

## Where Do We Get Our Water?

By Rebecca Miller-Cripps

For most of us who live in Tuolumne and Calaveras Counties, the essential link to our water supply is the Stanislaus River (“The Stan”). Creeks that drain melting run-off from Sierra snowpack feed the Stanislaus River and are impounded in reservoirs ranging from Union and Utica in the north to Spicer and Donnell, Pinecrest and Lyons, and Phoenix Lake and Lake Tulloch farther south and west. Eventually the multiple branches of the Stanislaus find their way to New Melones Reservoir, operated by the United States Department of the Interior Bureau of Reclamation. From there the Stanislaus eventually joins the San Joaquin River and flows out to San Francisco Bay, mingling with waters from the Sacramento River flowing down from the north. In addition, rivers that supply water to Calaveras and Tuolumne Counties include the Mokelumne in the north and the Tuolumne, originating in Yosemite National Park, to the south.

The ditch system, which flows for 71 miles in Tuolumne County, brings water from Pinecrest Lake (fed by the South Fork of the Stanislaus River) to Lyons Reservoir and then on to communities ranging from Twain Harte to Jamestown. For more information, see <https://tudwater.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Understanding-Your-Water-Supply.pdf>

“TUD has a contract with PG&E (Pacific Gas and Electric Company) which provides for perpetual water supply for TUD from the South Fork Stanislaus River. This water is stored in Pinecrest Lake, Lyons Reservoir, Phoenix Lake and other small reservoirs on the TUD ditch system. PG&E owns Lyons Reservoir and the 15.7-mile Main Canal that leads to its Phoenix powerhouse. From the Tuolumne Main Canal, TUD’s water splits into three branches – one serves Twain Harte, Soulsbyville and Tuolumne; and another feeds TUD’s network of ditches, pipelines and treatment plants that serve Crystal Falls, Big Hill and Columbia. The remainder goes into Phoenix Reservoir to serve Phoenix Lake, East Sonora, Sonora and Jamestown.” \*

But, it’s not just Tuolumne Utilities District. There are over 125 separate water companies in Tuolumne County alone! In Calaveras County, the situation is very similar. The largest water utility is Calaveras County Water District; However, many other water utilities exist including City of Angels, Valley Springs Public Utility District, Union Public Utility District, Calaveras Public Utility District, and others.

All of these water providers rely on the Sierra Nevada snowpack in our two-county area. Much of that snowpack is drained by the hard-working, ever-flowing, many-branched Stanislaus River. May we be cognizant of and protective of this vast and complex system that provides such a life-sustaining service!

\*Sources include: Tuolumne Utilities District website: <https://tudwater.com/about-us/> and Calaveras County Water District website: <https://ccwd.org/about/>

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*UCCE Master Gardeners of Tuolumne and Calaveras Counties can answer home gardening questions. Call 209-533-5912 or go to:  
<http://ucanr.edu/survey/survey.cfm?surveynumber=7269> to fill out our easy-to-use problem questionnaire. Check out our website at:  
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