

Frank Cirill Inducted into CPRS Hall of Honor

Frank Cirill, president emeritus of Save the American River Association (SARA), was inducted into the California Parks & Recreation Society Hall of Honor at a February banquet.

Cirill, 93, held key positions in SARA through the 1970s, 80s and 90s. He still serves on the Board of Directors. During those decades, Cirill produced some of SARA's most consequential victories including the 21-year legal battle to stop diversion of the Lower American River below Nimbus Dam by the East Bay Municipal Utilities District.

At the induction, society members lauded his tireless work on behalf of the American River Parkway and his ability to recruit community leaders to assist in his advocacy efforts.

Cirill led efforts to preserve ecosystems, create dedicated open spaces, and protect wildlife habitat and water supplies. He was able to stop

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Sandhill Cranes at sunset over The Delta

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Congressional Water Bills Would Increase Damage to Fisheries and The Delta

BY STEPHEN GREEN

Again this year, bills are afloat in the U.S. Congress that would build more dams in California, "maximize" water exports from The Delta and weaken the Endangered Species Act.

Two bills getting the most attention were authored by Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., and Rep. David Valadao, R-Hanford.

Feinstein's bill, S. 2533, would order government agencies to pump water from The Delta at the maximum level whenever possible. The word "maximize" appears ten times in her bill. It also would order changes in biological opinions and court rulings that regulators rely upon to enforce the Endangered Species Act.

In essence, Feinstein's legislation would solidify water diversion practices that have been degrading The Delta environment for decades. She introduced the legislation at the behest of San Joaquin Valley growers who are major contributors to her campaigns.

Valadao's bill, H.R. 2898, contains the same maximize language but goes much further. It would order water exports from The Delta that are up to 50 percent greater than those permitted by biological opinions. Wildlife agencies would not be allowed to implement the Endangered Species Act to restrict water deliveries. In addition, new water projects would not have to comply with the Environmental Policy Act.

The bill also would allow the Secretary of Interior to authorize construction of the Temperance Flat Dam on the San Joaquin River without congressional review of the project and a cost-benefit analysis. The dam, roughly estimated to cost \$2.5 billion, would add only 100,000 acre feet to California's water supply.

"Little in either bill offers near-term water supply benefits that don't also harm some other water user," said Matt Weiser a freelance writer who

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Frank Cirill

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development of a 40-acre parking lot within the American River flood plain at CalExpo. He derailed plans to develop the Lake Natoma shoreline and a golf course at Mississippi Bar, among many other accomplishments.

He also served on the Sacramento County Parks and Recreation Commission, founded the Lake Natoma Community Task Force and helped guide the updates of the American River Parkway Plan.

The Parkway would not be the tremendous regional asset that it is today if it had not been for the thousands of hours Cirill spent working for its enhancement, said Charlie Willard who once served

“There are two types of people in this world, people who make things happen and people who wait for things to happen ... don't ever wait.”

on the SARA board. “He is truly an inspirational leader,” Willard added.

One speaker noted that Cirill often told his children: “There are two types of people in this world, people who make things happen and people who wait for things to happen ... don't ever wait.” ■

Water Bills

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formerly covered water issues for the Sacramento Bee.

The drought's impact in California would have been less severe, Weiser added, if elected representatives had promoted legislation to initiate “groundwater recharge, water conservation on farms, storm water capture and wastewater recycling.”

Valadao also is sponsoring H.R. 4366, the San Luis Unit Drainage Resolution Act. The bill authorizes a settlement agreement between the Obama Administration and the Westlands Water District that would end the long-running dispute over toxic irrigation runoff that caused the 1983 environmental disaster in Merced County at the Kesterson National Wildlife Reserve.

The U.S. Dept. of Interior would no longer have liability for managing drainage water from 600,000 acres of San Joaquin Valley cropland farmed by Westlands growers. Westlands would be relieved of \$375 million owed for construction of the 1960s extension of the Central Valley Project that serves their farmers. Westlands would agree to retire 100,000 acres of land laden with toxic chemicals, including selenium, where the water runoff causes severe pollution. Much of the land already has been retired. Interior previously had said 300,000 acres must be taken out of production.

Westlands would take responsibility for eliminating toxic runoff from their lands. But the agreement has no timeline for accomplishing that and no enforcement mechanism such as cutting off water supplies if Westlands



SARA president emeritus Frank Cirill and former SARA Board of Directors member Charlie Willard

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Water Bills

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fails to act. Westlands also would get an indefinite supply contract for subsidized water rather than one that has to be renewed every two years.

Critics contend Interior Department officials secretly forged the agreement with Westlands.

Four Northern California members of Congress are challenging the agreement. Reps. Doris Matsui, D-Sacramento, Jared Huffman, D-San Rafael, Mike Thompson, D-St. Helena, and Mark DeSaulnier, D-Concord, have released a report by the Congressional Research Service that outlines numerous shortcomings in the agreement. The lawmakers also wrote Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Gina McCarthy urging her to review the settlement. And they have asked the House Natural Resources Committee to conduct a hearing.

Retired U.S. Fish & Game biologist Felix Smith is a member of Save the American River Association's Board of Directors. Westland growers "have been milking the Central Valley Project managers for all the water and special privileges they can get," Smith said. "These farmers apparently believe that the water that flows through The Delta and San Francisco Bay to the Pacific Ocean is wasted."

They are "the same folks that Brought us the selenium contaminated Kesterson National Wildlife Reserve and thousands upon thousands of migratory bird deaths, poisoned by a toxic food chain," Smith said. "I was there. I saw the dead and deformed birds. These are the same people who brought us polluted ground water denying the poorest of Californians potable drinking water. They are the ones primarily responsible for the demise of the Central Valley's once famous Chinook salmon runs and poor water quality in the San Joaquin River and the southern Delta."

He noted that Westlands serves more than 1,000 square miles of arid land in western Fresno and Kings Counties. Their operations consume 1.5 times the volume of water needed to serve Los Angeles. Since the drought hit in 2012, Westlands farmers have added more than 18,000 acres of nut trees which require large amounts of water.

"The federal government should buy out or condemn the vast major of Westlands lands," Smith concluded, "that contribute selenium drainage and runoff that exacerbates the irrigation, drainage and land-use problems on the West Side of the San Joaquin Valley." ■

State Water Board, EPA Sued Again

Three environment organizations have sued state and federal regulators, claiming they have repeatedly allowed reductions in minimum flow and oxygen standards in the San Joaquin River as it flows to The Delta.

That has resulted in devastating losses of threatened fish species, chiefly fall-run Chinook Salmon and Delta Smelt, the suit contends. Repeated reductions were made by the California Water Resources Control Board in order to supply more water to upstream farms and cities during the drought.

The U.S. Environmental Protection also was named in the suit since they should have stepped in and stopped the state board from violating the Clean Water Act, the plaintiffs contend.

The suit was filed in April in U.S. District Court in San Francisco by the Natural Resources Defense Council, The Bay Institute and Defenders of Wildlife. ■

Feinstein's legislation would solidify water diversion practices that have been degrading The Delta environment for decades.

Sacramento County Joins Plastic Bag Ban

Save the American River Association (SARA) was part of the coalition that persuaded the Sacramento County Board of Supervisors to approve an ordinance banning throwaway plastic bags given out by grocery stores, large pharmacies and convenience stores in unincorporated areas of the county.

The ban takes effect July 1.

The vote by the supervisors was 4-1 in favor of the ban. Supervisor Susan Peters was the one "No" vote.

Shoppers will have the option of bringing their reusable bags or paying ten cents for a recyclable paper bag.

Bag bans already are in place in 147 other cities and counties in California, including the City of Sacramento. An estimated 500,000 plastic bags are put in circulation in unincorporated areas of Sacramento County each day, according to Supervisor Phil Serna who sponsored the ordinance. The county spends

\$200,000 yearly dealing with plastic bag residue.

Plastic bags are a common site on the American River Parkway and the Nimbus and Folsom Dam reservoirs. Bits of plastic infiltrate the food chain and are ingested by fish, turtles, otters and beavers. Birds mistake plastic pieces for food, or swallow plastic while feeding on dead fish. Sharp edges can fatally puncture internal organs. If a bird's gut fills with plastic, it will starve to death.

In 2014, SARA was part of the coalition that successfully passed statewide legislation banning single-use plastic bags despite fierce opposition from lobbyists hired by bag makers in Texas, South Carolina and New Jersey.



The manufacturers then spent \$3 million to gather enough signatures to place a referendum on the November statewide ballot asking voters to overturn the law. We can expect millions more to be spent on ads promoting the referendum. But even if the referendum is approved, the local bans will stay in place. ■

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

The county spends \$200,000 yearly dealing with plastic bag residue.

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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:

Robert Feagans

Jack Sohl

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. ■

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! ■

*"Who hears the
fishes when
they cry?"*

HENRY DAVID THOREAU
WHO HAD OBSERVED DAM
CONSTRUCTION ON THE
CONCORD RIVER IN 1839

Define "Park"

BY DAN WINKELMAN
SARA DIRECTOR; RETIRED PARK RANGER

A few months ago, I heard a radio talk show host say that the most successful park in California is Disneyland. My lifetime of sensibilities towards parks felt shredded by the remark. How could anyone confuse an amusement park with the concepts that gave us our treasured public parks?

As I listened to the show, it became clear that the commentator had gathered park concessionaires for a look at their wares. They had a financial objectivity deemed necessary to save parks from financial ruin caused by government bureaucracy. There was no concern for the concepts of preservation and protection that justified the creation of our magnificent parks over the past 150 years.

How do we make a distinction between an amusement or theme park and what we have traditionally known as parks? Land for parks is chosen based on the assessment of qualities that represent cultural or natural history worthy of preservation. Once preserved, park land and structures are protected from abuse and decay for the enjoyment of generations of visitors. Park staff has the objective of helping visitors find a sense of the real that has been lost in the everyday detached reality of life they must face.

Theme parks in contrast focus on presenting a fantasy that takes us away from reality without considering the need to touch the whole person. No relatable identity is present; it is merely an escape for people who are willing to pay a large sum to have a moment's pleasure. Nothing wrong with that, but it is not worthy of support from our tax dollar nor should it be allowed in our parks.

Let's be suspect of those who offer to save parks by offering amusement activities for financial gain. The money sphere often is a distortion of park values. Those who drink from the money sphere will tell you of the pleasure received while insisting that it isn't being too mischievous.

Beware of all attempts to turn our eyes away from what is our American River Parkway heritage. Demand action to stop special events that are an inappropriate use, recreation facilities that overwhelm natural park features, recreation activities that provide mainly amusement and are a distraction from what the park offers, and agreements that benefit concessionaires but detract from the real purpose of the parkway. Let's all be good stewards of our American River Parkway. SARA is here to help you achieve this goal. ■

Mule Deer Grace the Parkway

Large herds of Mule Deer once browsed the Central Valley. But hunting, urbanization and agricultural practices dramatically reduced their numbers and forced the remaining deer to seek shelter in the remaining riparian areas and the foothills.

The American River Parkway became a major haunt for deer remaining in the valley – and they are thriving. The Parkway is home to one of six subspecies of Mule Deer (*Odocoileus hemionus californicus*) and they are the largest mammals found there. They get their name from their large (mule-like) ears.

Muleys are the largest deer species. A buck can measure up to 42 inches at the shoulder. They can be seven feet from nose to tail and weigh up to 330 pounds. Healthy deer tend to live 12-15 years.

Bucks have a set of branching antlers. Each side will have two main beams and each beam forks into two tines. Age, nutrition and genetics determine the number of forks. Bucks shed their antlers any time from late January to mid-March. It's rare for a buck to shed both antlers on the same day. The new antlers start to grow almost immediately. They are soft and are wrapped in a brown, velvety material that provides a constant supply of blood as they grow. Full growth occurs around mid-to-late August. As the antlers mature, they harden and the bucks begin to rub off the velvet on trees or bushes.



Mule Deer

The bucks tend to be in rut from late October to late December. One buck can mate with many does and the gestation period is about 200 days. Younger does usually give birth in late spring or early summer to just one fawn. Older does often have two fawns and, on rare occasions, there will be triplets. Fawns are weaned after about 60-75 days and stay with their mothers during their first year. They become sexually mature after 18 months.

The Parkway provides an abundance of nutritious grasses and forbs for these beautiful animals to browse. They especially like tender shoots and young shrubs and leaves. But they also can eat bark, buds and acorns. Most of their foraging occurs around dawn and dusk. But residences along the Parkway also offer succulent feeding after dark. Rose bushes and vegetable gardens are among their favorite browse.

One Fair Oaks couple tried to grow vegetables during their first three years of residence next to the Parkway. But the deer cleaned out their garden each year. The last year, they set out 36 tomato plants and thought that would provide enough tomatoes for the deer and themselves. The deer got every tomato. ■

*The Parkway is home to one of six subspecies of Mule Deer (*Odocoileus hemionus californicus*) and they are the largest mammals found there.*



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