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# \$2m gift goes to Valley rivers

## Donation to Fresno foundation aims to protect and preserve.

**By Heather Somerville**

### **The Fresno Bee**

Ted Martin used to spend a lot of time fishing the Valley's rivers. He'd bring his fly rod down to the banks of the San Joaquin and the Kings and pass entire afternoons waiting for "any fish I could fool" to bite, he said.

Now 87 and in a wheelchair, Martin doesn't fish like he used to. But he's giving away millions of dollars to make sure future generations will be able to fish along the Valley's riverbeds for many years to come.

Martin, a lifelong Fresnan, has donated \$2 million to the Fresno Regional Foundation to restore and preserve the San Joaquin River. The donation was announced Wednesday at the foundation's 45th anniversary celebration — an afternoon that turned out to be quite lucrative for the community philanthropic organization.

Martin's donation followed the announcement of a \$3 million grant — the largest unencumbered grant in the foundation's history — from the San Francisco-based James Irvine Foundation. The Fresno foundation will use Irvine's grant to help Valley nonprofits address the region's most critical economic, environmental and social needs.

The Fresno Regional Foundation has received larger donations in the past, including \$6 million from the Lyles Foundation and \$5 million from James B. McClatchy. But those donations have been earmarked for specific causes.

Martin's gift is the largest donation that the Fresno Regional Foundation has ever received for protecting the area's rivers, the organization's staff said. The money will be put into an endowment, and interest on the fund will be given out annually as grants to organizations working to improve the San Joaquin's water flow, preserve fish populations and restore native habitats.

Martin has donated twice before to the foundation, but Wednesday's gift is by far his largest.

"I had some extra cash in hand," said Martin, who spent his career in the oil business.

Always, though, the focus of his philanthropy has been the Valley's rivers. In 2009, he donated about \$200,000 to the cause. Earlier this year, he gave \$100,000 for restoration projects on both the San Joaquin and Kings rivers, and grants from that donation will be awarded later this year, said Fresno foundation chief executive Dan

DeSantis.

"The river has made this community what it is," Martin said. "It's the only reason any of us are here."

The announcement of his gift was met with a standing ovation from the crowd of about 130 who attended the downtown event. Martin, a soft-spoken and quick-witted man, nodded graciously but didn't make a speech.

The two substantial donations signal the growing wealth and influence of the Fresno Regional Foundation, which has seen its assets more than triple, to about \$50 million, since 2003.

The Fresno foundation will use the Irvine grant to establish a new fund, called Fund for the San Joaquin Valley. The hope is that community donors will contribute to that fund, creating an endowment that could eventually provide up to \$1 million per year to support non-profits working in the Valley.

Speaking at Wednesday's event, Irvine Foundation Chief Executive Jim Canales said local philanthropy and community fundraising efforts offer the best solutions to the area's economic woes because the state Legislature isn't fixing the weak economy.

"We need to realize no one is going to save us," Canales said.

# Feeling generous

The largest gifts received by the Fresno Regional Foundation, 2007-11:

- \$6 million: Lyles Foundation, Fresno
- \$5 million: James B. McClatchy, fourth-generation owner of The McClatchy Co. (publisher of The Fresno Bee)
- \$3 million: The James Irvine Foundation, San Francisco
- \$3 million: an anonymous donor
- \$2 million: Dorothy Mitsuoka, Dinuba farmer
- \$2 million: Ted Martin, Fresno
- \$1.2 million: The Hewlett Foundation, Menlo Park
- \$250,000: Frank F. Parker, who grew up in Firebaugh



Ted Martin, a lifelong Fresnan, has donated \$2m to protect the San Joaquin River.



## **JOHN WALKER/THE FRESNO BEE**

Ted Martin, center, donor of \$2 million at the Fresno Regional Foundation luncheon Wednesday, receives a standing ovation in the Grand Ballroom of the Trade Center building.

# Big grants

The largest recent discretionary grants awarded by the Fresno Regional Foundation:

- Fresno Barrios Unidos, \$100,000
- Boys& Girls Club Fresno County, \$100,000
- Madera County Public Health, \$100,000
- Latino Commission/ Nuevo Comienzo, \$100,000
- Boys& Girls Club Sequoias, \$100,000
- Big Picture Schools, \$50,000
- San Joaquin River Partnership, \$50,000
- San Joaquin River Water Leadership Forum, \$50,000

Source: Fresno Regional Foundation

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