thanks to dam releases that support recreation, the Tuolumne River provides water for fruits, vegetables, and ecological preservation, as described in the following paragraphs.

Fiorini Ranch was founded in 1909 and is located in Merced County. After dealing with issues of water accessibility during its first 20 years, the ranch eventually started producing peaches, wine grapes, and almonds. This ranch was one of the pioneers in using sophisticated irrigation technology, such as drip and micro-sprinklers. Presently, Fiorini Ranch - and the rest of the Central Valley - is working to address groundwater overuse. Government regulations (see Sustainable Groundwater Management Act²) and precise irrigation schedules that use new technology to measure water stress in fruit and nut trees conserve water to produce almonds, peaches, strawberries, sweet potatoes, and more, with high efficiency by using cutting edge machines for harvesting.



Farther downstream is Dos Rios Ranch, where a restoration project has been held since 2013. This 2100-acre ranch, located at the confluence of the Tuolumne and San Joaquin rivers, previously produced tomatoes, alfalfa, wheat, and dairy. Now it is the site of ecological restoration to preserve birds, rabbits, rats, beetles and fish. Incredibly, a native species of bird not seen for several years finally came back to Dos Rios Ranch, indicating the success of the restoration project. To offset restoration costs, Dos Rios Ranch is producing 40 acres of almonds with yearly revenue of \$40,000, focusing on the environment through sustainable agriculture.

Dos Rios Ranch will likely be a new state park, offering camping areas, hiking and biking trails, fishing, non-motorized boat access, etc.³



¹ Tuolumne River Trust. (2022). Tuolumne River. <https://www.tuolumne.org/>

² State of California. (2022). Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA). <https://water.ca.gov/programs/groundwater-management/sgma-groundwater-management>

³ River Partners (2022). Dos Rios Ranch Preserve Eyed To Become California's Newest State Park. <https://riverpartners.org/news/dos-rios-ranch-preserve-eyed-to-become-californias-newest-state-park/>