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SAVE THE AMERICAN RIVER ASSOCIATION

RiverWatch

this issue

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THIS OR THIS?

Measure A Would Allow Bad Transportation Projects To be Built in Sacramento County

Sacramento County voters are being asked to approve a developer-backed measure called Measure A on the November ballot that would increase the sales tax by a half cent for the next 40 years to fund transportation projects.

But a scathing analysis by the Sacramento Area Council of Governments (SACOG) concluded that the tax revenue would fund some projects that violate climate law, “would substantially increase per capita (greenhouse gas) emissions” and “jeopardize” the county’s ability to get state money to fund transportation and affordable housing projects.

For those reasons, the tax increase measure is being opposed by environmental organizations, taxpayer groups, air-quality advocates and transit riders.

The Sacramento County Transportation Maintenance, Safety and Congestion Relief Act

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Homeless Campers May Have to Leave The American River and Dry Creek Parkways

BY STEPHEN GREEN

While wildfires near homeless camps were scorching portions of the American River Parkway on August 23, elected officials for the City and County of Sacramento voted unanimously to ban camping on specified public lands including the American River and Dry Creek Parkways.

The Sacramento City ordinance will empower police to clear camps when they are blocking sidewalks or business entrances.

The Sacramento County ordinances ban camping in the 29-mile American River Parkway corridor from Folsom Dam to the river’s confluence with the Sacramento River, and in the six-mile Dry Creek Parkway from the Sacramento/Placer County line to the Sacramento City limit at Ascot Lane. It passes through the unincorporated communities of Antelope, Rio Linda and Elverta, and is part of the American River watershed.

The county ordinances also ban camping within 25-feet of critical infrastructure such as drainage systems (creeks, rivers and other waterways), water sources, schools, public libraries, fire and police stations, jails, courthouses, hospitals, structures (including antennas, bridges, roads, train tracks, rail stations, and radio towers), public utilities, electrical wires and natural gas pipes.

The ordinances are effective as of Sept. 23. But county officials cautioned that campers won’t be immediately removed from the Parkways.

In 2018, a federal court ruled that homeless people cannot be removed from public spaces when there is no other shelter available for them (*Martin v. Boise*). The county ordinances are “narrowly focused” to prohibit camping in areas where they threaten critical infrastructure or are in wildfire or flood-risk areas. Campers will be removed when more shelters become available.

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Measure A

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of 2022 is projected to raise \$8.5 billion over the next 40 years. Funding would be provided for highway, street, pedestrian and transit projects.

The signature project is the Southeast Capital Connector, a 34-mile expressway linking Elk Grove, Rancho Cordova and Folsom. Completion of the project would encourage sprawl development in the south area of the county which is now primarily agricultural land. It would fundamentally alter the metropolitan area and increase traffic congestion.

The developers who financed the signature gathering to put the measure on the ballot have been buying up land in the south county area. Revenue from the sales tax increase to pay for roads and streets that would make their developments more profitable.

Sacramento County already collects a half cent of sales tax on purchases in the county for transportation projects. That measure was approved by voters in 2004 and it expires in 2039.

The measure on the November ballot is nearly identical to a 2016 sales tax measure that was narrowly defeated.

If the current measure is approved in November, it will continue the tradition of developing transportation and land-use projects that have fouled our air, clogged our roads and overheated our planet.

If it is defeated in November, we urge developers to work with SACOG, the transit agency and community groups to come up with a new measure for the 2024 ballot.

That measure would focus on projects that:

- Repair and improve existing streets and roads.
- Improve and expand rail and transit.
- Make neighborhoods safer and better connected for walking and biking.
- Reduce traffic congestion. ■

Camps

Continued from Page 1

Assemblyman Jim Cooper, D-Elk Grove, made homelessness a key issue in his successful campaign for sheriff earlier this year. When he takes the job at year's end, Cooper said his deputies won't be doing sweeps of areas where people are camping. The deputies will be accompanied by county mental health professionals and service navigators when removing campers.

"We want to help the people that want help out there," Cooper said. "It's unfortunate, it's tough, but at the same time you have a Parkway where crime is pretty significant and a lot of folks are afraid to use the Parkway. It's not a crime to be homeless, but at the same time, you can't have the issues that are going on."

In 2021, county officials reported that there were about 150 fires on the American River Parkway and 300 acres were burned. There were six murders in the Parkway. All the victims were residing in or near encampments. Park rangers responded to hundreds of crimes including rapes, domestic violence assaults, robberies and attacks by off-leash dogs.

In February of this year, a 22-year-old woman who was taking pictures on the Parkway was raped, tortured and murdered. The man charged with

her murder lived nearby in a camp on the Parkway.

The rough estimate is that there are 9,300 homeless people in Sacramento County and perhaps a third of them are living in the Parkways. The homeless population has more than doubled in the past few years. One projection claims that an average of 27 people are becoming homeless in the county each day.

The city provides 1,100 shelter beds and spaces, and the county has 1,400 indoor shelter beds.

If campers refuse to leave, they can be served with a misdemeanor citation and a written notice that their camp will be removed after 48 hours. Any personal property left behind by the campers is to be stored for at least 90 days and the campers will given a written notice as to where it can be retrieved.

Save the American River Association (SARA) and other stakeholder groups were heavily involved in the ordinances as they were being developed as were advocates for homeless people. There were lengthy hearings that frequently became contentious.

Among other issues, SARA sought to designate all regional waterways as critical infrastructure including not

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Camps

Continued from Page 2

only rivers but creeks, springs, sloughs and canals.

The ordinances, SARA maintained, should incorporate provisions of state law that prohibit dumping and the accumulation of human waste, garbage, debris and the storage of personal property within 150 feet of the high-water mark of rivers and tributaries (*California Fish & Game Code 5652*).

SARA members also worked to secure more shelters for homeless people in the region.

The American River and Dry Creek Parkway are unique regional assets providing many benefits to residents and visitors to Sacramento County including critical flood control and conveyance infrastructure, drinking water, preservation of open space and wildlife habitat, and recreational opportunities.

All these assets are being threatened by the presence of people camping in the Parkways. And the unsanitary living conditions that many of them endure puts their health and welfare at significant risk.

SARA will continue its mission to protect and enhance the wildlife habitat, fishery and recreational resources of the American River Parkway, and to protect the more than eight million people who visit it annually. ■



Cannabis and Hemp Businesses May be Coming to Unincorporated Areas of Sacramento County

It is illegal to operate a cannabis dispensary in unincorporated areas of Sacramento County. But that could change.

The county Board of Supervisors voted to put a measure on the November ballot to establish a tax on cannabis and hemp business activities in the unincorporated area of the county. If approved by a two-thirds vote, county officials would then develop a regulatory plan for operation of the businesses. All revenues from the taxes would go to a special fund that would finance services for homeless people.

Currently, only the cities of Sacramento and Isleton allow cannabis businesses to operate within their jurisdictions. Supervisors contended legalizing cannabis sales in the unincorporated area would help the county curtail the illegal market and would allow the county to compete with Sacramento and Isleton for cannabis tax revenue.

All registered voters in Sacramento County would be allowed to vote on the ballot measure. About two thirds of them live outside the unincorporated area.

Supervisor Sue Frost voted against putting the measure on the ballot. “It’s not that I’m opposed to a vote,” Frost said. “It’s that I’m opposed to a vote where two thirds of the constituents are making a decision for those that are singled out as impacted by the vote. For good reason, we don’t allow residents of Nevada to vote for California Governor...and we shouldn’t allow residents of Sacramento City to vote for an issue that only impacts unincorporated areas.”

The ballot language will read as follows:

“Shall the measure to fund enhanced County homeless services, including those benefitting the American River Parkway, by establishing a special tax on the gross receipts from cannabis and hemp businesses in unincorporated Sacramento County, not exceeding 6% for retail, 4% for manufacturing, 3% for distribution, 2% for testing and, 3% for cultivation or \$10 per canopy square foot inflation adjustable, generating an estimated \$5,100,000 to \$7,700,000 annually, and levied until repealed by voters, be adopted?” ■

Assemblyman Cooley has Honored SARA

At a ceremony at the state Capitol each summer, legislators honor Nonprofit Organizations in their districts that “make significant contributions to our local communities.”

This year Assemblyman Ken Cooley honored Save the American River Association (SARA).

“I am honored to have the opportunity to showcase the hard work the SARA organization does to ensure and protect the resources of the river and the parkway,” Cooley said.

SARA President Stephen Green thanked Cooley for the honor. He noted that SARA “often provides presentation to local agencies and advisory boards with an interest in the river and its assets, but the real work is in the court room and in California Legislative Chambers where we can partner with legislators like Cooley who has clearly demonstrated his commitment to protecting the American River.”

Cooley represents the 8th Assembly District which includes Carmichael, Citrus Heights, Gold River, Rancho, Rosemont and other portions of Sacramento County. ■

“I am honored to have the opportunity to showcase the hard work the SARA organization does to ensure and protect the resources of the river and the parkway.”

ASSEMBLYMAN KEN COOLEY



For a second year, Save the American River Association partnered with Waste Management to donate 100 trash cans to Sacramento County for use on the American River Parkway. A group of SARA Board members were at the William Pond Recreation Area when the recent delivery was made in July. From left are George Nyberg, Dr. Mary Beth Metcalf, Kathy Kayner, Stephen Green and Joe Cadelago. In addition to serving on the SARA Board, Joe Cadelago is the Public Sector Service Manager for Waste Management based in Sacramento.

Photo by Kayla Rodriguez



Thank you, Kiene's Fly Shop

Gary Eblen, Owner/Managing Partner of Kiene's Fly Shop, presents a check for \$1,070 to SARA President Stephen Green — money raised at Kiene's annual Shad Derby on the Lower American River.

"We really appreciate all SARA does to protect the Lower American River and our fishery," Eblen said. Kiene's Fly Shop is located at 9550 Micron Ave., Sacramento.

Photo by Greg Vinci

SARA Membership Donations

April — June 2022

Mark Baker	Don Imamura & Anna Pinon	Marilyn Pearce
Paul Barth	Judith Lamare & James Pacht	Dennis Philippart
Katie Baygell	John Cox	Michael Ranta
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Lisa Cirill	Joanne Lindsay	Cheryl Slama
Kelly Cohen	Frank Lindsen	Felix Smith
Illa Collin	Amanda Meeker	Warren & Judy Smith
Betty Cooper <i>In honor of Betsy Weiland</i>	Dan Meier	Terry Snyder
Jacqueline DeLu	Bob & Mary Beth Metcalf	<i>In honor of Tricia Brown Snyder and</i>
Susan Davidson & Dennis Neufeld	Jeff Miller	<i>Wendy Snyder</i>
William Patterson & Doris Brown	Jerry & Eleanor Mitchell	Mary Tappel
Dennis & Terese Eckhart	John Moore	Chris Tooker
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Shawn Harrison	Karen Olson	Katherine Keysor West
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SARA appreciates the support of our generous members. Without your support, SARA would not be able to continue our role as *Guardians of the American River and Parkway since 1961*. New and renewing members are listed in *RiverWatch* according to their preference (indicated on the SARA membership/renewal form).

In Memoriam

Save the American River Association has received donations honoring the memory of the following friends:

Frank and Doris Cirill
Eric R. Gerstung
Don Lollock

Save the American River Association frequently receives donations in memory of lost loved ones, many of whom were users and supporters of the American River Parkway. Some donors give names. Others prefer to remain anonymous. SARA notifies family members when donations are made. The money is used to further SARA's advocacy work on behalf of the Parkway. Contributions may be made by check or online via SARA's website. **SARA also has a Legacy program.** For information on the program, please contact the SARA office. ■

Downy Woodpeckers Inhabit Most of North America

The Downy Woodpecker, *Dryobates pubescens*, is the smallest woodpecker but probably the most prolific of its species in North America.

Measuring just up to 6-3/4 inches, Downy Woodpeckers are found in backyard feeders, parks, open woodlands and brushy areas from Alaska to Baja California, and across the continent to Nova Scotia and southern Florida. They also are known to drink from Hummingbird feeders.

Downy Woodpeckers have a straight chisel-like bill that is smaller than other woodpeckers. Their wings are black with a white checker-board pattern and the head has broad stripes. They have a wide white stripe down the middle of their back and the male has a small red patch on its head.

Downy Woodpeckers have an undulating flight pattern like most woodpecker species. When having a dispute with another bird, Downy Woodpeckers fan their tails, raise their head feathers, and jerk their beaks from side to side.

They eat foods that larger woodpeckers cannot reach such as insects living on or in stems of weeds. They feast on insects and beetle larvae that live inside



Downy Woodpecker

wood or tree bark, and search the ground for ants and other bugs. They have been seen hammering galls to get the fly larvae inside.

In winter, males and females separate. Males feed mainly on small branches and weed stems, and females feed on larger branches and tree trunks. Males keep females from foraging in the more productive areas.

Downy Woodpeckers nest in dead trees or in dead parts of live trees. Mates typically choose a small stub that leans away from the tree and excavate a nest

hole on the underside – work that can take one-to-three weeks. The entrance holes are round and 1-1.5 inches across. The Cavities are 6-to-12 inches deep and widen toward the bottom to make room for eggs and the incubating bird. The cavity is lined with wood chips.

The clutch will usually have three to eight eggs. The incubation period is 12 days and the chicks will fledge in 18-to-20 days. ■

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Idled Farm Lands Can Harm Local Air Quality

Residents of California's Central Valley have lived with air quality problems for decades. The topography traps dust stirred up by wind and pollution from motor vehicles, industries and construction sites.

Coarse and fine particulates in the air can cause chronic respiratory issues and cardiovascular complications for people living in the valley.

Valley Fever, which is generated by a fungus in soils, has generally been confined to the southern San Joaquin portion of the valley. But the fever has been spreading. People living in rural communities appear to be the most vulnerable.

Agricultural operations and wind erosion are two of the largest sources of dust in the valley. And that could get much worse.

Over a half million acres of farmland may be taken out of production in the next two decades to help bring groundwater basins into balance under the 2014 Sustainable Groundwater Management Act. Unless measures are taken to protect those lands, there will likely be a substantial increase in windblown dust.

Federal and state agencies need to get ahead of this problem. More research is needed on how to manage idled farmlands so that dust erosion is minimized. And funding must be available to assist land owners to deal with the issues.

Maintaining vegetative cover on idled lands is one of the easiest ways to control dust. But establishing the cover with little or no irrigation is a challenge.

Establishing grazing lands can result in successful vegetation management. But if the lands are not managed properly, soils are disturbed and dust can increase. Planting local native grasses in a manner that requires minimal watering the first year and no watering or weed control subsequent years also is a viable option. Building solar arrays on the idled lands is another option.

To date, however, very little planning has been done on the best ways to manage the idled lands. Government agencies should be giving priority to dust management programs. ■

Support County Parks — Buy An Annual Pass

For as little as \$60 per year, you can have unlimited access and parking in the parks. All funds go directly towards maintaining and operating the 15,000-acre system.

Pass holders receive free daily entry into Regional Parks and annual passes are valid for one year from date of purchase.

Pass Fees Are Based On Use:

Vehicle:	\$60
Vehicle + Trailer/Boat/RV:	\$120
Senior Citizen Vehicle*:	\$30
Senior Citizen Vehicle + Trailer/Boat/RV*:	\$60

** Senior discount applies to ages 65 or older and must have proof of age at time of purchase.*

Where to Purchase Your Parks Pass

- Online through the American River Parkway Foundation Web site arpf.org/visit
- At REI stores in Sacramento, Roseville and Folsom
- Patriot Cycles in Fair Oaks
- Effie Yeaw Nature Center at Ancil Hoffman Park
- Regional Park offices and park kiosks
- American River Parkway Foundation office at the William B. Pond Recreation Area ■





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River and Parkway Since 1961*

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May we publish your name as a SARA member in a future *Riverwatch* issue?
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Insert credit card info below or go to our secure Web site to donate — www.sarariverwatch.org.

The following membership categories are suggested: *(Please circle your choice)*

\$10-\$24	Student	\$25-\$49	Regular
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