

this issue

The Never-Ending Bridge Saga	P.2
Help Red Fox Conservation Efforts	P.2
Whatever Happened to the Grassroots Working Group?	P.3
State Fails to Set a Drinking Water Standard	P.5
In Memoriam	P.6
In Memory of Joe Verderber	P.7
ARP Film Festival Benefits SARA	P.7

CEQA Could Lose its Teeth

By Stephen Green

In the closing days of the California Legislative Session, there was an effort to sneak through a bill to gut the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). But environmental and labor organizations rallied to stop the bill.

We are indebted to Senate President Pro Tem Darrell Steinberg whose opposition helped stall the bill. He maintained the proposed changes to CEQA should be given careful scrutiny and not rushed through in the waning days of the session. Thirty-three Democratic lawmakers also signed a letter in opposition.

Come the new session in January, however, we can expect a major push to rewrite CEQA from well-financed business and development interests. And they will have an important ally. Last August, Gov. Jerry Brown told reporters: "CEQA reform is the Lord's work."

CEQA was signed into law by then-Gov. Ronald Reagan in 1970. It requires major developments, and transportation and industrial projects, to undergo environmental review even if they are consistent with a general plan or land-use plan

Continued on Page 2

Photo by Warren Truitt

Parkway Alcohol Ban Expanded

By Bill Davis

The Sacramento County Board of Supervisors voted in August to give the County Regional Parks Director authority to ban from time to time alcoholic consumption on the American River Parkway between Hazel and Watt Avenues.

The director is to consult with the County Executive before instituting a ban based upon the Director's reasonable belief that alcohol consumption will result in significant issues of public safety.

The action was taken in response to a July 14 orgy called Rafting Gone Wild involving some 3,000 people. Many of the rafters were drinking excessively.

Fights broke out. Rocks and bottles were thrown at law enforcement officers and paramedics who had responded to the fracas. People were seen urinating and defecating in public areas. Some rafters were mooning people — including children — who were on the river's banks.

Twenty-three people were arrested. County officials estimated the cost of the response at about \$35,000. The rafters left behind copious amounts of litter on the Parkway and broken bottles in the river.

Previously, the county had banned drinking on the Parkway on the

*Continued on Page 3*Please Join Us For SARA's
Annual Meeting

Saturday, December 1, 2012

At the Effie Yeaw Nature Center

Honoring Alan Wade, for 18 years of service to the American River & Parkway community.

Coffee, Breakfast Rolls & Socializing — 9:30 a.m.

Meeting Begins — 10:00 a.m.

Buffet Lunch — 11:30 a.m. or so

EYNC Annual Holiday Sale — 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.



Everyone is welcome to attend the SARA Annual Meeting on December 1, 2012, at the Effie Yeaw Nature Center in Ancil Hoffman Park.

CEQA Could Lose its Teeth

Continued from Page 1

that already has undergone CEQA analysis. The failed legislation would have exempted many projects from environmental review.

California Sierra Club Director Kathryn Phillips said the legislation "would have knocked the teeth out of CEQA."

Many city and county general plans or land-use plans are sprawl friendly. Still others have few restrictions on industrial operations. If a company is going to build an incinerator near your neighborhood, there should be no exemption from environmental review.

Development interests argued, however, that CEQA is too often used to block projects. The Sacramento Bee said in an editorial, however, that the proposed changes would "likely lead to environmental injustices."

Earlier this year, Gov. Brown's Office of Planning and Research polled local governments on what they saw as major obstacles to infill development. CEQA ranked 12th on a list of concerns.

Local government leaders responded that the chief barriers to infill development are infrastructure constraints, lot issues, lack of funding and the loss of redevelopment agencies. ■

"Look deep into nature, and then you will understand everything better."

- Albert Einstein

The Never-Ending Bridge Saga

By Betsy Weiland

On June 28 of this year, the City of Sacramento convened a Stakeholder Advisory Committee to study a new car/truck bridge across the American River somewhere between Interstate 5 (I-5) and the State Route 160 (SR 160). Save the American River Association, represented by Board members Betsy Weiland and John Whelan, is a part of this stakeholder group.

There is a 20-plus-year effort underway to finally build a transit/bicycle/pedestrian-only bridge across the American River at Truxel Road that would eventually link Sacramento to the airport. SARA has been involved with planning for the Downtown/Natomas/Airport or DNA Line since 1986.

This new effort, to add car and truck capacity somewhere in the vicinity,

certainly presents a potentially significant wrinkle. Many, many questions need to be answered before anyone jumps on this latest effort to build/expand bridges across the American River that will inevitably lead to significant loss of the American River's and Parkway's natural resources. The DNA bridge alone, as designed right now, will result in a projected loss of five-plus acres of scarce riparian habitat on the lower American River.

The Stakeholder Advisory Committee will continue to meet from now until February 2013. The meetings are public. Please contact Betsy Weiland through the SARA office, (916) 482-2551, if you have any questions or would like further information, and — STAY TUNED! ■

Help Improve Red Fox Conservation Efforts

Red Foxes in the Sacramento Valley were long thought to be non-native. Genetic testing in 2005 by UC, Davis, scientists revealed Red Foxes are native to the region and potentially in decline.

In 2007, a website was set up for the public to report sightings in the valley. Now, MA student Amy Brasch of Victoria University in Wellington, New Zealand, is assessing: (1) how effective public input was on locating the foxes and (2) how the website can be improved for future conservation efforts.

You may share your opinions

regarding the foxes and the fox sighting website in a brief 5-minute survey located on the website: <http://foxsurvey.ucdavis.edu/>

Results of the survey will enhance the website as well as develop a better understanding of how effective public input is on locating Sacramento Valley Red Foxes. ■



Photo by Ben Sacks

Alcohol Ban

Continued from Page 1

Memorial Day, July 4th and Labor Day holidays. Now, Parks Director Jeffrey Leatherman has the authority to institute further bans when an event is scheduled that could pose a public safety threat.

Leatherman's staff is monitoring social media to find out if more events are being promoted. They will use social media such as Facebook and Twitter to warn that an alcohol ban has been imposed.

The supervisors expressed interest in imposing a ban on Parkway drinking between May and October in the future. They also asked county staff members to draw up legislation that would allow the county to recoup costs of responding to similar events.

Representatives of Save the American River Association were among those who spoke in favor of the Board of Supervisors action. No one spoke against the proposal before the supervisors voted.

The county previously reduced the park ranger force from 28 to 14 in response to budget cuts. The Rafting Gone Wild event required responses from nearby law enforcement agencies. Two more rangers are to be added next year and the new Chief Ranger, Stan Lumsden, is organizing a force of up to ten reserve rangers who will work without pay and serve at least 15 hours monthly.

Lumsden also is acquiring a GPS-based system that will provide instant, accurate locations for crimes, illegal camps, injured parks users and related incidents. He also has instructed his rangers to write citations whenever appropriate rather than just issuing warnings. In the future, he hopes to acquire a patrol boat. ■

Raley's Supports Wildlife

The Raley's store at Madison & Hazel Avenues in Fair Oaks makes weekly donations of discarded produce to the Wildlife Care Association.

The Wildlife Care Association is a 501(c)3 located on the former McClellan Air Force Base. The association's primary mission is the rescue, rehabilitation and release of

sick, orphaned and injured wildlife. They care for more than 6,000 birds and animals yearly.

Thank you Raley's. ■



Whatever happened to the Grassroots Working Group?

By Bill Davis

Recognizing the threat that Sacramento County's continuing budget crisis posed to the existence of our Regional Parks system, a group of concerned residents formed the Grassroots Working Group (GWG) in mid-2010. The purpose was to evaluate options and provide recommendations for achieving stated goals related to funding of development, operation and maintenance of the 15,000-acre Regional Park System that is in the care and custody of the Sacramento County Board of Supervisors.

The GWG worked for more than a year to evaluate and compare options for governance and funding. Expert assistance was provided by The Trust for Public Lands, the Dangermond Group, and County Regional Parks Department staff. Four management structures and four revenue options were evaluated. The GWG then adopted the following recommendations:

1. Sacramento County voters should be asked to approve the creation of an independent regional parks

district to be responsible for management, development, operation and maintenance of our Regional Parks System.

2. A sales tax in the amount of 1/10 of one cent to be dedicated to the Regional Parks district should be submitted to the voters of Sacramento County.
3. The County Board of Supervisors should advocate for state legislation to give the Board the authority to establish the independent regional district and to authorize the establishment of the 1/10 of one cent sales tax only in Sacramento County.

GWG documents, including the GWG Recommendations, are available on the web at <http://www.sarariverwatch.org/grassroots.php>.

GWG recommendations were presented to the Board of

Continued on Page 4

Whatever happened to the Grassroots Working Group?

Continued from Page 3

Supervisors in May 2011. The board adopted a modified version of the sales tax recommendation legislation that ultimately was unsuccessful, in part, because it was introduced too late in the Legislative process. The balance of the recommendations were rejected by the Board in May 2011 in favor of a Ad Hoc Committee appointed by the County Executive that was finally formed in August 2011, after the arrival of the new County Executive, Brad Hudson.

The County Executive's Ad Hoc Committee consisting of 42 persons met 6-8 times over the period of November 17, 2011 to April 11, 2012. The outcome appears to be an effort to develop a website to network with all park agencies in Sacramento County with a focus on development of recommendations for controlling off-leash dogs. It also has been reported that county staff is leading a "healthy parks" effort focused on human health benefits of parks. The focus of meetings was reported to be on operational, not policy issues. Members of the Ad Hoc Committee (mostly parks directors) continue to meet monthly. Consideration of governance and financing issues for our Regional Parks System was never taken up by the committee in any substantive way.

Sacramento County government appears to have embarked upon a program of divesting responsibility for Regional Parks as evidenced by: (a) leasing of Gibson Ranch Regional Park to former Congressman Doug Ose, (b) leasing of Effie Yeaw Nature Center to the American River Natural History Association, (c) leasing of the American River Ranch to Soil Born Farms Urban Agricultural Project, and (d) the refusal of the county to acquire the Urrutia Property and Camp Pollock, lands within the American River Parkway that are

available to be acquired — even though county funds dedicated to park land acquisition are available.

Goals of the Grassroots Working Group

Adequate funding sufficient to (1) provide a safe environment for users of the System, (2) preserve the cultural and natural resources existing in the System and held in trust by County government, and (3) does not require excessive fees and charges that could reduce access to the System,

Stable funding that is not subject to diversion to other uses during economic downturns, and

Long term to provide enough time for stable operating conditions and establishment of a track record while providing for renewal by voters, say 20 years.

Given the county's actions, GWG has ceased functioning. It falls to Save the American River Association and other stakeholder groups to continue efforts to achieve the GWG goals. To that end, the following should be kept in mind:

1. People living in the cities and unincorporated areas of Sacramento County need access to coordinated regional, community and neighborhood parks that are safe, clean and well maintained for the purpose of improving quality of life.
2. Our Regional Parks System is a critical part of the overall parks system and needs to be preserved, not only for quality of life reasons, but also to contribute to the attraction of new businesses with good-paying jobs. Sacramento County government continues to

struggle to provide safe, clean and well-maintained Regional Parks and seems to be headed towards divesting responsibility. The consequences for our Regional Parks could be a change in the character and purpose of some or all of the Parks and risks the possible loss of the American River Parkway and other Regional Parks as we know them today.

3. Adequate, stable, long-term funding is needed if our Regional Parks System is to be preserved and the cultural and natural resources that are held in trust by Sacramento County are protected for our children and future generations.
4. In order to have a full range of options, Sacramento County government and other local elected officials should, in the near term, pursue State Legislation to update existing law that authorizes the county to establish a regional parks district. That update, which will give similar authority to the county with regard to an independent regional district, is needed to give the Board of Supervisors flexibility to create either a dependent or independent regional parks district in the future.
5. There is a need to move ahead expeditiously so as to (a) staunch the deterioration in our Regional Parks System operated by Sacramento County government, (b) provide a sound basis for improving the economic and employment picture for the region at the earliest possible time, and (c) be ready to go with a ballot measure in 2014 or 2016 at the latest. With the passage of time, the risk of loss of our Regional Park System increases.

Continued on Page 5

Continued from Page 5

If Sacramento County government is going to be in the Regional Parks business, the county needs to adequately fund the development, operation and maintenance of the Regional Parks. If the county is going to get out of the business, county officials need to be candid with the public and also provide sufficient staff and consulting resources to ensure effective oversight on behalf of the public can be provided for these resources. ■

GWG Conclusions

1. Our Regional Parks and Open Space System will need to be developed and expanded to keep pace with population growth.
2. Connectivity between the units of the System is needed to overcome the isolation of many units and relieve pressure on the American River Parkway.
3. Sacramento County cannot continue to rely on state, federal and nonprofit revenue to fund acquisition and development of new lands and operation of the System in accordance with best practices.
4. Our Regional Parks and Open Space System is important to attracting new businesses to the Sacramento area as well as to the quality of life of all residents.

State Fails to Set a Drinking Water Standard

By Stephen Green

Over the past decade, environmental and consumer groups have found it necessary to file an unprecedented number of legal actions to force state government to begin enforcing environmental law or respond to legislative mandates.

A case in point is a suit filed in mid-August by the Natural Resources Defense Council and the Environmental Working Group. They sued the State Dept. of Public Health for failing to protect millions of Californians from hexavalent chromium, the cancer-causing chemical made infamous in the movie "Erin Brockovich."

The 2000 film chronicled actions of a law clerk who investigated a Pacific Gas & Electric compressor station that transported natural gas in the San Bernardino County town of Hinkley. She found hexavalent chromium in settling ponds near the station was contaminating the city's drinking water. PG&E initially denied being the source of the contamination, but eventually paid \$333 million to Hinkley residents.

In response, the Legislature passed a law requiring the Dept. of Public Health to set a standard for the chemical in drinking water — and have it in place by Jan. 1, 2004. More than eight years have passed since the 2004 deadline and the state still has no standard.

Today, Brockovich is an environmental and consumer advocate. In a statement

issued when the August suit was filed, she said: "Communities all over California and the U.S. are being poisoned by this dangerous chemical. We have waited long enough and the people of California should not continue to be exposed to unsafe levels of this toxin in their tap water. The California Department of Public Health needs to do its job..."

Studies by the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences have shown that ingestion of water contaminated with hexavalent chromium has been linked to cancers of the oral cavity, stomach and intestinal tract. There is evidence that hexavalent chromium can damage DNA, a known way that cancer develops.

Additional non-cancer effects associated with exposure to hexavalent chromium compounds in human and animal studies include: liver toxicity; blood disorders, including anemia; male reproductive harm (reduced sperm counts); and ulceration and non-cancerous lesions of the stomach and small intestine. Hexavalent chromium can cross the placenta, exposing the fetus during vulnerable periods of development.

Hexavalent chromium contamination is widespread in California. The Environmental Working Group's analysis of records from the California

Dept. of Public Health's water quality testing conducted between 2000 and 2011 revealed that about one-third of the more than 7,000 drinking water sources sampled were contaminated with hexavalent chromium at levels that exceed safe limits. These sources supply water to an estimated 31 million Californians, including those living and working in parts of Sacramento County.

The Dept. of Public Health web site says a draft of the standard could be released next year and finalized by July 2015. A San Francisco Chronicle reporter asked a department spokesman why the 2004 deadline to have a standard in place was not met. He refused to answer.

Hexavalent chromium, also known as Chromium6, usually enters the drinking water supply by running off from industrial operations into surface waters or leaching from soil into groundwater.

The chemical is used for the production of stainless steel, textile dyes, wood preservation, leather tanning, and as an anti-corrosive as well as a variety of niche uses. Due to its wide use by industry, hexavalent chromium is a common pollutant found at contaminated sites and has been documented at approximately two-thirds of Superfund sites. ■

Support County Parks — Buy An Annual Pass

The Pass pays for itself in 10 visits and all funds go directly towards maintaining and operating the 15,000-acre system. For as little as \$50 per year, you can have unlimited access and parking in the parks.

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	\$50
Vehicle + Trailer or oversized vehicle (over 22 feet):	\$100
Vehicle + Horse trailer	\$75
Vehicle and small watercraft:	\$75
Parks supporter pass*	\$50

** This pass is for those who want to support Parks but do not drive to Parks facilities*

Where to Purchase Your Parks Pass

- Online through the Sacramento County Web site
www.co.sacramento.ca.us
- 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

SARA Membership Donations July — September 2012

Russ & Dixie Albright
Russ Andris
Clifford Anderson
Mike & Toni Arnold
Mrs. Jeff Arthur
Brad & Annette Braddon-Walker
Vicki Briggs
California Native Plant Society
Richard Chin
Michael Covey & Jacqueline Delu
E. Patrick Creehan, M.D
Alison Harvey & Dave Loera
John Huls
Elizabeth Ewing
Janet Feil
C.B. & E.A. French
Hon. & Mrs. Eugene Gualco
Susan Guenard
Warren Harding
Peter Hayes
Tomiko Ibser
DelMar Janson
Linda B. Kingsley
Adele & Jim Kruger
Janet Lee
Charles Lindquist
Jennifer Miller

Jerry & Eleanor Mitchell
Tom Monteith
Virginia & James Moose
Sue O'Donnell
Marilyn Pearce
Ben Peccianti
Charles & Jane Pivetti
American River Raft Rentals
Michael R. Ranta
Kelly Regan
Jason Rogers
Pat Sayer Handley
Robert & Lyvonne Sewell
Warren & Judy Smith
David Strand
Paul Tebbel
Nancy & Mick Tooley
Clifford Vose
Leo Winternitz
Dr. Frances M. Wrightson

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 Parkways 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 friend:

Elmer Aldrich

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 and those people are always very appreciative. The money is used to further SARA's advocacy work on behalf of the Parkway. Contributions may be made by check, Visa or Master Card. A form for contributions appears on the last page of this newsletter.

SARA also has a Legacy program. For information on the program, please call the SARA office (916) 482-2551. ■

Bench Installed in Memory of Joe Verderber

By Warren V. Truitt

An attractive concrete bench, with a brass plaque affixed to it reading *Joe's Bench*, was installed and dedicated in memory of Joe Verderber, during a brief ceremony at River Bend Park on August 29th.

The bench was carefully lowered by a forklift on a previously installed



Joe's Bench after installation at River Bend Park on August 29th

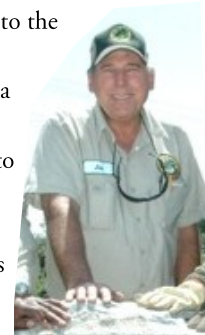
concrete pad, located on a bluff looking over the American River. Then, Jeff Leatherman, Director of Sacramento County Regional Parks, and Eppie Johnson, founder of *Eppie's Great Race*, both spoke and reminded those in attendance of Joe's contributions to the Parkway and the community in general. Attendees included several members of the Save the American River Association Board and Advisory Council.

Joe was a long-time and well-respected maintenance and operations employee with Regional Parks. In June 2011, in preparation for SARA's 50th Anniversary celebration, under Joe's supervision the Regional Parks maintenance crew members expertly

installed the SARA monument honoring William "Bill" Pond.

Not long after the Pond monument dedication, Joe died suddenly of a heart attack. Attendance at his subsequent memorial service was huge. Those who spoke at the service shared many stories of Joe's kindness and valuable work with the youth of our community.

SARA contributed to the purchase of Joe's bench, a tribute to a man with a BIG Heart. As the photo on the left shows, someone left a snack for Joe on his bench. ■



Joe Verderber

American River Parkway Film Festival benefits SARA

By Warren V. Truitt

2012's beautiful summer evenings were also beneficial to SARA.

Dr. Stuart Gherini, a retired and well-respected otologist (think ears), a SARA member and generous supporter, and well-known user of the American River Parkway bike trail, came up with a fun idea to entertain family, neighbors and friends — a summer film festival, featuring a popular vintage film shown each week in his backyard, with all the popcorn you could eat. Attendees brought their own lawn chairs and beverage of choice

and set up on the expansive Gherini backyard lawn.

Stuart purchased a projector, an 8' x 16' screen and most importantly, a popcorn machine. Vintage films shown included: *American Graffiti*, *Bridge on the River Kwai*, *The Third Man*, *Breaking Away*, *It's a Mad, Mad, Mad World*, *North by Northwest*, and *Some Like It Hot*. The last film shown was *The Dish*, a true story about a small Australian community's important contribution to the Apollo 11 moon landing. Stuart's mother was born in Moree, Australia, a town just 10 miles away from the largest space object tracking dish in the world.

Stuart named the event the *American River Parkway Film Festival* as he wanted the Parkway to benefit from the festival. Stuart determined that contributions to SARA would provide the best bang for the contributor's buck. He put a large glass jar next to the popcorn machine and through



Stuart Gherini's WAW, an enclosed Belgian-made recumbent cycle

August 17th, attendees dropped over \$1,200 in the jar to go to SARA.

If you spend time on the American River bike trail, you most likely have seen Stuart riding in his WAW (an enclosed Belgian-made recumbent cycle, pronounced WOW), decaled to resemble a WW II P-51 fighter aircraft.

SARA is most appreciative of Stuart's generous and creative approach to fund raising. Please go to the following link to view a News & Review article about Stuart Gherini: <http://tiny.cc/gherini> ■



Warren Truitt (left) and SARA Member Stuart Gherini



*Guardians of the American
River and Parkway Since 1961*

SARA Officers 2012

Clyde Macdonald — *President*

Stephen Green — *Vice President*

Mary Beth Metcalf — *Treasurer*

Alan Wade — *Secretary / Past President*

Warren Truitt — *Immed. Past President*

SARA Directors

Frank Cirill — *President Emeritus*

Bill Davis Betsy Weiland

Burt Hodges Elke Guenter

Jim Morgan Felix Smith

John Whelan

SARA Advisory Council

Mike Arnold Dan Bacher

Anne Baron John Barris

Katie Baygell Rick Bettis

Lea Brooks Wayne Chubb

Dave Clark Maxine Clark

Illa Collin Al Freitas

Guy Galante Bill Griffith

Jane Hagedorn Bob Hanna

Callie Hurd Jim Jones

Tim Keenan Gary Kukkola

Pam Lapinski Joseph Larzalere

Dave Lydick George Nyberg

Randy Smith Ron Stork

Ron Suter Stephanie Taylor

David Thesell Linda Villatore

Leo Winternitz

Volunteers & Staff

Betsy Weiland — *Volunteer Coordinator*

Sara Stephens — *Office Manager*

4441 Auburn Blvd., Suite H
Sacramento, CA 95841-2551

Phone: (916) 482-2551

E-mail: info@sarariverwatch.org

www.sarariverwatch.org

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Non Profit
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit 0922
Sacramento, CA

Membership and Contributions

My gift to SARA is a: *(Please indicate with an "X")*

☐ Renewal ☐ New Membership ☐ Non Membership Donation

☐ Memorial - In Memory of *(Name)*: _____

May we publish your name as a SARA member in a future *Riverwatch* issue?

*(Contribution amount will **not** be included)* ☐ Yes ☐ No

\$ _____ *(Please indicate your TOTAL contribution)* Check _____ VISA _____ MC _____

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
\$50 +	Supporting	\$100 +	Family
\$250 +	Business	\$1,000 +	Sustaining

☐ **Please send me information on SARA's Legacy Program.**

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State & Zip: _____

Visa/MC #: _____ Security Code: _____

Expires: _____ Phone: _____ E-mail: _____