

County Adopts Fire Prevention Ordinance

In response to a record number of fires on the American River Parkway this year, the Board of Supervisors approved an ordinance banning barbecues, stoves, camp fires and other incendiary devices in areas outside the designated picnic grounds in the regional parks.

The ordinance was sponsored by Supervisor Phil Serna who said the goal "is to protect everyone who uses the Parkway, the neighborhoods surrounding it, and the public safety personnel who respond to fires."

There have been nearly 60 wildfires in the Parkway this year, ranging in size from 20 square feet to more than 20 acres. Many were sparked at illegal campsites and some were deliberate arson. During previous droughts, there were fewer illegal campers on the Parkway and many fewer fires.

Rangers now have the authority to seize barbecues and other equipment in riparian areas. People who use them can be given a misdemeanor citation.

During county budget deliberations in September, Save the American River Association (SARA) was able to get three more ranger positions for Regional Parks, bringing the total to 23. During the recent recession, the

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Photo by George Nyberg

Conservancy Proposed for American River Parkway

BY STEPHEN GREEN

Legislation to be introduced when the California Legislature reconvenes in January would place the American River Parkway under a state conservancy.

This proposed conservancy is being developed by Rep. Kevin McCarty, D-Sacramento, and Sacramento County Supervisor Phil Serna.

State conservancies provide a framework for allocating state funds for enhancing and protecting natural lands and waterways. Conservancy status would give local officials and organizations greater access to funds for projects such as habitat and creek restoration, land acquisition, trail development, storm drainage cleanup, river access and interpretive projects.

Since 1996, \$740 million in state bond and general funds dollars have been allocated to rivers. Of that, \$660 million has gone to rivers with conservancies. Only \$3 million was dedicated to the Lower American River. Proposition 1 approved in 2014 allocates several hundred million to conservancies. None of that is

available to the Lower American River.

"This new conservancy would have the dual goals of environmental protection and increasing public enjoyment of the American River," McCarty said.

Corey Brown, a Sacramento environmental attorney who has helped develop state conservancies, said day-to-day management of the Parkway would remain a county responsibility and any new projects

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Please Join Us for SARA's Annual Meeting

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 5, 2015
EFFIE YEAW NATURE CENTER

Coffee, Breakfast Rolls
& Socializing — 9:30 a.m.
Meeting Begins — 10:00 a.m.
Lunch — 11:30 a.m.

Support the EYNC:
Enjoy the Annual Holiday Sale —
9 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Conservancy

Continued from Page 1

would need county approval. The American River Parkway Plan is state law under the Urban American River Parkway Preservation Act and would continue to be the governing document for the Parkway, he added.

Save the American River Association (SARA) representatives will be monitoring the legislation as it moves forward to ensure that the Parkway Plan is not compromised in any way. If enacted, SARA will continue to monitor all planning activities and projects to ensure that they are consistent with the goals and policies of the Parkway Plan.

The Parkway receives more than 8 million visitor days yearly and generates \$360 million annually for the local economy, according to a 2006 Dangermond report. It is California's first Parkway, established in 1961. Parkways in California and other states have been modeled on the American River Parkway.

Other state conservancies include the San Diego River Conservancy, San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles River and Mountains Conservancy, San Joaquin River Conservancy (in Fresno and Madera Counties), Santa Ana River Conservancy, Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, State Coastal Conservancy, and San Francisco Bay Conservancy.

They were established to protect and increase public access to Lake Tahoe, the Sierra Nevada Mountains, the LA River, etc.

Some conservancies have a board of directors charged with allocating funds. The boards consist of local and state officials, and some appointees. Others are placed within a state agency such as the State Wildlife Conservation Board. They have advisory committees staffed by state officials and local public members. Corey Brown believes the latter option would be most suitable for the American River Conservancy. ■

Westlands Deal Sucks Water and Taxpayers

The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation has signed a deal with the Westlands Water District that ends a decades-long legal battle over whether the federal government must provide more irrigation drainage for Westland corporate farms in the San Joaquin Valley.

The agreement was negotiated without transparency. It forgives Westlands' massive \$350 million debt owed to the government and taxpayers. Westlands also gets a no-need-to-review contract that would boost water deliveries they receive from the San Joaquin-Sacramento Delta — further devastating the Delta's fragile ecosystem.

Rep. Jerry McNerney, D-Stockton, has called the agreement "an outrageous windfall for Westlands."

Congress must approve the settlement. Save the American River Association is among the many organizations that have written each member of the California Congressional Delegation asking them to reject the settlement.

Westlands grows unsustainable crops on desert lands. Westland growers release drainage contaminated with

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Photo by Warren Truitt

Fire Prevention

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ranger force was cutback to 13 positions. SARA will continue to work to bring the ranger force back to the historic service level of 26 rangers — and will support Supervisor Serna's efforts to add additional ranger positions.

The supervisors also agreed to restore one maintenance worker position and created a position for a "homeless navigator." That employee is to help homeless people get access to social services. ■

Westlands

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selenium, salts and other wastes that impact wetlands, poison fish and wildlife and their habitats on both public and private lands. The drainage also has caused salinization of bottom-land soils and aquifers.

The state Water Resources Control Board and its regional boards have the authority put an end to pollution from Westland farms. Article 10 of the California Constitution states: "The right to water ... shall not extend to the waste or unreasonable use or unreasonable method of use" The water boards ignore that mandate.

Even though the agreement calls for Westlands to retire 100,000 acres, much of that land already has been retired courtesy of the federal taxpayers. The agreement is silent on cleaning up the drainage from at least 200,000 identified acres of other toxic crop lands served by Westlands and adjacent water districts.

Unlike the earlier proposals from the Bush Administration, the current settlement agreement makes no demands as to how the drainage is managed, including no monitoring requirements, no performance standards, no drainage plan for review, and has no provision for approval by state authorities. Equally, the settlement agreement is silent on enforcement and cleaning up wastes that migrate from Westlands to

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downstream neighbors and eventually to the San Joaquin River and Delta estuary.

The disastrous consequences of industrial-scale cultivation of contaminated lands became obvious in 1983, when thousands of migratory waterfowl, including ducks and geese, were deformed or killed outright at Kesterson National Wildlife Refuge due to deliveries of toxic drain water from Westlands farms. That huge environmental scandal was exposed by Felix Smith, a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service biologist at the time, who now serves on the Board of the Save the American River Association.

There are alternatives to be considered. An economic analysis by EcoNorthwest has concluded that retiring and curbing water rights for

300,000 acres of contaminated land being farmed in the San Joaquin Valley would cost upwards approximately of \$1 billion.

That is a reasonable price to pay to stop the poisoning of California's environment. In addition, retiring the land would free up to 455,000 acre-feet of water annually. That is a vast amount of water. The City of Los Angeles, in comparison, uses an average of 587,000 acre-feet per year.

Farmers whose lands are retired deserve compensation. And while \$1 billion is a substantial sum, it compares favorably when the cost of other projects for managing California's water supply are considered.

The proposed construction of the Temperance Flat Dam and the Sites Reservoir would do little to increase California's water storage. But the construction cost is roughly estimated at **\$6.5 BILLION!**

Leaving the contaminated land in production will ensure perpetual taxpayer subsidy to agriculture's wealthiest 1% and continued environmental destruction of fish, wildlife, water quality and air quality. Removing that land from agriculture production should be the focus of the Bureau of Reclamation — not the sweetheart deal the bureau is asking Congress to approve. ■

*"Conservation is a cause that has no end. There is no point at
which we say, 'Our work is finished.'"*

RACHAEL CARSON

Battling Water-borne Disease in Kenya

BY STEPHEN GREEN

Members of Save the American River Association's Board of Directors spend a lot of time immersed in water issues. But for veteran member Dr. Mary Beth Metcalf and her husband Robert, the issues extend far beyond our borders. They are the primary supporters of organizations that are equipping and training people to eradicate water-borne diseases in an impoverished region of Kenya.

Through their efforts during the past three years, water-borne diseases no longer afflict most of the 70,000 people in Kenya's Lower Nyakach sub-county near Lake Victoria.

"We're giving people the resources and empowering them to do what is needed," Mary Beth said.

She is a retired pediatrician and currently serves as SARA's treasurer.

She also is SARA's liaison to the Sacramento Audubon Society. Bob is a microbiologist and professor emeritus at Sacramento State University.

In 2010, Bob and a colleague founded the non-profit International Water and Health Alliances (IWHA) which partners with a Kenya-based organization called Friends of the Old (FOTO). IWHA funnels more than \$5,000 monthly, most of it from the Metcalfs, to FOTO which trains people to test and purify water in

villages and schools. FOTO relies on chiefs and elders to distribute free bottles of chlorine treatment to all 14,400 households and 42 schools in Lower Nyakach. FOTO also teaches people to pasteurize water by heating it using sunshine and a simple solar cooker, or with a fire.

Unsafe water is a problem affecting more than 800 million of the poorest people on earth, Mary Beth noted.

Water testing in Lower Nyakach consistently shows that rivers, ponds and shallow wells are heavily contaminated with the bacteria from fecal matter. The water table is high and occasional floods have contaminated even bore holes where water is drawn. Recently, there was an outbreak of cholera in areas adjacent to Lower Nyakach. But there was no cholera reported in Lower Nyakach.

"During our visits to Lower Nyakach in January and July, we were unable to find anybody who does not treat drinking water with chlorine or heat," Mary Beth said. "Preventing water-borne diseases is not complicated. The community is doing it. The village elders and chiefs are all behind this project. They were all thankful that their villages remained free of cholera."



Bob and Mary Beth Metcalf give water purification supplies to leaders of an organization they partner with in Kenya.

"Every day, more than 4 million people experience significant diarrhea and more than 2,000 children under age five die — that's every day!" she said. "For children, that is more fatalities than from HIV/AIDS, TB or malaria. Lots of money rightfully goes to research and treatments for the 'big three' but water-borne diseases get short shrift. The sad irony is that in contrast to the complexities of HIV/AIDS, TB and malaria, prevention of water-borne diseases is straight forward. Kill the germs and people don't get sick."

IWHA also has enabled FOTO to distribute 10,000 pairs of reading glasses in the region. And they have provided maize and sorghum seeds for greater food security.

The Metcalfs originally went to Lower Nyakach to distribute low-cost solar cookers. But their success was limited. "These people don't have a dollar to buy anything," Bob said. The bottles of chlorine treatment being distributed cost 25 cents each. "These people don't have 25 cents," he added.

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Read Your *RiverWatch* Online

In an effort to reduce the amount of paper we use and to reduce our costs, SARA is now offering our members the option to read *RiverWatch* online.

RiverWatch is available in an electronic PDF format on our website. If you elect to receive your copy electronically, we will send you an e-mail each quarter with a link to the same articles on issues affecting our River and Parkway, so you'll never miss an issue.

Please take a moment to let us know if you'd like to read *RiverWatch* online. Visit the SARA Web site, sarariverwatch.org, and choose "Newsletter" and then "Delivery Preference" from the top menu. Complete the short form and, beginning with our next issue, we will e-mail you a link to *RiverWatch* and you will no longer receive a paper copy in the mail. Thank you for helping us become a greener organization! ■

Water-borne Disease

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In October, the Metcalfs participated in an international water conference in Jordan. Their interest in providing impoverished people with the means to cook food and purify water stems from experiments with solar cooking that the Metcalfs launched in 1978. During a recent visit to their home in East Sacramento, beans were baking in the backyard.

The success of the program in Kenya is beginning to attract the attention of governments and organizations. The Metcalfs are optimistic that the strategy to eliminate water-borne diseases in the FOTO project could be replicated in Kenya and other parts of the world to end the health burden those diseases cause.

The IWhA is a 501c3 and contributions are both welcome and tax-deductible. Contributions may be sent to IWhA, 417 Mace Blvd., Ste. J-187, Davis, CA 95618. ■

In Memoriam

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

Wanda Denson

Stroube Richardson

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 MasterCard. 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. ■

SARA Membership

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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).

Pot Laws Aim to Stop Environmental Damage

California legalized marijuana for medicinal purposes in 1996. But it wasn't until this fall that laws were finally approved to regulate a crop that is polluting and causing waterways to run dry.

Three bills were signed into law that require pot growers to comply with the same regulations that regulate food crops. A new state Bureau of Medical Marijuana Regulation (BUMMR) also is to be created. It's already being referred to as "bummer." Pot growers will be required to acquire a license. Illegal toxic runoff from grows and illegal water diversions also are to be policed.

For decades, California growers, estimated at 50,000, have been using dangerous chemicals to fertilize pot crops and kill pests. Some of the chemicals run off into waterways where they harm aquatic life. Some growers also illegally divert water. Again this year, several dozen creeks have gone dry, and rivers such as the Russian and Noyo have been reduced to a succession of ponds. Fish and Wildlife officers estimated that a half million gallons of water was being diverted daily from the Eel River, causing salt water

intrusion in the river and threatening spawning fish.

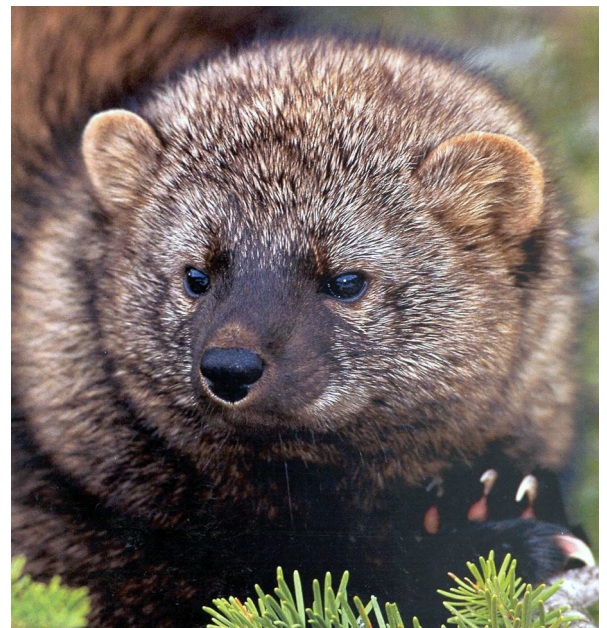
A weasel called the Pacific Fisher has been eating rodents poisoned by pot farmers, according to a study by Mourad Gabriel, wildlife disease ecologist at the University of California, Davis. Many more species feed on dead rodents, Gabriel noted. The National Park Service recently announced that a young mountain lion in the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area died as a direct result of exposure to rodenticide.

It remains to be seen whether the legions of black-market growers will abide by the new laws and apply for licenses.

To date, state enforcement of violations on pot farms have been minimal. Token staffs have been put into the field to investigate. When they find violations, they usually give the grower an e-mail or a report telling what they can do to come into compliance with the law.

In the Sierra Nevada foothills, an officer was patrolling back roads when he saw a pot grow. He got out of the patrol car, and the grower sicced his pit bull on the officer. The officer opened the rear door of his car and the dog jumped in. The mutt apparently thought it was going for a ride. ■

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Pacific Fisher



Sheep are now doing fire prevention work on the Parkway. Photo by George Nyberg

A Little Water Law History

The Federal Water Pollution Control Act of 1948 was the first major law enacted by Congress to address the problems of water pollution in the United States. It did little to control pollution, gave only limited authority to the federal government, and provided an extremely cumbersome enforcement mechanism.

In 1972, legislation authored by Sen. Edmund Muskie, D-Maine, totally rewrote the act and the law became commonly known as the Clean Water Act.

Republicans and Democrats came together to protect America's waterways. The Clean Water Act passed the Senate unanimously and the House by a simple voice vote. President Richard Nixon vetoed the bill, but both houses of Congress met to override his veto the very same day.

The 1972 amendments:

- Established the basic structure for regulating pollutant discharges into the waters of the United States.
- Gave EPA the authority to implement pollution control programs such as setting wastewater standards for industry.
- Maintained existing requirements to set water quality standards for all contaminants in surface waters.
- Made it unlawful for any person to discharge any pollutant from a point source into navigable waters, unless a permit was obtained under its provisions.
- Funded the construction of sewage treatment plants under the construction grants program.

Recognized the need for planning to address the critical problems posed by nonpoint source pollution.

Over the years, many other laws have changed parts of the Clean Water Act.



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 over-sized vehicle (over 22 feet):	\$100
Vehicle + Horse trailer	\$75
Vehicle and small watercraft:	\$80
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.regionalparks.saccounty.net
- 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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My gift to SARA is a: (Please indicate with an "X")

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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.

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