

# The Tulare Basin Watershed

## A Map of the Natural Rivers and Streams

During the early history of California and dating back for thousands of years, Tulare Lake existed in the Southern San Joaquin Valley as the second largest fresh water lake in the United States. Today, the dry lake bed is one of the most fertile producers of agricultural land in the world.



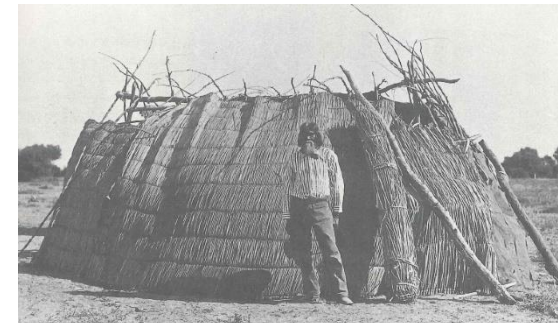
Tulare Lake was once home to thousands of migratory birds, numerous land and water species and provided for a population of up to 70,000 Native American Yokut people.

Between 1850 and 1900, Tulare Lake was known to have varied in size between wet and dry years. At times it was a dry lake bed and other years it swelled to an area of nearly 800 square miles .

The lake is the terminal point for 4 primary rivers in the watershed basin; the Kings, Kaweah, Kern, and Tule Rivers. During the wettest years the lake would rise above the elevation of its natural spillway (approximately 216 feet above sea level) and flow north into the San Joaquin River system.



This view of the Tule marshes in the Kern National Wildlife Refuge gives us a glimpse in to the past



A hut constructed of Tule reeds  
1903