

Honoring Judge Gualco

Eugene Gualco was on the Sacramento County Board of Supervisors during the critical years that led up to the establishment of the American River Parkway.

"As a supervisor and a state legislator, Gene was SARA's 'go-to-guy.'" said former SARA President Clyde Macdonald. "We could always count on him."

During Gualco's time on the board, the 1972 County Park Bond was placed on the ballot and approved by county voters. It provided the funding for acquisition and development of the Parkway.

Two years later, the board created the Sacramento Regional County Sanitation District which closed numerous sewage treatment plants that discharged to the American River and replaced them with a regional plant south of Sacramento near Freeport.

As a legislator, Gualco carried a bill to require the State Parks

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SARA honored retired Superior Court Judge Eugene Gualco (left) during the annual meeting on Dec. 7. Then SARA-President Clyde Macdonald presented him with a framed photo from the American River Parkway.

Photo by Warren Truitt



Photo by Guy Galante

Drought

BY CLYDE MACDONALD

In California, drought doesn't come in yelling. It comes in quietly.

December 2013 was virtually rainless, caused by high-pressure air sitting off the coast — causing winter storms to skip to the north.

By Christmas, Folsom Reservoir was down to about 200,000 acre-feet, about 20% of capacity. The reservoir was dropping 1,500 acre-feet per day due to low inflows, evaporation, water deliveries from the reservoir, and outflow. Two weeks later, the reservoir was down to 170,000 acre-feet. The reservoir was bleeding out.

The Cities of Folsom and Roseville and the San Juan Water District draw water from Folsom Dam. If the reservoir continued to drop, their intake would be sucking air in a few months. Panic.

The Sacramento Water Forum was created in 1993, consisting of local water leaders, government agencies, business groups, and environmental representatives. The Forum has two co-equal goals: meet the water needs of the

Sacramento area and protect fisheries and recreation in the Lower American River.

In early January, the Water Forum recommended that reservoir outflows be lowered from 1,300 cubic feet per second (cfs) to 800 cfs. Some thought that the recommendation did not give adequate consideration of fisheries and some thought it didn't adequately protect urban needs. The federal Bureau of Reclamation, the dam's operator, decided, instead, to lower outflows to 500 cfs.

Fall-run salmon come up the American River to bury their eggs into the gravels, starting in late September and peaking in November. Water Forum fishery consultants estimated that about twelve percent of the salmon nests would be dewatered if outflows were reduced to 500 cfs. And salmon eggs would die.

State and federal fishery representatives seemed to support 500 cfs, a flow that could be sustained long enough to protect very young salmon and

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steelhead. If blue-sky weather continues, river flows may have to be reduced further.

We must establish a modern flow standard for the river — one that protects the river, recreation, and fisheries.

A number of Sacramento area water purveyors depend heavily on the American River, and don't have backup water supplies. These purveyors may not be able to meet their customers' water demands in the hot summer ahead — either because of an actual lack of water or a lack of facilities to obtain and deliver water. The most likely to be impacted are the San Juan Water District, and the Cities of Sacramento, Folsom and Roseville.

So what needs to be done in the short term? All Sacramento water agencies should have implemented their emergency drought plans. The public needs to conserve water, starting now. Folsom and San Juan will have to consider putting a barge in the Folsom Reservoir — a barge that could pump water into their water intake. The City of Sacramento may have to devise a way to get low-flowing water into their American River water intake near Sacramento State University. The

City may have to constrain water use because its two water treatment plants may not be able to supply summer demands. Water purveyors will have to determine whether water can be moved from purveyors with sufficient water to purveyors with serious shortages. The impacts on the river should be studied and evaluated — so we learn what to do if the drought worsens and what we should do in the next drought.

In the longer term, the Sacramento area has to develop a water system that isn't based on the silly assumption that the American River will never experience a serious drought. Backup options could include groundwater transfers among our purveyors, facilities to tap the Sacramento River, or interconnections among water purveyors. Having backup supplies would raise water rates, but customers are impacted if water deliveries have to be substantially reduced: say goodbye to the lawn, the azaleas, and the rhododendrons. We need more water conservation: water-saving landscapes, low flow showerheads, faucets, and high efficiency, low-flush toilets.

For the river, we need more investment. Folsom Dam's ancient, leaky powerplant intake structure should be replaced so that the water in the reservoir of the proper temperature can be released to the lower river — as temperature is so important for the survival of

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Drought

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fisheries. The dam's powerplant intake also needs to have the ability to reach into the lower depths of the reservoir. That would allow the release of cold, deep water for fisheries and avoid the need to bypass the powerplant to get that water — a benefit for both fish and power production. Given that Folsom Dam blocks the normal downstream movement of gravel, there needs to be an improved program of placing gravels in the river in salmon spawning areas. Small side river channels need to be re-shaped to depths and widths that are usable by spawning salmon. Places for small fish "to hide" need to be added. Pulse flows need to be considered to flush out young fish in drier years. And more than anything, we must establish a modern flow standard for the river — one that protects the river, recreation, and fisheries.

We can't avoid periodic droughts, but we can do a better job of protecting the river and meeting the needs of people. ■

"It is not the strongest of the species that survive, nor the most intelligent, but the one most responsive to change."

CHARLES DARWIN

Brown's Drought Declaration Suspends Environmental Law

BY STEPHEN GREEN

Gov. Jerry Brown staged a news conference in San Francisco on Jan. 17 and issued a declaration laying out steps for dealing with the drought in California.

He directed state officials to assist farmers and communities that are economically impacted by dry conditions and drinking water shortages. The declaration, Brown added, also will make the state eligible for federal assistance in fighting fires and other disruptions caused the drought.

Brown, however, did not discuss a provision of the declaration that exempts drought response actions from the state's foremost law protecting wildlife and the environment — the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

Provision 9 of Brown's declaration states:

"The Department of Water Resources and the Water Board will take actions necessary to make water immediately available, and, for purposes of carrying out directives 5 and 8, Water Code section 13247 and Division 13 (commencing with section 21000) of the Public Resources Code and regulations adopted pursuant to that Division are suspended on the basis that strict compliance with them will prevent, hinder, or delay the mitigation of the effects of the emergency."

Here's what the gibberish means:

Division 13 of the Public Resources Code is the technical name for CEQA.

Exempting the Dept. of Water Resources and the Water Board from compliance with section 13247 of the Water Code excuses them from compliance with water-quality plans. The agencies can ignore those plans

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The American River near Lower Sunrise. Photo by Guy Galante

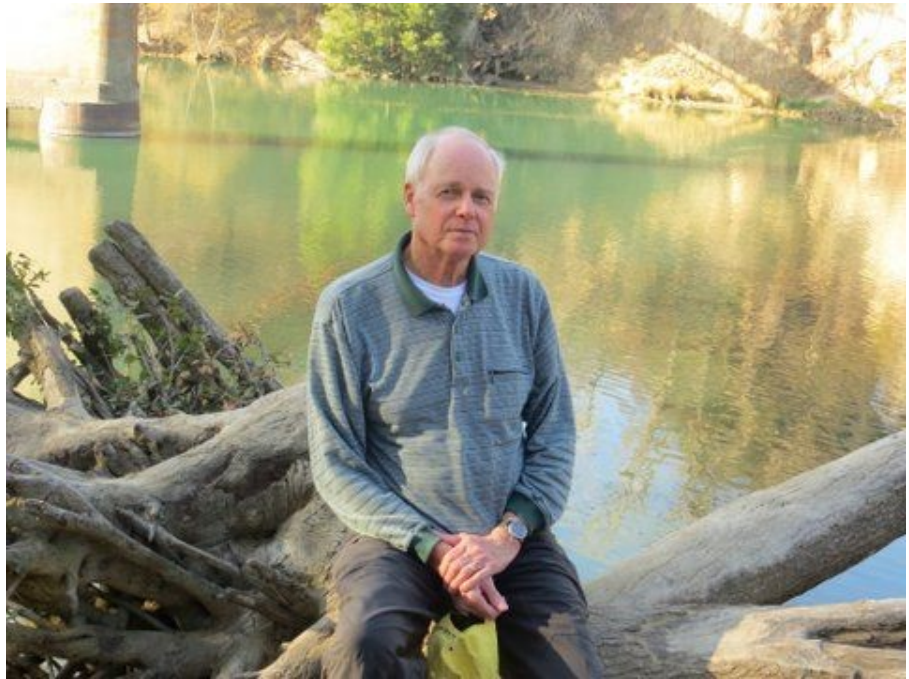
SARA's New President

Stephen Green, a veteran of the California Water Wars, was elected president of Save the American River Association at the January Board of Directors meeting.

He replaces Clyde Macdonald who is taking on expanded responsibilities with the Sacramento Water Forum where he has served since 1995.

Green has resided next to the American River Parkway for 33 years. Then-SARA President Frank Cirill recruited Green for SARA membership in 1985 to assist in stopping development proposals on the Lake Natoma shoreline. They succeeded.

Green has been involved with SARA ever since. In 1995, he initiated SARA's effort to stop residential encroachment on the Parkway at the Fair Oaks Overlook. It took 17 years, a lawsuit, nearly \$1 million, and efforts by many people — especially Tracy Martin Shearer who spearheaded the fundraising effort to buy additional land. The Parkway Warriors finally were able to add 4.5



Stephen Green, the new SARA president, takes a break near the Fair Oaks Bridge.

acres to the Parkway at the Overlook site.

In recent years, Green has served as SARA's vice president and editor of the *RiverWatch* newsletter. He is one of two SARA representatives on the Citizen Advisory Group for the federal Superfund cleanup of contaminated groundwater emanating from the Aerojet and Boeing properties in Sacramento County. During the last session of the California Legislature, he worked with lobbyists for other organizations to block bills that would have gutted the California Environmental Quality Act.

Green was a newspaper journalist for 32 years, covering water issues, science, energy and politics. He edited four editions of the California Political Almanac, a source book on California government and politics. He also has held legislative and communications positions in California government and on the staff of U.S. Sen. Alan Cranston.

Green earned bachelor's and master's degrees in journalism at the University of Oregon. He was awarded research fellowships by the Kiplinger Foundation and the National Science Foundation (NSF). The NSF fellowship allowed him to pursue research in the Antarctic.

Other officers elected at the meeting were:

George Nyberg, Vice President

Mary Beth Metcalf, Treasurer

Alan Wade, Secretary/Past President



Judge Gualco

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& Recreation Dept. to preserve the Bushy Lake area on the Parkway. There had been plans to turn it into a parking lot for CalExpo.

He also obtained state funds for an extension of the Parkway bike trail along Lake Natoma.

Those and other initiatives pursued by Gualco were instrumental in making the Parkway what it is today. ■

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

RACHAEL CARSON

SARA Membership Donations *October — December 2013*

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In Honor Of:

Susan Solarz

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:

Pete Altenburg
Vaughn Bishop
Ronald L. Brown
Bill Griffith

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. ■

Statewide Ban on Single-use Plastic Bags is Overdue

On Jan. 1, Los Angeles joined more than 80 California cities and counties in banning single-use plastic bags. Davis will impose a ban on July 1 and a proposal eliminating the bags is to go before the Sacramento City Council this spring.

The restrictions vary from jurisdiction to jurisdiction and some businesses have had trouble with compliance. Yet cities and counties are moving ahead with a patchwork of ordinances because we can't get a uniform, statewide ban out of the California Legislature.

Proposals were turned down in 2010 and 12. Last year, a ban in legislation carried by Sen. Alex Padilla, D-Los Angeles, failed by three votes in the Senate — despite the fact that it was supported by retailers, the California Grocers Association, and environmental and sportfishing groups.

This year, Padilla is back with another bill banning bags and he's added provisions that garnered

support from two colleagues who helped kill the 2013 bill: Sen. Kevin de Leon, D-Los Angeles and Sen. Ricardo Lara, D-Huntington Park.

The new bill provides \$2 million in state recycling funds for grants to retrain workers in plastic bag factories and to re-engineer manufacturing operations to make reusable plastic bags. Manufacturers would be required to use 20 percent recycled material in their bags initially. Over time, that would increase to 40 percent

and bags would have to be strong enough for 125 uses.

Consumers would pay a fee of 10 cents for paper bags when they shop. The fee can be avoided if they bring their own bags.

Not all manufacturers are on board with the new legislation and there could be changes as the bill goes forward.

There is indisputable evidence that single-use plastic bags are bad for the environment and the economy. The bags pollute shores and streams, clog

equipment at recycling plants, increase storm wastewater costs and pose a threat to certain wildlife. They accumulate in soupy garbage patches in oceans where they ensnare marine life. Scientists fear the patches also host micro-organisms that release chemicals that harm wildlife. Roads and streets are littered with the bags, forcing governments to spend money on cleanups.

The California Grocers Association reports that more than 14 billion single-use plastic bags are handed out by California retailers each year. But only five percent of them are recycled.

If Padilla is able to get an acceptable bill enacted, then we can start a conversation about single-use plastic bottles. Only 30 percent of them make it to recycling centers. ■



Plastic bags pollute shores and streams, clog equipment at recycling plants, increase storm wastewater costs and pose a threat to certain wildlife.

A Parkway Story

In early December, a mailman was filling a group of postal boxes in Old Fair Oaks near the American River Parkway. The key that he used to unlock the postal box locker was attached to a chain on a belt loop on his pants. The key was still in the lock on the locker.

Suddenly, a cougar ran past the mailman about six feet from where he was standing. He jumped into his truck and slammed the door.

After a few moments, he noticed that the key was still in the locker — and he'd ripped a big hole in his pants. ■

Brown's Drought Declaration Suspends Environmental Law

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in ordering dam releases and transfers of water between the State Water Project the federal Central Valley Project. Both CEQA and section 13247 require agencies to follow water-quality plans that protect California's stressed fish populations — populations being stressed further by the drought. The Central Valley's salmon runs and the Delta smelt are among those at greatest risk.

Exempting state agency actions from CEQA also means that water diversions and transfers won't be subject to third-party scientific analysis or public review.

These actions by Gov. Brown come as no surprise. He has supported efforts to weaken environmental law in the past. "CEQA reform," Brown has said, "is the Lord's work."

Brown's actions come at a time when San Joaquin Valley members of the House of Representatives are developing "emergency drought legislation" that would increase pumping from The Delta to farms through 2015. It also would halt efforts to restore the San Joaquin River and restore salmon runs, and waive requirements of the Endangered Species Act.

CEQA was signed into law by then-Gov. Ronald Reagan in 1970. It provides a framework for successful planning up and down the state whether it's the City of Folsom's controversial plan to pave the Lake Natoma shoreline or prevent water diversions in areas where there is critical wildlife habitat.

The fundamental principles of the law require public disclosure of the potential environmental impacts of development proposals and actions by government agencies.

Last year, Save the American River Association joined a coalition of environmental, sportfishing and labor groups that stopped legislation to gut CEQA. The same coalition will be monitoring CEQA proposals in the recently convened legislative session. And the coalition will be closely watching actions state agencies take in response to the drought.

CEQA provides a framework for successful planning up and down the state whether it's the City of Folsom's controversial plan to pave the Lake Natoma shoreline or prevent water diversions in areas where there is critical wildlife habitat.

Without question, state agencies will need to take some expedited actions to confront the drought. But the coalition is committed to preventing actions that cause long-term damage to wildlife populations and California's environment.

The governor's complete declaration can be read on his on-line home page: gov.ca.gov ■

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.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



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4441 Auburn Blvd., Suite H
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Phone: (916) 482-2551
E-mail: info@sarariverwatch.org
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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
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