

## A Lethal Weapon is in Use on the Lower American

Earlier this year, the California Fish & Game Commission voted to allow spearfishing for striped bass on the Lower American River.

Save the American River Association (SARA) has asked the Commission to ban spearfishing on the Lower American, both for striped bass and the non-game species that have been fair game for spearfishing for some years. Divers using spear guns or rods could harm people and wildlife in the American River Parkway, and boaters, rafters and swimmers on the river.

Fortunately, Sacramento County Code Section 9.36.060 prohibits the use of weapons in county parks. Article 5.27 of the American River Parkway plan prohibits the "use of any firearm, including air rifle, pellet guns, BB guns, paint ball, sling shots or any other ballistic devices."

Under the state's Urban American River Parkway Preservation Act (Public Resources Code Section 5840), state actions affecting the use of lands in the Lower American River are to be "consistent" with the County's American River Parkway Plan.

So, spear guns can't be carried onto the Parkway. But it is legal for someone in a boat to enter

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Mugwort, Rush, and Oregon Ash on Lake Natoma's shoreline

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## SARA Sues Folsom Over Plan to Pave Lake Natoma's Shoreline

BY STEPHEN GREEN

Save the American River Association (SARA) filed a lawsuit in Sacramento County Superior Court on July 10th over the City of Folsom's plan to pave a trail and impose other alterations on the Lake Natoma Shoreline.

The city did a superficial assessment of the project's environmental impacts rather than a comprehensive Environmental Impact Report. After careful review, SARA's attorney concluded the project fails to meet the minimum legal requirements of the California

Environmental Quality Act, the American River Parkway Plan, the Folsom Lake State Recreation Area General Plan, and State Planning and Zoning Law.

Members of SARA and other stakeholder groups are concerned about the environmental impacts — especially those associated with aesthetics, biological resources, recreation and land-use planning.

Dan Winkelman, a Folsom resident, retired State Park Ranger, and author of the book "Lake Natoma," said the project would dramatically alter "this treasured piece of wilderness in our city. This is just the first segment of the city's plans to take over and develop Lake Natoma."

Defendants in the suit are the City of Folsom and the City Council which approved the project on June 11. During hearings on the project stretching over two years, all but one Folsom City Councilman refused to entertain any concerns raised by the public. The exception was Councilman Ernie Sheldon who repeatedly raised questions about costs, suitability for disabled access, and damage to the existing native environment.

The project is called the Lake Natoma and Waterfront Trail Enhancement Project. The Project would be located on U.S. Bureau of Reclamation land managed as a park by the state Dept. of

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*Large swaths of existing habitat would be removed including many mature Oak Trees.*

## Lake Natoma

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Parks and Recreation. A small portion of the trail would be on city property.

The project site would extend from the intersection of Gold Lake Drive at the top of the Lake Natoma Crossing Bridge down to the Lake Natoma waterfront. From there, it would follow the existing trail along the waterfront to its reconnection to the existing paved bike trail about 1,000 feet south of the Lake Natoma Crossing Bridge.

Most of the site is part of the Folsom Lake State Recreation Area which is part of the Gold Fields District of the state Dept. of Parks & Recreation. When the city applied for a state grant to pay for part of the project, the application said: "State Parks is one of the biggest supporters of this project."

After then-Gold Fields Superintendent Scott Nakaji read the application, he sent the city a letter outlining his objections to the project. In conclusion, he said the project is "not consistent with the State Parks mission." Despite that, higher state officials approved the grant.

The site currently is designated by the state for Low Intensity Recreation/Conservation. The proposed project would provide for high-density recreational use. Large swaths of existing habitat would be removed including many mature Oak Trees.

The project includes a path for

disabled people from Leidesdorff Street to the bike trail under Natoma Crossing Bridge.

"This is an inappropriate location for ADA access," Winkelman said, "as current plans call for an eight-foot-high (maximum) double concrete wall ramp down a 40-foot cliff. Disabled people would be required to traverse 700 yards and down 70 feet to reach the shoreline. Disabled access to the lake exists at Willow Creek and Negro Bar where ADA

that there would be no light intrusion into the lake and State Park. From the day the mall opened, light has been intruding in and around the lake — and directly into a Fair Oaks neighborhood across the lake.

The City of Folsom has a long history of abuses of the Lake Natoma environment. The city has been fined for the release of sewage that has flowed into Lake Natoma. Sewage releases still occur in the city when there is heavy rainfall.



View of Project site from across Lake Natoma  
Photo by Warren Truitt

rest rooms are available. The damage caused by the project to the wilderness experience expected in a state park would be overwhelming."

SARA board members are especially concerned that the project includes lighting of native oak trees and bollards in the State Park. The park is closed to visitors after dark.

In the past, the City of Folsom has approved projects that cause light pollution in the Lake Natoma area. When the Folsom Auto Mall was approved, area residents were assured

For years, the City of Folsom and its contractors allowed toxic runoff from the Folsom Corporation Yard Landfill in violation of the city's NPDES Permit.

Previously, Folsom destroyed habitat in and around the landfill for a federally listed threatened species, the Valley Elderberry Longhorn Beetle (*desmocerus californicus dimorphus*).

The failure to prepare an Environmental Impact Report for the project violates state law and constitutes a prejudicial abuse of discretion. ■

SARA expects to run up significant legal fees as this suit goes through the courts. Donations would be appreciated. Checks may be sent to the SARA office:

Save the American River Assn  
4441 Auburn Blvd., Suite H  
Sacramento, CA 95841-2551

## Lethal Weapon

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the American River from the Sacramento River and pursue spearfishing as long as they exit the Lower American the same way and don't set foot on Parkway land. There

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*"One of the hallmarks of traditional fishing is being quiet and not disturbing the water."*

JIM JONES  
LONGTIME FISHER AND MEMBER OF  
SARA ADVISORY COUNCIL

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is an unsettled question as to whether someone with a spear gun or rod can enter the river from private property with river access.

The season opened May 1 and ends Sept. 15. Spearfishing is allowed from about mile 12 on the American River (near the William B. Pond Recreation Area) to its confluence with the Sacramento River.

It's likely that more people are spearfishing since striped bass is a tasty fish unlike the non-game species previously being taken such as carp, Sacramento blackfish or Western sucker. And the Lower American is generally clear and an easier place to spearfish, unlike the sediment-filled Sacramento and San Joaquin Rivers.

Felix Smith, a retired U.S. Fish & Game biologist and SARA board member, noted in a letter to the



Spear guns are lethal weapons being used by divers to bag fish on the Lower American River. The trigger releases a metal shaft with barbs on and near the tip.

commission that May 1 to Sept. 15 "is a time of heavy recreation use, i.e. wading, swimming, rafting, canoeing and boating along with spin cast, fly bait, trolling fishermen using the river. This puts spear gun hunting of fish in serious conflict with other uses."

Smith also asked: "How does the commission intend to protect Chinook salmon (4 races), steelhead and sturgeon from being poached — taken under the excuse 'Oops, I missed that carp and bagged a 12-pound Chinook.'"

A number of traditional fishers and sport fishing organizations also have asked the commission to consider a ban. They note that a spear wound is nearly always fatal. There are few catch-and-release opportunities.

"One of the hallmarks of traditional fishing is being quiet and not disturbing the water," said Jim Jones, a longtime fisher and member of the SARA Advisory Council. "That's totally contradictory to what a spearfisherman does."

If the commission won't repeal the season, SARA will ask area legislators for a bill imposing a ban. ■

## 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.

Vehicle	\$50
Vehicle + Trailer or oversized vehicle (over 22 feet):	\$100
Vehicle + Horse trailer	\$75
Vehicle and small watercraft:	\$80
Parks supporter pass*	\$50

### Pass Fees Are Based On Use:

*\* 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](http://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

*"Man's heart away from nature  
becomes hard."*

- Standing Bear



## Restoration has Begun at River Bend Fire Site

BY STEPHEN GREEN

At 12:23 a.m. last May 22, Sacramento Metropolitan Fire received a report of a fire in River Bend Park on the American River Parkway.

When the first firefighters arrived minutes later, they found a multi-acre fire burning in heavy, dry vegetation between the river and the Bike Trail near Camp Mokitana, the old Camp Fire Girls camp.

Multiple crews responded and the fire was contained within 11 acres about 5 a.m. Gusty winds caused a flare-up in the late morning which burned three more acres. No structures were threatened.

The cause and initial ignition point of the fire could not be determined.

Within the burn area, pockets of vegetation remained and most contain invasive species including the nasty Yellow Star Thistle, *Centaurea solstitialis*, which migrated from South America in the 1800s.

The Sacramento Regional Parks Dept. began developing a plan to prevent



SARA Board Member Betsy Weiland removed invasive weeds that survived the fire. Photo by Chris Lewis

invasive plants from overtaking the burn site. Two different work crews removed invasive species from the site in June, including members of the Save the American River Association Board of Directors. More crews will be there next June killing the invaders.

Native seed mix can be raked into the area in late fall. Plugs of grasses, sedges and/or mugwort can be planted once the winter rains begin to saturate the area. New oak seedlings that appear naturally will be identified and caged to protect them from browsing deer.



Firefighters knocked down hot spots once the main blaze was contained. Photo by Warren Truitt



Yellow Star Thistle  
*Centaurea solstitialis*

## SARA Membership Donations *April—June 2013*

Granite Bay Flycasters  
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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:

**Bill Griffith**

**Arthur F. White**

**Harold Kerster**

**Sid Inglis**

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. ■

*"We will be known  
 forever by the tracks  
 we leave."*

- Native American Proverb



On June 8 at Glenn Hall Park, Councilman Steve Cohn (left) announced his 2013 Volunteer of the Year Awards and presented SARA's own Frank Cirill (right) with a Lifetime Achievement Award for his dedication of over 45 years of service to his community. Photo by Steve Harriman



## Central Valley Aquifer Depletion is Accelerating

BY STEPHEN GREEN

Twin Satellites named Gravity Recovery and Climate Experiment are telling us what California water warriors have known for years — our precious water reserves in Central Valley aquifers are being pumped dry.

“We don’t recognize the dire water situation that we face here,” according to Jay Famiglietti, a professor of Earth System Science at the University of California, Irvine, and director of the UC Center for Hydrologic Modeling.

“We’re losing those groundwater reserves every month, and with climate change affecting snowmelt, the risks and uncertainties are changing faster than ever,” Famiglietti said. “We don’t see that they’ll be any replenishment in the future, so there’s a critical need to improve the way we monitor and regulate groundwater systems now.”

Famiglietti and Matthew Rodell of NASA’s Goddard Space Flight Center in Greenbelt, Md., have monitored the satellite measurements of large aquifers nationwide, including the Central Valley, every month since the satellites were launched in March 2002.

In an article in the June 14 journal *Science*, “Water in the Balance,” they reported that Central Valley aquifers have lost more than 30 cubic kilometers of water yearly for the past decade. That amounts to ten times the volume of the Lake Mead on the Colorado River — America’s largest reservoir.

The satellites have delicate instruments that detect minute variations in the Earth’s gravity fields caused by changes in underground land masses. The worst Central Valley groundwater depletion has been in the San Joaquin Valley where pumping water from aquifers has caused the ground level to drop four-to-five feet in many areas. In southern Kern County,



*“We’re losing those groundwater reserves every month, and with climate change affecting snowmelt, the risks and uncertainties are changing faster than ever.”*

JAY FAMIGLIETTI  
PROFESSOR OF EARTH SYSTEM  
SCIENCE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF  
CALIFORNIA, IRVINE

there are places where the subsidence has been 40-to-50 feet.

The light snow pack in California mountains this year is forcing growers to suck ever more water out of the ground.

In years past, they were pumping out water within 100 or more feet below the surface. In some parts of the Central Valley, water is being pumped from depths of up to 1,500 feet. Some of that water comes from deep clay layers and is both salty and acidic. Crops don’t like it.

Famiglietti and Rodell conclude that “without coordinated and proactive management, the aquifers supplying the Central Valley and the southern High Plains with water for irrigation will deplete their groundwater reserves, perhaps within decades, putting the nation’s food supply at considerable risk.”

Their findings “make a strong case for immediate action, and ultimately, for a comprehensive, national water policy in the United States,” the scientists concluded. ■

## Book Review

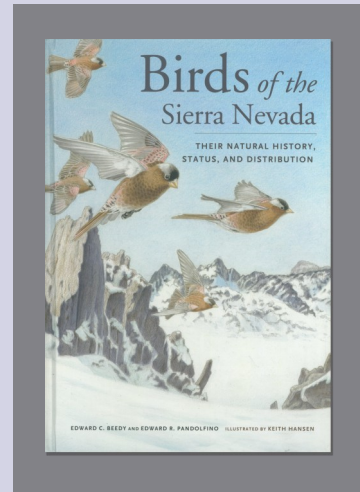
BIRDS OF THE SIERRA NEVADA:  
THEIR NATURAL HISTORY, STATUS  
& DISTRIBUTION

by Edward C. Beedy and Edward R.  
Pandolfino, Illustrated by Keith Hansen.  
University of California Press, 446 p. \$75  
hardcover; \$39.95 paperback; \$39.95  
e-book.

This book was years in development and provides the most complete assessment ever produced on the nearly 300 bird species that frequent the Sierra Nevada, its foothills and nearby Great Basin areas. For each species, there's a thorough description of their history, habits, range and status along with many fascinating insights.

You'll learn, for example, that "Brown-headed Cowbirds are nest parasites, avoiding all parental duties and devoting not one iota of energy to rearing their own young ... Instead, a breeding female carefully monitors a nesting pair of songbirds, waits for an opportune moment when both parents are away, then swiftly lays one of her own eggs among the host's clutch and makes a rapid getaway, leaving the hosts to raise a cowbird chick while still trying to raise their

own offspring. A single female may lay up to 40 eggs per season ..."



The book has maps and photos. But the most stunning illustrations are Keith Hansen's birds. He drew both the male and female of each species — work that took him 13 years. He also sells prints of his birds from his gallery in Bolinas.

Whether you're a serious birder or one who just enjoys being out there in the Sierra Nevada, this book will give you knowledge that will enrich your outing experience. ■

## More Homeless People in the County

Sacramento County's homeless population has increased 7.6 percent, according a biennial survey conducted by Sacramento Steps Forward, a public/private partnership. The count, conducted last spring, was 2,538, up from 2,358 in 2011.

The count is considered a snapshot in time, and doesn't include some people living in cars, couch surfing or camping in far suburbs.

Local law enforcement officers have been regularly evicting illegal campers from the American River Parkway. But they quickly return, particularly in locales on the Lower American and under bridges crossing Discovery Park.

Elected leaders have yet to address problem of chronic homelessness in the area. ■

*"There will be those, I hope,  
who share my basic assumption  
that wilderness is a necessary  
part of civilization and that it is  
the primary responsibility of  
park systems to preserve intact  
and undiminished what little  
still remains."*

- Edward Abbey



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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](http://www.sarariverwatch.org).*

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

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