

RIVERWATCH

VOLUME 48, ISSUE 1

SAVE THE AMERICAN RIVER ASSOCIATION, INC.
ORGANIZED AND INCORPORATED MARCH, 1961

SPRING - 2009

SARA Annual Meeting

by Warren Truitt, President

Keeping with a tradition begun in 2004, *SARA's* 2008 Annual Meeting was held at the Effie Yeaw Nature Center, on December 6, 2008. The first Saturday in December has become a special day at the Nature Center. In addition to the *SARA* event, the Nature Center holds its Annual Sale and the birders do their annual count. Annual Meeting attendees are thus able to also shop for Christmas gifts, and *SARA* feeds the birders as well.

President Warren Truitt thanked the 120+ attendees for coming out on a crisp Fall morning to catch-up with other Parkway stakeholders, hear a brief recap of *SARA's* 2008 activities and accomplishments, and to honor *SARA* pioneers for their distinguished service to the American River and Parkway.

Warren reported that *SARA* more than doubled its membership base over the last 3 years, partially due to a very generous match offer by *SARA* members who wish to remain anonymous. Qualifying new member contributions received between October, 2007 and October, 2008 were matched 100%.

SARA's 2008 activities included regular participation at American River Parkway Coalition, Water Forum, Environmental Caucus, Natural Resources Management Plan, Environmental Caucus of Sacramento, Habitat 20/20, American River Natural History Association, Lower American River Task Force and American River Parkway Joint Power Authority Steering Committee sessions.

In addition, *SARA* Immediate Past President Alan Wade, and *SARA* member Steve Green, have taken the lead challenging the City of Folsom and the California State Regional Water Quality Control Board regarding negative consequences associated with the opening up of, and soil removal from, a former city landfill immediately adjacent to Lake Natoma.

Board member Felix Smith and Advisory Council member Leo Winternitz represent *SARA* at Water Forum sessions and deal with issues ranging from the Delta, to flow and temperature standards in the American. Other *SARA* leadership, including Jim Jones and Betsy Weiland, regularly attend these sessions as well.

SARA had a booth at the Earth Day, Salmon Festival and SacFit Half Marathon events, plus provided volunteer support at the Half Marathon. As a thank you, SacFit

made a very generous donation to *SARA*. NOTE: If you would like to be a *SARA* volunteer at the 2009 SacFit Half Marathon - to be held on Saturday, May 2, 2009, please contact *SARA* Board member Tim Keenan at the following e-mail address: tim.keenan@comcast.net.

SARA, along with our Parkway Coalition partners, sponsored the August welcoming session – also held at the Nature Center – for new Director of County Parks, Janet Baker. The attendance, food and energy were all exceptional.

SARA welcomed two new Board members in 2008: George Nyberg and Tim Keenan, replacing former Board members Deborah Baron and Wayne Chubb, both of whom remain on the *SARA* Advisory Council. Kevin Regan, *SARA* Vice-President, reluctantly resigned from the Board for personal reasons, and will be sorely missed. Kevin was the voice of reason and integrity, and supported *SARA* in many ways, including attending the American River Parkway Plan Update Citizen's Advisory Committee (UCAC) sessions and representing *SARA* on the Water Forum.

The highlight of the day was the presentation of awards. Elmer Aldrich and Felix Smith were honored for exceptional long-term service to the American River and Parkway, and were each presented with a *SARA Award*. Each award is a unique handcrafted ceramic salmon, brightly painted and fired by local artist Stephanie Taylor, and mounted on a beautiful walnut base shaped in a subtle wave. The base was created by Dr. Fred Weiland.

SARA also honored Howard Leach, the only surviving member from the original (1961) *SARA* Board. The original *SARA* Board had only 7 members and included: Jim Mullaney, President; Effie Yeaw; Secretary, Guy Fairchild; Orrin Finch; Bruce Swinehart; Forrest Boucher, and; Howard Leach. Howard was presented with a large, wood-framed Guy Galante photo of a beautiful Parkway scene.

The attached plate read, Thank You Howard, *SARA* 2008. Each of these men have made, and continue to make, significant contributions as Guardians of the American River and Parkway since 1961.



SARA: Guardians of the American River & Parkway since 1961
www.sarariverwatch.org

Editor's Comments - Elke Guenter, Editor

In these uncertain and troubling economic times it would behoove us more than ever to contemplate the many riches that Mother Nature bestows upon us.

I've always felt especially fortunate to be living in the greater Sacramento area. We are especially blessed to have the American River Parkway right in our backyard. One of my favorite resources for the Parkway is ***Biking and Hiking the American River Parkway***. This wonderful little book can be purchased at the Effie Yeaw Nature Center as well as local bookstores.

The month of April is synonymous with the blooming of the vernal pools at Mather Field. These absolute gems are the result of millions of years of geology and evolution and are exceptional examples of a rare wetland ecosystem unique to California. More information can be obtained by calling 916-364-2437 or visiting www.sacvalleycnps.org.

One of my very favorite springtime places to visit is the South Yuba River State Park on Pleasant Valley Road in Penn Valley. Between now and approximately the middle of May, this relatively new state park offers a spectacular explosion of wildflowers, primarily along an easy 1 ½ mile out and back trail high above the Yuba River whose deep turquoise waters can be seen and heard crashing over massive granite boulders. And my absolutely favorite time during this ever-changing display of wildflowers is when the hillsides are ablaze with purple lupines and California poppies — truly a feast for the eyes and soul!!!

American Mail Service, highly recommended by Print Tech, our printing service, has agreed to provide our mailing service in sending out the Riverwatch.

The address for American Mail Service is:
8353 Demetre Ave., Sacramento, CA 95828-0920
Phone: 916-381-6647 - Fax: 916-381-1342

Please contact American Mail Service if you need help with your mailing needs. Type in *American Mail Service* on Google and learn about all the services they provide.

Print Tech, located at 8605 Folsom Blvd. (near the South Watt & Folsom Blvd. intersection in Sacramento), has provided excellent printing service to SARA for over 10 years. They have been totally responsive to our needs and very prompt as well as helpful with suggestions.

Anyone looking for a reliable firm to do their printing will do well to call Print Tech, at 916-388-5618. SARA extends much appreciation to Print Tech and American Mail Service.

PHOTOS FROM 2008 ANNUAL MEETING



Kevin Regan and Burt Hodges



Warren Truitt and Howard Leach



Warren Truitt and Howard Leach

Folsom Clean Closure

by Alan Wade

The City of Folsom wants to build a four story hotel on three acres of their old city sewer plant, dump, and corporation yard. The hotel is planned as part of a development scheme, which would include expansion into the generally wild and undeveloped area along the shores of Lake Natoma, currently controlled by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation and operated as part of the State Park system. To accommodate the plan, the city had to clean up a small part (3.2 acres) of the 19 acre site. The so-called "clean closure" was supported by a permit from the Regional Water Quality Control Board, issued July 31, 2008, which SARA opposed.

The clean-up consisted of deep excavation of a site that has been used as a landfill (dump site, both authorized and illegal) for perhaps as long as 150 years. Layer upon layer of refuse in varying stages of decomposition have been covered for a decade or more by a clay cap, under which a total of nineteen toxic substances have been identified so far.

While it might seem strange that we would oppose cleaning us such a huge mess next to and just above the shores of Lake Natoma, we stated and still believe that opening up this site last fall, well into the rainy season, carried the potential for serious harm to the Lower American River. An estimated 73,000 cubic yards of soil and waste material had to be unearthed, sorted, contained, covered, and/or removed from the site before completion of the project.

OUR APPEAL HAS BEEN REJECTED.

S A R A
insisted
in its
petition

of appeal to the State Board, and in our more recent complaint to the California Environmental Protection Agency, that the burden of proof rested with Folsom as the discharger and with the Regional Board as permitting agency to show that the planned action would not endanger an already over-stressed and fragile eco-system, to say nothing of the water supply for a major metropolitan area.

Our appeal has been rejected. The Regional Board continues to deny the validity of our concerns, allowing the project to go on with the assurance that numerous "Waste Discharge Requirements" (WDR's) would prevent damage. Regional Board staff agrees that toxic agents are present, but claims that they are present in amounts too small to threaten public health or the environment. On the day before Thanksgiving, during one of the first light rains of the year, five SARA members met with two Water Board staff engineers sent by headquarters to reassure us. This event occurred because the Board had got wind of our plan to hold a press conference at the site.

Board staff members have assured SARA that they will increase their efforts to monitor the clean-up. We remain skeptical, but have continued conversations with Board staff to ensure to the extent possible that the WDR's are observed. A dry winter thus far may have worked in favor of the project, which is now covered with black plastic. Immediate neighbors at the site also continue to express their concerns. Independent testing of the river waters—an expensive proposition—may be required in the future.

It should be kept in mind that the current project includes only a small portion of the site, which encroaches on Federal lands. At the other end of the site, just above State Park land and the bike trail and right next to the Folsom neighborhood on Young Wo Circle, the VFW Hall and the city Corporation Yard raise additional concerns.

Data obtained from Public Records Act requests indicate that both of these active sites lack sewer connections. We have given our data to Water Board staff, and so far, have received no satisfaction.

We are considering follow-up options. The threat to the river from these sites is palpable and real. We have the additional concern that the Water Board is more interested in protecting the City of Folsom than it is in protecting the public from untreated raw sewage in a major drinking water source.

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SAVE THE AMERICAN RIVER ASSN., INC.
P.O. BOX 277638
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Those who contemplate the
beauty of the earth
find reserves of strength
that will endure
as long as life lasts.

Rachel Carson

Erlewine Elementary School Children Help in Preserving the Parkway

by Tim Keenan

From O.W. Erlewine Elementary School, my children can see SARA Park as we walk along the school's Nature Area in the morning, heading in to class. Sometimes, on the way home from school, we take the long way – the kids' favorite – and they take a dip in the American River's edge, skipping stones, hunting clams, tadpoles & water bugs, or watching a heron hunting dinner. Other times we pause to see a flicker in the school's forest, or watch in rapt amazement at jumping oak leaf galls on a hot summer sidewalk beneath a native oak. Occasionally we'll take the route near the playfield, and watch as 50 geese feed in the lawn or a pair of red-shouldered hawks perch from the ball diamond's backstop, hunting under cover of early morning fog.

Growing up on a Midwestern farm, it was the wild places my heart most remembers, so I moved to be close to the American River when I chose to start my own family in Northern California. Having the amazing biological gem in my neighborhood meant I could teach my children firsthand about the skunks, racoons, possums, and beaver such as those I'd grown up with, but also salmon, striped bass, whooping cranes and wood ducks that were only in storybooks and movies of my youth.

As my kids prepared to enter first & second grade last April, I suggested during the school site council that we needed an "ecology club," and another river-lover who came from around the globe to settle here – Ted Dang – volunteered me to spearhead it. Having led for 4-H and the Sierra Club and taught pre-school, I launched with gusto into the effort, and with this my path crossed with Warren Truitt, President of Save the American River Association, (SARA).

As we gathered several interested parents together from the neighborhood to teach our "Eco-Club," I received word through the College Greens East Homeowners Association that "our" precious greenspace at Rio Bravo Circle on the American River Parkway levee was being targeted by the Sacramento Area Flood Control Agency (SAFCA) for an access ramp. During one meeting I learned that SARA Park was also on SAFCA's list for access points. By accessing SARA's website, I connected with Warren who provided vital information and guidance as our Homeowners Association strategized to protect our greenspace and neighborhood.

Interest in the ecology club and the American River Parkway issues grew tremendously over the summer of 2008, and all agreed that the river and parkway are an incredible resource for teaching our children and enriching their lives. The fact that "SARA Park" was where the American River Parkway began, with the donation of the first 7 acres by SARA to County Parks almost five decades ago, was often a huge revelation for adults and children alike, and I became aware that our local history was disappearing before our eyes.

Yet those people who had some inkling of the historical and social importance of what took place in our back yards often pointed in a common direction – Bill Griffith. Meeting this crusty River Rat was a turning point for our eco club. Bill resides just a few doors from our school, appropriately enough on Rogue River Drive. This retired biologist became an inspiration for the shaping of our fledgling club at OW Erlewine Elementary. As a retired biologist for the State, he became a resource for learning of the ecological vitality of our stretch of the American. As an athlete, he demonstrated the importance of outdoor recreation as a means to a long and vital life. As an activist and SARA Board member, he reinforced the fact that involvement in social and political process *is a key to understanding biology if we are to leave a vibrant Earth* for our children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Bill's first visit to our school was about forty years ago, when he threw out his shoulder helping put in the fence along our half acre nature area. He returned last June, along with Warren Truitt and Chris Lewis of the California Native Plant Society. They came to lend their support for OW Erlewine's bid to join the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's Schoolyard Habitat Program. A lesson learned on the bane of *Sesbania* to our local wildlife paid off a few months later, when a group of 20 parents and neighbors along with 14 students from the school participated in the Great American River Clean-Up 2008, locating and removing over a dozen of these invasives from the Parkway, along with three small mountains of trash.

Chris Cullen, the steward for Mile 11S, and our neighbor, was so impressed with our GARCUC turnout that he offered to present the kids their T-shirts & certificates at the school. On October 1, 2008, he, Betsy Weiland and Bill Griffith representing SARA, thanked each participating child personally at a school assembly. Afterwards, Betsy, on behalf of SARA, presented several books to our school librarian, including *The Outdoor World* of the Sacramento Region and a history on SARA and the American River Parkway.

Although still in its infancy, the Eco Club at OW Erlewine continues to grow rapidly. Beginning with a Sacramento Urban Creeks Council grant for our Kinder students, the program has garnered no less than four grants in its first year. We have received support from such diverse organizations as the National Fish & Wildlife Foundation, Health Education Council, Effie Yeaw Nature Center and Stone Lakes National Wildlife Refuge. Our Kinder and Special Education classes – six total – eagerly look forward to a half-hour each week of experiential environmental education.

(Continued on page 5)



Erlewine Elementary School (continued from page 5)

Our after-school enrichment program includes an hour-and-a-half each Wednesday for the 4th, 5th, and 6th graders, and another hour-and-a-half each Friday for 1st, 2nd, and 3rd graders. The pre-school program has collaborated with the Sacramento Community Garden Coalition to install a garden, and our half acre nature area, school garden and Ecology Learning Center are a resource for the entire school and neighborhood. County Extension's 4-H program is teaching wetlands awareness in partnership with our on-site START program, and the County's 4th "R" program routinely makes use of our nature resources on campus.

It is these kids who are the heart of why this program was created, as the Earth leave behind us is theirs to live in. They are the future of ecological awareness and environmental activism. We are guiding them to become the guardians of the wild places, and they are teaching us to see the world in a grain of sand, wilderness in a patch of cover crops, here at our public school along the American River Parkway where Effie Yeaw and others had a vision fifty years ago.

**SARA is recipient of Annual Behr Award**

by Elke Guenter

Save the American River Association (SARA) has been selected by Friends of the River (FOR) to be honored with the annual Peter Behr Award. The award will be presented to SARA on May 7, 2009. Tickets for this event here in Sacramento will be \$50.00 per person with part of the proceeds going to SARA.

Further information may be obtained by calling SARA at 916-387-1763 or going to: www.sarariverwatch.org or by visiting www.friendsoftheriver.org, by calling FOR at 916-442-3155.

FOR's mission is to protect and restore California rivers by influencing public policy and inspiring citizen action. This Sacramento-based organization is nationally recognized as an authority on the adverse impacts of dams on rivers and ecosystems and has led successful campaigns for the permanent protection of many outstanding rivers and streams in the State. Throughout its 35-year history, FOR has been a steadfast advocate for sustainable water management.

The Behr Award is given annually in memory of Peter Behr, a former California State Senator and Marin Supervisor. Mr. Behr is widely credited with persuading Congress to purchase much of the land for the Point Reyes National Seashore.

SARA & County Parks – Warren Truitt, President

Save the American River Association (SARA) and Sacramento County Parks formed an early bond to establish, fund, preserve and protect the American River Parkway – at least ten years before the successful 1972 Bond formally establishing the Parkway was submitted to, and passed by, an overwhelming majority of County voters.

Whereas, the County is the financial and management steward of the Parkway, SARA is the lead community advocate for the Parkway, as expressed in SARA's motto: *SARA: Guardians of the American River and Parkway since 1961*

Significant SARA contributions to the American River Parkway:

- * **Land acquisition:** The first 7 acres of the Parkway was donated to County Parks by SARA, and is now known as Sara Park.
- * **Land protection:** Fought many battles to prevent inappropriate public and private development along the American River Parkway.
- * **American River:** Fought and won a 20-year battle to keep EBMUD from taking water at the Folsom South Canal, potentially resulting in the river being reduced to a creek during certain periods. A founding member of the Water Forum continues today to fight for appropriate flows and temperatures to protect salmon and steelhead.
- * **Clean water:** Led successful 1978 bond measure to stop sewage discharges into river. Continues to monitor and fight against upstream sewage discharges in the American.
- * **Parkway leadership and policy:** SARA members participated in the selection of each and every Parks Director, and were members of all Parkway Plan Update committees.
- * **Inappropriate behavior:** Led the successful fight to ban alcohol from the Parkway during the 3 Summer Holiday weekends.

Recently retired Deputy Director of County Parks, Dave Lydick, perhaps said it best: *"SARA has always been the conscience of the American River Parkway!"*

Congratulations to Sacramento County Parks on 50 years of excellent service to the community and the Parkway stakeholder community, including the resident flora and fauna.

SARA: Guardians of the American River and Parkway since 1961

www.sarariverwatch.org

PHOTOS TAKEN DURING SARA'S ANNUAL MEETING ON DECEMBER 6, 2008



Ron Suter, Illa Collin, and Peggy Berry



Felix Smith, Howard Leach, Warren Truitt & Elmer Aldrich



Maxine and Dave Clark with Mary Truitt



Charlie Willard, Gary Keill, Burt Hodges and Kevin Regan



Elke Guenter and Felix Smith



Regina Lugani and Chelsea McDaniel

MANY THANKS TO ALL THOSE WHO SUPPORT US!

We want to extend our heartfelt thanks to Print Tech for continuing to support us by donating the printing of the RIVERWATCH & other printing needs. We have received donations and renewals from many of our members, some who have been SARA members since 1961. We really appreciate your support! We have also received donations from various businesses and other organizations. Their support is also vital to our mission. All those businesses who supported us this year will be listed in our next issue.

SARA MEETINGS AND LOCATION

The SARA Board Meetings are held on the third Tuesday of each month, and begin at 7:00 p.m. Meetings are held in the Conference Room of the County Parks & Recreation Department Bldg, located at 3711 Branch Center Road, Sacramento, 95827. Please call Wanda Denson at 383-1298 if you need directions. Turn right onto Bradshaw Road from Folsom Blvd. Go south on Bradshaw until reaching Ecology Lane (right side of Bradshaw) & turn right onto Ecology Lane; turn right again into the first parking lot. The first building is 3711.

SARA OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

Warren Truitt.....President
.....Vice-President
Elke Guenter..... Secretary
Pamela Maybury..... Treasurer
Alan WadeImmediate Past President
Frank Cirill.....President Emeritus
Jim Jones.....Past President
Bill Griffith.....Burt Hodges
Tim Keenan.....Mary Beth Metcalf
Jim Morgan.....George Nyberg
Ken Press.....Felix Smith

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Betsy Weiland, Volunteer Coordinator
Chelsea McDaniel, Student Intern

STAFF

Wanda Denson, Exec. Assistant
(Riverwatch Word Processing & Layout)
BEST NUMBER TO CALL: 383-1298
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SARA WEBSITE: www.sarariverwatch.org
WEBMASTER: Ken Press

IF YOU WANT TO BE ON THE SARA SAFETY ALERT LIST PLEASE SEND AN E-MAIL TO: riverwatch@comcast.net - LIST YOUR NAME, ADDRESS, AND E-MAIL ADDRESS. Have you moved recently? A few members on our list are current with their dues but their mail is being returned to SARA, with no listing in the phone book, so we can't contact them. It would help us immensely if all of our would remember to keep their information with us current. WE DON'T WANT TO LOSE ANY OF OUR MEMBERS.

MEMBERS: Will this be your last copy? Ever increasing postal expenses make it necessary to stop sending this newsletter to those who are not current with their dues. Please take a moment to check the expiration date above your name on the mailing page. If you are past due, you need to send in your renewal soon. If you have questions about your expiration date, don't hesitate to call Wanda at 383-1298.

SAVE THE AMERICAN RIVER ASSOCIATION, INC.
MEMBERSHIP AND RENEWAL APPLICATION FORM

SPRING - 2009

NAME: _____ NEW MEMBER? [] RENEWAL?
ADDRESS: _____ HOME PHONE: [] _____
CITY, STATE, ZIP: _____ WORK PHONE: [] _____

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES WANT TO VOLUNTEER? _____

- [] \$ 10.00 FULL TIME STUDENT [] \$ 25.00 REGULAR [] \$ 50.00 SUPPORTING [] \$ 100.00 FAMILY
[] \$100.00 SUSTAINING [] \$ 250.00 CORPORATION/BUSINESS [] \$ 1000.00+ LIFETIME/PATRON
[] \$ _____ LEGAL FUNDS (PDF) [] \$ _____ PARKWAY [] \$ _____ DONATION [] \$ _____ OTHER

NOTE: SARA NOW HAS 501 (c)(3) TAX STATUS ALLOWING DUES & DONATIONS TO BE TAX DEDUCTIBLE - SARA'S EIN IS: #94-2987563
PLEASE INDICATE ON THE MEMO LINE OF YOUR CHECK IF IT'S A DONATION, RENEWAL, NEW MEMBER OR OTHER.
PLEASE MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO: SARA or SAVE THE AMERICAN RIVER ASSN., INC.
NEW ADDRESS >>> 2851 WISSEMANN DRIVE - SACRAMENTO, CA 95826-3637

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American River Half Marathon

The 3rd Annual Event will take place on **Saturday, May 2, 2009** — the start and end point being near the William Pond Recreation Area in the Parkway at the foot of Arden Way in Sacramento. All proceeds of this very popular event will benefit several organizations within the American River Parkway, including SARA.

This race is much more than simply a race — it is truly an EVENT with a good deal of food and entertainment as well. One very unique feature of this half marathon is the fact that walkers and runners take off in opposite directions — a fact much appreciated by all participants! And of course, the scenery couldn't be more splendid with the Parkway decked out in its spring finery. For more information, please call 916-SACFIT1 (916) 722-3481.

EARTH DAY

SACRAMENTO EARTH DAY 2009 — SUNDAY - April 26, from 11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.
Southside Park (8th & W Streets) in downtown Sacramento.

With our planet in environmental and economic crisis it is more important than ever that we come together to renew our commitment to a sustainable and equitable future. Crisis equals opportunity — and this year we have an unprecedented opportunity to help our planet, our communities and ourselves by transforming our lives.

We are excited to announce that we are expanding and rearranging some of the elements of this year's **Sacramento Earth Day**. The amazing annual "Wildflower Weekend" event, hosted by the Sacramento Chapter of the California Native Plant Society is becoming a one-day event and will be at **Sacramento Earth Day!** We are also greatly expanding the food options, clustering all of the info. tables and booths into themed "villages" and hoping to have a beer/wine garden, showcasing local brews and vintages. **Don't miss out!**

This is a project of ECOS (Environmental Council of Sacramento and Friends of ECOS).

SARA - GUARDIANS OF THE AMERICAN RIVER AND PARKWAY SINCE 1961
www.sarariverwatch.org

