

## INTRODUCTION

The Cherokee Watershed is located in central Butte County, trending generally from southwest to northeast. This small watershed encompasses 95 square miles and ranges in elevation from 65 to 2000 feet. Streams within the watershed include Clear Creek, Dry Creek, Gold Run Creek, and Cottonwood Creek, all of which drain into the Cherokee Canal.

The Cherokee Watershed is inhabited by over 10,000 people and supports a diverse range of land uses, including field and orchard agriculture, cattle ranching, and residential and urban development. The area also contains Table Mountain, Butte Community College, and a California State Wildlife Area. The Town of Paradise and the unincorporated community of Cherokee occupy the forested headwaters of three of the watershed's tributary streams. A large-scale hydraulic placer mine is located adjacent to the community of Cherokee. This mine operated between the 1850s and the 1880s and is still a prominent feature in the landscape. The mid-elevation foothill region of the watershed is largely owned and managed by cattle ranchers. These rangelands currently support important habitat values, including blue and valley oak woodlands, extensive riparian corridors, and vernal pools. A few olive, orange, apple and apricot orchards are interspersed among the ranches. Residential development of this foothill region has accelerated in recent decades concentrating primarily around Butte College. Prune and almond orchards and rice fields occupy most of the land in the lower elevations of the watershed. Other notable features of the watershed include a tallow factory, two gravel-mining operations, two wildlife refuges, and a 2500-acre mitigation bank.

In the mid 1990s, concerned mid-elevation residents of the Cherokee watershed formed the Cherokee Watershed Coordinated Resource Management and Planning (CRMP) Group in response to water transfers and declining groundwater tables in the Butte Basin. The group played a key role in focusing the attention of local and state government on the potential risks of water exports and promoted monitoring and modeling efforts to advance understanding of the groundwater system. In 2000, the CRMP initiated community watershed forums to link the diverse populations of the Cherokee Watershed in a collaborative, stakeholder-based water process.

As a result of these and other efforts, the Cherokee Watershed CRMP and the Butte County Department of Water and Resource Conservation applied for and was awarded grant funding from the State Water Resources Control Board and the CALFED Watershed Program to support a variety of tasks including the formalizing of the Cherokee Watershed Alliance, public outreach and education, citizen water quality training and monitoring, university-level water quality monitoring, and the development of this report, the *Existing Data Summary*. Due to limited resources to support this activity, the decision was made to assemble the existing data into an annotated bibliography format which could be used by stakeholders and interested entities to access more in-depth information if they so desired.