

Funds to Restore Watersheds Have Been Diverted

Five watersheds, including the Upper American River, feed Northern California's primary reservoirs. They generate water for 25 million people, eight million acres of irrigated farmland and 85 percent of the water flowing to San Francisco Bay.

Yet those watersheds are in decline because of climate change, drought, decreased snowpack, wildfires, development and toxic runoff from pot farms.

The U.S. Forest Service released a report in December concluding there are now 129 million dead trees on 8.9 million acres in California. Flows from the watersheds also are warmer which threatens cold-water fisheries.

"California watersheds serve as this state's natural infrastructure," said Assembly Member Richard Bloom, D-Santa Monica. "Restoring and conserving these watersheds is therefore essential to improving water security and reliability. Bloom authored AB 2480 which was signed into law in September 2016. It established that watersheds are an essential and integral part of California's water infrastructure and are eligible for the same types of financing as other water infrastructure such as dams, canals and levees.

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River otters. Photo by George Nyberg

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A Yes Vote on Proposition 68 is a Vote for the Lower American River

BY STEPHEN GREEN

Proposition 68 – the Clean Water and Safe Parks Act on the June 5 statewide ballot – allocates \$10 million for the Lower American River, its tributaries and the Parkway.

Proposition 68 authorizes \$4 billion in general obligation bonds that invest in coming years to address some of California's most important water, park and natural resources needs.

Save the American River Association worked with a coalition of organizations, including the California Chamber of Commerce, to develop the Act. It had strong bipartisan support as it went through the Legislature and was signed by Gov. Jerry Brown.

Most lawmakers recognized that California faces growing challenges to our water supplies and natural resources. A changing climate has put our water supplies more and more in jeopardy as we face increasingly intense wildfires, droughts and floods. Much of the state's aging water infrastructure is in poor repair and there have been limited expenditures in recent years to maintain parks and restore natural resources.

Among the priorities for Proposition 68 funds are:

- Protection of natural areas, including funding for state conservancies, protection of rivers, lakes and streams, and funds for fish and wildlife habitat.
- Projects to clean up and protect drinking water, local water capture and recycling.
- Helping communities that lack clean water.
- Restoring groundwater reserves and groundwater cleanup.
- Preparing for the next drought.
- Improving the safety and quality of our state and neighborhood parks.
- Establishing and upgrading neighborhood parks in areas that currently are underserved.
- Wildfire and flood protection, including watershed protection in the upper Sierra Nevada and Cascade Mountain Ranges
- Forest restoration and fire protection.

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Proposition 68

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- Creation of open green space.
- Projects on farms and ranches that sequester carbon, improve habitat, reduce development pressures, and increase water retention and absorption.
- Protection and increased access to the coast.
- Community conservation projects.

The American River funds would be administered by the Lower American River Conservancy program. Grants would be available to improve access to the Parkway and River, improve and expand trails, restore habitat and creek diversions, remove invasive plants and protect natural areas where fish spawn and wildlife live.

The Lower American River Conservancy program was created in 2016 by legislation sponsored by Assembly Members Kevin McCarty and Ken Cooley, and Senator Richard Pan. It extends 22 miles from Nimbus Dam to the Lower American's confluence with the Sacramento River. An advisory committee composed of local-elected officials, representatives of state agencies and three public members will review applications for funding.

Grants would be available to improve access to the Parkway and River, improve and expand trails, restore habitat and creek diversions, remove invasive plants and protect natural areas where fish spawn and wildlife live.

The Act also would provide funding for eight other conservancies including the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Conservancy and the Sierra Nevada Conservancy.

The Act prohibits the use of funds for design, construction or maintenance of Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta conveyance facilities.

For more information, go to yes68ca.com. ■

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:	\$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 American River Parkway Foundation Web site <http://arpf.org/visit/>
- 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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Watersheds

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"This simple statutory change will increase the amount of financing that watershed projects can tap into and also will unlock access to federal financing programs," Bloom said.

Projects would include clearing dense brush and dead trees in fire-prone areas, reforesting burned areas, planting more trees along waterways, removing invasive plants and restoring habitat where mudslides have occurred, among others.

To date, however, money that could have been spent to restore and rejuvenate California watersheds has been diverted to fight wildfires statewide. Blazes in Northern California last year killed 44 people and produced \$9.5 billion in insurance claims. Southern California wildfires last December resulted in another \$2.1 billion in claims and claims are still coming in from mudslides in burned out landscapes.

The federal government spent more than \$2.7 billion fighting fires in 2017.

In January, the Congress agreed to increase the U.S. Forest Service budget by \$2 billion per year so that the agency can focus more money on preventing wildfires. But at the insistence of House Speaker Paul Ryan, R-Wisconsin, that more won't kick in until 2020.

Ryan, who gives little credence to the problems being caused by climate change, contends that the U.S. Forest Service has adequate resources for the work it does.

The Congress, however, did approve an additional \$500 million for fighting fires this year and another \$40 million for forest management. ■

Climate Change Warnings Were Made As Early as 1800

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Scott Pruitt and other climate change deniers would have us believe that human activity has little or no impact on the earth's environment.

Yet scientists have been documenting that phenomenon since 1800. In that year, German naturalist and polymath Alexander von Humboldt was on a scientific expedition in South America when he entered the Aragua Valley in what is now Northern Venezuela. The valley was one of the most productive agricultural areas in the colonies. And Humboldt was greatly disturbed by what he saw there.

Long-term changes in climate would occur, he projected, as humans continue to destroy forests, irrigate "ruthlessly" and release "great masses of steam and gas" in industrial centers.

Forests had been cleared to make way for croplands. Streams had been diverted to fields. And the water level at Lake Valencia at the base of the valley was dropping precipitously. Humboldt measured, examined and questioned. And concluded: "The wooded region acts in a threefold manner in diminishing the temperature, by cooling shade, by evaporation and by radiation." The effects of the human intervention were



Alexander von Humboldt

already "incalculable," he insisted, and could become catastrophic if people continued to disturb the world so "brutally."

Humboldt, who was then 31-years-old, would spend the next 59 years of his life documenting the impacts of human activity in Europe, Asia and the Americas. Long-term changes in climate would occur, he projected, as humans continue to destroy forests, irrigate "ruthlessly" and release "great masses of steam and gas" in industrial centers.

As his work progressed, Humboldt became the most esteemed scientist in his age and influenced the work of many generations of scientists to come.

In the Americas, Humboldt's name was given to towns, parks, bays, lakes, mountains, a river, a Pacific Ocean current and a county on California's North Coast. ■

Howard R. Leach: Last of the Significant Seven

BY WARREN V. TRUITT

In 1961, the people of Sacramento County were indeed fortunate to have among them seven tenacious, forward thinking and unselfish citizens. These seven individuals were the original members of the Save the American River Association (SARA) board of directors.

One of those significant seven was Howard R. Leach, a native of Fresno and graduate of Fresno State University with a BS degree in biology. For several years prior to his passing in February of this year, Howard was the last living member of the initial seven SARA directors. Howard attended several consecutive SARA Annual Meetings in the early 2000s and was honored by the 2008 SARA Board of Directors. He was presented with a beautiful framed photo of the American River Parkway as a thank you for his leadership in the creation and preservation of this beautiful river parkway, for perpetual enjoyment by the citizens of the greater Sacramento region, and beyond.

Howard was a man of adventure. While serving as a bombardier, on the B-17 *Dixie Delight*, with the *Bloody 100th* bomb group of the Eighth Air Force during World War II, Howard's B-17 *Flying Fortress* was shot down while on a bombing run over Berlin in February 1945. After successfully bailing out of their doomed aircraft, Howard & his eight crewmates were subsequently captured and held in a German POW camp until the end of the war in Europe.

After his release and return from Europe in the summer of 1945, Howard and his wife Barbara ultimately relocated to Sacramento after Howard began a career with the California State Department of Fish & Game (CDFG), where he became a highly respected Wildlife Biologist. Highlights of Howard's career included a significant role in the 1970 formation of the California Endangered Species Act, as well as the establishment of the 1973 Federal Endangered Species Act.

Howard managed the Nongame Program

at CDFG, which is today known as CA Department of Fish & Wildlife – a name change much appreciated by Howard and other nongame staff. Receiving adequate attention for the nongame side of CDFG was difficult. But Howard, well respected by his superiors and staff alike, was able to secure long-term funding for research and monitoring to keep this area of CDFG alive and well.

Despite his important responsibilities at CDFG, Howard also became fully involved in the forming of the Save the



Howard R. Leach

American River Association. The efforts of the significant seven and the subsequent rallying of the greater Sacramento community ultimately resulted in the gift to the community of the American River Parkway, by means of a successful bond effort. It was Howard who SARA's original board secretary, Effie Yeaw, asked to go with her to visit the 1961 Sacramento County Board of Supervisors to challenge them to keep their promise to create a Parkway along the Lower American River. That visit got the supervisors attention and ultimately resulted in the successful SARA-sponsored 1972 bond ballot

measure that funded the original purchase of lands along the Lower American River, including providing initial funding for the popular Jedediah Smith American River Class A bike trail – which today runs the 31-mile length of the Lower American River between Beals Point at Folsom Lake and the confluence of the American with the Sacramento River.

Howard always was about adventure and being out in the wilderness. He loved taking family and friends on outdoor trips, which included camping, hunting, fishing, trapping and hiking. He loved to tell stories about those adventures. Howard also was a Boy Scout leader and led many scout troops over the years. Howard likely would never fess up to it, but he was an important influence on others who joined the effort to create the American River Parkway.

Howard was definitely a giver and many a family member, friend or acquaintance enjoyed the experience of Howard's first-hand energy and enthusiasm for the outdoors. It was infectious and fun to be with Howard in the outdoors. Appropriately, in the 1960s, Howard was recognized and honored with the American Motors Award for his outstanding contribution to wildlife conservation.

The SARA pioneer leaders organized Lower American River raft trips in 1961-62 to build enthusiasm and rally the support of Sacramento County citizens for the Parkway dream. It quickly became a community effort with citizens from all walks of life joining in. Of course, Howard was one of the float trip organizers and his raft was likely a fun one to be in. SARA was so very fortunate to have the Significant Seven launch our organization. Howard's passing closes that chapter but his energy, joy and enthusiasm for the outdoors lives on and serves as a reminder that we current Parkway stakeholders owe a debt of gratitude to Howard and his fellow pioneer board members for taking on the this amazing project. Long Live Howard Leach and the American River Parkway!



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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:

Howard Leach

Tom Rosenberg

Frank Cirill

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.

The money is used to further SARA's advocacy work on behalf of the Parkway. Contributions may be made by check or online via SARA's website.

SARA also has a Legacy program. For information on the program, please call the SARA office (916) 936-4555. ■

*Energy and
persistence conquer
all things.*

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

Hinkle Creek Work Group Receives Bud Davies Community Preservation Award

The Heritage Preservation League of Folsom presented the Hinkle Creek Work Group with the Bud Davies Community Preservation Award at a meeting of the group held March 26, 2018 at the Veterans' Hall in Folsom. Pictured at right is the Hinkle Creek Work Group receiving the Award presented by Beth Kelly, President of the Heritage Preservation League of Folsom.

Congratulations to the Hinkle Creek Work Group. Recognition well deserved. SARA is very proud to be a part of this extraordinary effort to save the historic, cultural and natural gem that is the Hinkle Creek Nature Area. ■



From left to right: Roger Butcher, John Combs, Beth Kelly, Sharon Kindel and Fred Kindel.

State Government Must Rescue Recycling Centers

Across California, recycling centers for beverage cans and bottles have been closing down as prices for scrap metal, glass and plastic have plummeted in response to a glut of waste and energy costs for recycling.

People have to travel farther to find a recycling center and there simply aren't any in many rural areas of the state. As a result, anywhere from 2 million to 3.5 million

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bottles and cans are being littered or sent to landfills every day according to various estimates. No meaningful research efforts are underway determine the actual amounts.

Deposits that consumers pay go the state Dept. of Resources Recycling and Recovery or CalRecycle. Deposits that don't get redeemed are supposed to be given as a subsidy to recyclers when

prices for scrap metal, glass and plastic hit rock bottom. But that hasn't been happening. Some of the unredeemed money has been held in reserve by the state or diverted to other state programs.

Both Gov. Jerry Brown and legislators have said they are working on developing a comprehensive reform of the state 30-year-old recycling program. But no legislation to do that has gotten out of the Legislature in recent years.

Until the state revamps the recycling program, advocates say recycling centers will continue to struggle and close — leaving fewer options for the many people — especially homeless people — who rely on them for income. And more and more beverage cans and bottles will be littering California's landscapes and piling up in landfills. ■



Western Pond Turtles Are a Species of Special Concern

The only remaining native freshwater turtle species in California is the Western Pond Turtle *Actinemys marmorata*.

They range up to 8.5 inches in length with a dark brown, olive brown or even blackish carapace (shell), and can be seen basking on partially submerged logs or rocks in ponds in and adjacent to the American River. If people or predators come by, they quickly slide into water and paddle for cover with their rear feet.

The turtles were once found from British Columbia to Baja California and west of the Sierra Nevada and Cascade Mountain Ranges. But populations have declined in northern and southern habitats. They are still plentiful in the Bay Area and Central Valley, and there are isolated populations in the Truckee and Carson Rivers in Nevada, the East Walker River and Mojave River in California, and near Susanville. The California Dept. of Fish & Wildlife lists Western Pond Turtle as a Species of Special Concern. In Washington State, they've been declared endangered.

Scientists attribute the population decline to habitat loss, shell disease often linked to invasive plants, and bullfrogs and largemouth bass that prey on hatchlings.

They also are threatened by the invasive Red-eared Slider Turtles which outgrow and compete with Western Pond Turtles for food, egg-laying sites and basking sites. Red-eared Sliders also are a vector of disease and can transmit parasites to native animals and the bacteria *Salmonella* to humans. Red-eared Sliders are natives of the Mississippi Valley. They also extend into West Virginia and westward to eastern New Mexico. They are a popular pet and have been shipped throughout North America and to other continents. Some manage to escape and many others are released after being kept as a pet for a time.

Western Pond Turtles eat aquatic plants, invertebrates, worms, frog and salamander eggs and larvae, carrion, and occasionally small frogs and fish.

Adults don't mate until they are eight-to-ten-years old, and sometimes longer. Mating occurs in April and

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May, and or earlier in warmer areas. Come summer, females climb onto land to dig a nest, usually along stream or pond margins, where they lay a clutch of three-to-11 eggs. Some lay two clutches in a year while others lay eggs every other year.

Scientists recently were surprised to learn that freshwater Western Pond Turtles were living in the brackish, high-salinity water of the Suisun Marsh – and seem to be thriving. Fish & Wildlife biologists have now partnered with colleagues from the University of California, Davis, and the Dept. of Water Resources for a long-term study to better understand the aquatic reptiles.

The turtles sometimes leave the water in search of food, more water or to lay their eggs. Some can travel up to 100 yards. Scientists ask people not to pick up a turtle when they see it walking on land. They most likely are not sick and should be left to go about their business. ■



Western Pond Turtles



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