

## President's Message

By Warren V. Truitt

It has been 50 years since Save the American River Association's "birth" and 39 years since the SARA-initiated bond issue to purchase the first 4,000 acres of what today is the American River Parkway was passed by more than 72 percent of the voters.

SARA was founded specifically to make the Parkway a reality. SARA spearheaded the effort, rallied the community, and even raised sufficient funds to purchase and donate seven acres of land adjacent to the American River. Today, that land, located in the La Riviera/Larchmont neighborhood, is known as *Sara Park*.



Warren V. Truitt, SARA President

The creation of the Parkway was a proud community effort. Families, students, leaders of the business and education communities, and elected officials were universally behind the establishment of this unique community asset. It truly *took a village* to make it

happen. However, in the giddiness of the time, a stable, long-term funding solution was not included to assure that the Parkway would be funded for generations to come. Today, we are paying the price for that oversight.

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## Options for Rescuing Regional Parks Under Study

By Bill Davis

The Grassroots Working Group (GWG) was formed in mid-2010 in response to devastating budget cuts and the possible dismantling of the Sacramento County Regional Parks and Open Space System.

The GWG's goal is to secure adequate, stable, long-term funding for operations and expansion of regional parks and open space.

The GWG was organized by Save the American River Association, and is chaired by SARA Board Member Bill Davis. SARA President Warren V. Truitt and Volunteer Coordinator Betsy Weiland also are GWG members.

Other organizations represented by members are the Sacramento Area Bicycle Advocates, Habitat 2020/South County, The Nature Conservancy, Butterfield-

Riviera East Community Assn., Dry Creek Parkway/Gibson Ranch, Sacramento Valley Conservancy, American River Natural History Assn., American River Parkway Foundation, and Pathways to Recreation.

GWG members serve as individuals and not as delegates from any organization, group or area.

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## For More Information About the Grassroots Working Group

Updates and additional information can be found at [www.sarariverwatch.org/grassroots.php](http://www.sarariverwatch.org/grassroots.php).

Either we rise to the challenge of funding our Regional Parks and Open Space System or bear witness to the loss of our magnificent public Parkways and Open Space throughout the Sacramento region.

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## President's Message

Our Sacramento County Regional Parks and Open Space(s) are in crisis. Due to huge County budget shortfalls, funding for County Regional Parks – which includes the American River Parkway – has been severely reduced. Parks staff has been drastically reduced. There are only 11 rangers today, vs. 22 just a couple of years back. The maintenance staff has experienced similar reductions.

### Please visit:

**[www.sarariverwatch.org/grassroots.php](http://www.sarariverwatch.org/grassroots.php)** for more information about the Grassroots Working Group and progress to date.

The result is that restrooms, turf areas, litter and trash cans are attended to less frequently. Graffiti is becoming much more prevalent as well – sprayed on the pavement, underpasses and signage. Several signs have been ripped from the ground, or otherwise damaged. Forty-five-plus tents, each housing illegal campers, are now occupying a large area of Parkway next to Hwy. 160. The dangerously understaffed ranger staff is responsible for all 15,000-plus acres of Regional Parks – spread all over the county. The Parkway alone now receives over 8,000,000 visits a year. The assigned resources cannot possibly protect the assets.

From inception, County Regional Parks has been funded from the County General Fund, along with several other Tier 3 *Quality of Life* departments. It has become clear that the county will not, anytime soon, be able to fund Parks at a level that users consider safe and clean.

**What is being done?** Initiated by

SARA, a Grassroots Working Group (GWG) was formed to study and make recommendations regarding governance and funding alternatives, raised funds to hire experienced professional parks consultant organizations: Trust for Public Land and The Dangermond Group. They will offer their conclusions, conduct polling to measure community acceptance and provide a feasibility study. Results are due by the end of the first Quarter.

GWG members are meeting with a variety of stakeholder organizations, including recreation groups, neighborhood associations, chambers of commerce and service organizations to get the word out that a crisis does indeed exist. The Sacramento Metro Chamber has endorsed the GWG's efforts.

### What can you do?

Once again, it is going to take the entire community to **Rescue Our Regional Parks and Open Space.**

#### Be informed

If you belong to a neighborhood association, recreation group, service club, or any other formal or informal organization, please schedule a GWG presentation. Presentations are 10-15 minutes plus Q&A and may be requested by sending an e-mail to: **[info@sarariverwatch.org](mailto:info@sarariverwatch.org)**.

#### Spread the word

After checking out the Grassroots section of the SARA Web Site, or attending a GWG presentation, share the concern with your friends, family and co-workers. Attend SARA's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration and Rally for Regional Parks: May 21st at William Pond Park. Details for May 21<sup>st</sup> event will follow in the next *Riverwatch* and will be posted on the SARA Web site: **[www.sarariverwatch.org](http://www.sarariverwatch.org)**.

## Grassroots Working Group Fundraiser

A fundraiser on Jan. 12 raised \$650 for the Grassroots Working Group (GWG).

The event was held at the at the Rubicon Brewing Company on Capitol Avenue in Midtown Sacramento. Rubicon, known for its good beer and tasty entrees and salads, hosts a monthly 501c Wednesday fundraiser for worthy groups, and gives a portion of the day's income to the charity or non-profit.

The event went from 11:30 a.m. to 11:30 p.m. and was well attended. Betsy Weiland reported that the Rubicon was still half full at 11 p.m.

The GWG was formed in mid-2010 in response to devastating budget cuts and the possible dismantling of the Sacramento County Regional Parks and Open Space System. The group's goal is to secure adequate, stable, long-term funding for operations and expansion of regional parks and open space.

People from many local interest groups were invited to the fundraiser and had an opportunity to learn about the governance and funding options being studied.

The GWG was organized by Save the American River Assn. and is chaired by SARA Board Member Bill Davis. SARA President Warren V. Truitt and Volunteer Coordinator Betsy Weiland also are GWG members. Other organizations represented are the Sacramento Area Bicycle Advocates, Habitat 2020/South County, The Nature Conservancy, Butterfield-Riviera East Community Assn., Dry Creek Parkway/Gibson Ranch, Sacramento Valley Conservancy, American River Natural History Assn., American River Parkway Foundation, and Pathways to Recreation.

Many thanks are extended to Joey Larzalere of the GWG Advisory Committee, Betty Cooper of the Effie Yeaw Nature Center and Betsy Weiland for the special contributions to assure the event was a success.

And if you're interested in good eats and drinks, Rubicon's extensive lunch and dinner menus can be found at: **[www.rubiconbrewing.com/food.html](http://www.rubiconbrewing.com/food.html)**.

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## Options for Rescuing Regional Parks Under Study

Where organizations or areas are identified, they are provided only to inform as to area of interest.

Our Regional Parks and Open Space System totals more than 15,000 acres. It is managed by the Dept. of Regional Parks in response to and in accordance with policies, practices and funding allocations set by the Sacramento County Board of Supervisors. Just under half of the system (American River Parkway, Mather Regional Park, Dry Creek Parkway, and Gibson Ranch Regional Park) is under active management by the Regional Parks Department. The balance is leased to others.

The GWG has concluded:

- The system will need to be expanded to keep pace with population growth.
- Connectivity between the various units of our Regional Parks and Open Space System is needed to overcome the current isolation that currently exists at many units.
- Sacramento County cannot continue to rely on state, federal and nonprofit revenue to fund acquisition and development of new lands.

It is estimated that about \$11 million per year, in addition to ongoing operation and maintenance expense, will be needed to provide for acquisition of new lands, development of existing and newly acquired lands so that the public can have access to them, and to provide for maintenance of the newly developed lands.

SARA has, on behalf of the GWG,

contracted with the Trust for Public Land (TPL) to research the most viable local public options for funding parks and open space maintenance and operations and open space land conservation in Sacramento County. Four management structures and four revenue options were evaluated by TPL. Management Structure options identified were:

1. Continuation of management by the County Board of Supervisors acting through its Dept. of Regional Parks.
2. Creation of a new countywide independent regional parks and open space district with an independently elected board of directors which would assume responsibility for the care, custody and control of our Regional Parks and Open Space System.
3. Creation a new countywide dependent regional parks and open space district with the County Board of Supervisors as the board of directors.
4. Creation of a countywide community services district with an independently elected board of directors which would assume responsibility for the care, custody and control of our Regional Parks and Open Space System.

The four finance options were:

1. A County Charter Amendment to dedicate funds from existing tax revenues to our Regional Parks and Open Space System much like that which is the practice in Santa Clara County.

2. A Special Tax, in the form of a parcel tax on all lands located in Sacramento County.
3. A Special Tax, in the form of a sales tax increase on all taxable transactions within Sacramento County.
4. A countywide benefit assessment based upon the benefits received by individual properties as a result of our Regional Parks and Open Space System.

After a careful review of all options, the GWG selected the following governance options for further study:

- Formation of a new independent regional parks and open space district.
- Continuation of control by the Board of Supervisors acting through its Regional Parks District.
- One or more nonprofit organizations as partner organizations with either the county or the Independent Regional Parks and Open Space District.

With respect to financing options, the Group has selected for further study:

- A parcel tax.
- A sales tax
- A county charter amendment.

Research on and discussion of those options are ongoing. More information is available at: [www.sarariverwatch.org/grassroots.php](http://www.sarariverwatch.org/grassroots.php).

## Remembering Robert D. Burrows

*By Stephen Green*

Robert D. Burrows, a civic leader and valued member of Save the American River Association, died Dec. 15 of Parkinson's disease at age 86.

"He loved the American River and cared very much about protecting nature," said Frank Cirill, SARA president emeritus. "He was a staunch advocate to have on your side."

Burrows served on the SARA board for 12 years in the 1980s and 90s, most of the time as Treasurer. He also did a stint as Membership Chair, and represented SARA on the Lower American River Task Force and the Parkway Advisory Committee.

He lived near the river where he planted many trees and enjoyed walking his dogs, his daughter Valerie Burrows recalled. He also was an avid fly fisherman, and fished many streams in the U.S., Canada, Ireland and Germany.

**"He loved the American River and cared very much about protecting nature"**

Frank Cirill  
SARA president emeritus

The Oakland native served in Europe during World War II with an Army tank battalion. After the war, he spent most of his career in the wholesale liquor business and devoted time to civic affairs, including service on the Sacramento Convention & Visitors Bureau board.

He is survived by his wife Emma Jane whom he married in 1947. His children are Valerie of Sacramento, Sandra King of Folsom and Christopher of Fairfield. He also leaves two granddaughters and three great-grandsons.

## In Memoriam

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

### **Bill Berry**

### **Robert D. Burrows**

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.**



Rainbow Bridge over the American River in Folsom  
Photo Courtesy: Ken Brown

## In Recognition

SARA received donations in honor of the following individuals:

**Sid Inglis**

**Dennis Philippart**

**Mary Ellen and Ernest Carboni**

## Supporting Organizations

SARA thanks the following organizations for their recent donations:

**American River Raft Rental**

**Eppies Great Race Foundation**

**Granite Bay Flycasters**

**Sac Fit**

**Sacramento Bike Hikers**

**California Expo and State Fair**

## SARA to Celebrate 50 Years

By Warren V. Truitt, President

On last day of February, 2011, Save the American River Association (SARA) will have reached a milestone — our 50th Anniversary.

This will be a time for each of us to recall and honor our SARA ancestors, who set the example we strive to follow today, by carrying on as *Guardians of the American River and Parkway since 1961*. To put 50 years in perspective, John F. Kennedy took office in 1961, Americans had not yet set foot on the moon nor fought in Viet Nam, and the name Silicon Valley did not yet exist.

SARA, formed to rally the community and elected officials of the time to create, fund and maintain what today is 4,660 acres — home to a rich array of wildlife, associated habitat and diverse recreational opportunities.

The historic and magnificent American River and nationally

acclaimed American River Parkway Bike Trail each thread their way through the full length of our Parkway.

The Parkway was made possible because early SARA members took the lead, elected leaders supported the effort and, in 1972, county voters easily passed a bond measure to purchase the first 4,000 acres of the Parkway, as well as Gibson Ranch and Elk Grove Park — all for a modest \$12,500,000.

In 1978, SARA led a second successful bond measure, this one to fund the removal of several sewage plants along the Lower American River. The latter measure also established the Sacramento Regional County Sanitation District.

Early on, SARA established a reputation for vigilance and appropriate action as needed, to

protect and preserve the land and water assets of the Parkway. Fifty years later, SARA continues to serve as the lead advocacy organization for the American River and Parkway.

Along the way, SARA fought many battles to protect this magnificent asset that is the Parkway. Major efforts included a successful 20-year battle to prevent the East Bay Municipal Utility District from taking water at the Folsom South Canal, as well as the current SARA-initiated Grassroots effort to *Rescue Our Regional Parks and Open Space*.

Due to ongoing County of Sacramento budget shortfalls, the Regional Parks Department has had its budget slashed, resulting in severe cuts to staff — most significantly to rangers and maintenance personnel. Our Regional Parks, which includes the Parkway, are in crisis mode.

## Sara Annual Meeting



Chris Lewis, joined by her family, was honored with the SARA Award at our annual meeting in December for service on behalf of the American River Parkway. Chris is past president of the California Native Plant Society and founder of the Elderberry Farms Native Plant Nursery.

Photo Courtesy: Pam Lapinski

## SARA 50th Celebration

May 21, 2011, at William Pond Park

SARA will officially mark our 50<sup>th</sup> year the morning of May 21, 2011, at William Pond Park. Please mark your calendar and ask family, friends and neighbors to join with SARA members, other Parkway stakeholders and stakeholder organizations to bring their ears, eyes and voices to both celebrate the Parkway we love, as well as voice our support for it — so we do not lose it as we know it. Event details will follow in subsequent *Riverwatch* issues and will be posted on the SARA Web site at: [www.sarariverwatch.org](http://www.sarariverwatch.org).

We anticipate that there will be a large gathering of members of stakeholder groups, adjacent neighborhood associations and elected officials to demonstrate support for the Parkway and Regional Parks.

## New Building Planned in the Parkway

*By Stephen Green*

The state Dept. of Water Resources and the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation would like to construct an office building with parking and storage areas in the American River Parkway near the Nimbus Fish Hatchery.

The structure would house their Joint Operations Center which currently occupies leased space on El Camino Ave. in Sacramento.

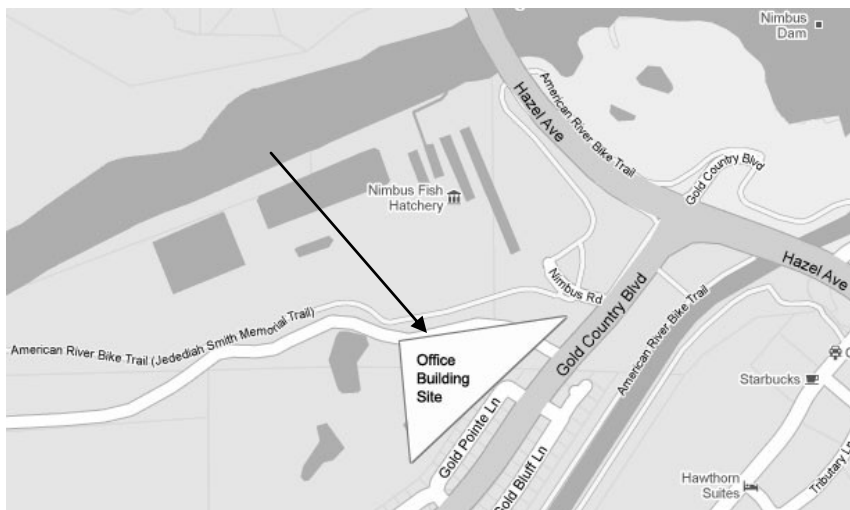
the Parkway. A decade ago, SARA President Emeritus Frank Cirill led an

**The structure would tower over the river and the Jedediah Smith National Recreation Trail.**

process and a new structure when the Sacramento region is littered with vacant office space. In the last quarter of 2010, the office vacancy rate in Sacramento County increased from 16.8 percent to 16.9 percent.

Government officials contend their current Joint Operations Center site “no longer (meets) critical requirement of both agencies” and they want to be in new quarters by the time their lease expires on June 30, 2015.

They have held two public scoping meetings for an Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report. Scoping comments are due Feb. 17. The EIS/EIR process would commence this spring.



The 18-acre site is owned by Reclamation and lies between some Gold River homes and Nimbus Drive. The structure would tower over the river and the Jedediah Smith National Recreation Trail.

Save the American River Association has fought projects that would tower over the American River Parkway in the past and will oppose this latest proposed intrusion – which would be built on

effort that blocked a proposed office complex near Lake Natoma in Orangevale.

The two government agencies also have identified an alternative site in a commercial area on Kilgore Road in Rancho Cordova. It would be much better suited to house the Joint Operations Center.

It is SARA’s position, however, that there is no reason to spend taxpayer’s money on an environmental review

**“It has always been my private conviction that any man who pits his intelligence against a fish and loses had it coming.”**

John Steinbeck

## Donations Sought for Preserve

*By Stephen Green*

The Deer Creek Hills Preserve southeast Sacramento offers recreation and tours on more than 4,000 acres of rangeland, oak woodlands, grasslands and seasonal creeks.

It is jointly owned by Sacramento County, the California Dept. of Parks & Recreation and the Sacramento Valley Conservancy. The Conservancy manages the preserve – and they need some help.

Last year, the Conservancy was able to add 375 acres of flowers, creeks and oak woodlands to the preserve. They must now raise \$4

million to retire debts and establish a permanent Stewardship Fund of \$300,000.

The Conservancy has received several grants and has more grant applications pending. But individual contributions are needed as well.

You may send a tax-deductible contribution to:

**Sacramento Valley Conservancy  
P.O. Box 163351  
Sacramento, CA 95816**

More information is available at:  
[www.sacramentovalleyconservancy.org](http://www.sacramentovalleyconservancy.org)



Deer Creek Hills Preserve

Photo Courtesy: Robert Boyer

## 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 website [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 Yaw Nature Center at Ancil Hoffman Park
- Regional Park offices and park kiosks
- American River Parkway Foundation Office at the William B. Pond Recreation Area



Save the  
American River  
Association

Guardians of the American  
River and Parkway  
since 1961.

We're on the Web!  
[www.SARAriverwatch.org](http://www.SARAriverwatch.org)

#### SARA Officers 2010

Warren Truitt	President
Clyde MacDonald	Vice President
Elke Guenter	Secretary
Alan Wade	<i>Immed. Past Pres.</i>
George Nyberg	Membership Chair

#### SARA Directors

Frank Cirill	<i>President Emeritus</i>
Bill Davis	Stephen Green
Elke Guenter	Burt Hodges
Mary Beth Metcalf	Jim Morgan
Felix Smith	

#### SARA Advisory Council

Mike Arnold	Dan Bacher
Deb Baron	Katie Baygell
Rick Bettis	Wayne Chubb
Maxine Clark	Illa Collin
Al Freitas	Guy Galante
Bill Griffith	Jane Hagedorn
Bob Hanna	Jim Jones
Tim Keenan	Gary Kukkola
Pam Lapinski	Joseph Larzalere
Dave Lydick	Ken Press
Randy Smith	Ron Stork
Ron Suter	Stephanie Taylor
Linda Villatore	Leo Winternitz

#### Volunteers & Staff

Betsy Weiland	Vol. Coordinator
Sara Stephens	Office Manager

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Email: [info@SARAriverwatch.org](mailto:info@SARAriverwatch.org)

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## 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 \_\_\_\_\_

Check, Visa or M/C welcome. Insert credit card info below or go to our secure Web site to donate.

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

\$10—\$24	Student Membership	\$25—\$49	Regular Membership
\$50 +	Supporting Membership	\$100 +	Family Membership
\$250 +	Business Membership	\$1,000 +	Sustaining Membership

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City, State & Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Visa/MC #: \_\_\_\_\_ Security Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Expires: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_