

SAVE THE AMERICAN RIVER ASSOCIATION

RIVERWATCH

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SPRING 2011

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You are Invited to Attend:
**SARA's 50TH ANNIVERSARY
CELEBRATION**

Please join Save the American River Association and other Parkway stakeholder groups for this celebratory event to dedicate a monument to **William "Bill" Pond** and show support for our Sacramento County Regional Parks — which are truly in peril.

The event will take place at William B. Pond Recreation Area on Saturday, June 4th at 10 a.m. Light refreshments will be served.



Join in the

CELEBRATION

And Rally To Support Our Parks

And Plaque Dedication
Honoring the Father of the Parkway
William B. Pond

JUNE 4, 2011 - 10:00 a.m.
**William Pond
Recreation Area**
At the end of Arden Way just past Fair Oaks Blvd

Celebrate **Save The American River Association's**
50th Anniversary at a rally to support our park system

SARA Guardians of the American River and Parkway since 1961
For more information, visit: salariverwatch.org
Artwork donated by Thomas Ford

GWG's Proposals to Rescue Our Regional Parks & Open Space System

By Clyde Macdonald & Bill Davis

Funding for county, city, and local district parks in Sacramento County has been declining substantially, even though parks are essential to the quality of life for us and for our children. Furthermore, safe and well-maintained parks are essential to attract good businesses and new, well-paying jobs.

Over the last three years, the county has reduced the parks budget by half; cut the ranger staff in half; significantly reduced maintenance; recently transferred operation of the Effie Yeaw Nature Center and Gibson Ranch Regional Park to non-governmental entities; and closed some American River Parkway access points.

In addition, Sacramento County has no funding for emergency repairs in parks and is deferring maintenance.

The Board of Supervisors and park

staff tried to find solutions, but were not successful. Save the American River Association brought together concerned residents and created the Grassroots Working Group (GWG) to explore how to fund parks. The goal was to make recommendations to the public and the Supervisors. The GWG raised funds to hire park consultants to evaluate options and to give advice.

Once key issues and options were identified, Fairbanks, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates, a respected polling firm, was then hired to do a public opinion survey on the key issues.

- A surprising result was that 79% of likely voters thought that regional parks are more important than the local park near their home.
- 62% of voters thought that

79% of likely voters thought that regional parks are more important than the local park near their home.

Poll conducted by Fairbanks, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates

regional parks are extremely or very important.

- 73% of voters said they would vote to approve funding for regional parks:

The GWG recommended the following:

- 1) Ask the Supervisors to put the creation of an Independent Regional Park and Open Space District on a countywide ballot in 2012. The District would be modeled after the very successful East Bay Regional Park District (in Contra Costa and Alameda Counties). The new District would have seven publicly elected board members and would cover all of Sacramento County. The board members would run in the same seven voting districts as the County Board of Education.
- 2) The District would take over county-operated regional parks and would provide some funds to city and local district parks through per-capita and competitive grant programs.



Deer Creek Hills

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GWG's Proposals

3) The funding for the District would include:

- a) Revenue currently derived from the operation of county regional parks such as parking fees, event fees, user fees and etc.
- b) The county would continue to contribute tax money that the county has been providing from **the County's General Fund** for county park operations.
- c) The ballot measure to create the District would include adding 0.1 (one-tenth) percent to the existing sales tax. A sales tax was recommended because polling demonstrated that likely voters prefer the sales tax and because **"out of county" folks who come to Sacramento to use our parks and other services will help pay for the cost.**

4) The District would have the following duties, in priority order:

- a) Providing that the American River Parkway, Discovery Park, and the Sacramento River Parkway are safe and clean – because these are our most heavily used parks and because most of our drinking water comes from the American and Sacramento Rivers.
- b) Providing that other county, city, and local district parks have adequate funds to remain safe and properly maintained.
- c) Providing for a reserve fund for deferred maintenance and future economic downturns.
- d) Developing parklands that already are in public ownership, but for which there have not been sufficient funds to make



River otter in the American River
Photo courtesy: Randy Smith

these properties open to the public. These largely undeveloped parks total 6,000 acres and include Mather Park, Dry Creek Ranch and Park, Gene Andal Park & Habitat Preserve, Indian Stone Corral Historical Preserve, Rancho Murietta Recreation Area, and Deer Creek Hills.

It would take a number of steps to implement these recommendations.

While the Supervisors could place the creation of the District on the county ballot without changes in state law, some technical changes would be appropriate. Because the Supervisors would be legally in charge of this process, it would be appropriate for the county to sponsor the legislation to make these changes, with the support of the GWG. These changes should be made in 2011.

The GWG, or its successor, will have to organize broad community support and funding for a ballot campaign in

2012. In July 2012, the Supervisors would decide whether to place a measure on the county ballot to create the District and to provide funding. County voters then would decide whether to support the measure on the November 2012 ballot. The vote requirement would be two-thirds.

For more information, see the various progress reports and the full report: "Recommendations By The Grassroots Working Group to Rescue Our Regional Parks and Open Space System." **These can be found on SARA's website:** www.sarariverwatch.org.

With the completion of the recommendations, Bill Davis ended his service as chair of the GWG. Bill has said that it has been a privilege to work with this dedicated group of citizens. Sean Donahoe has agreed to be the new Chair. Questions regarding the Grassroots Working Group should now be directed to Sean at: sdonahoe@gmail.com.

Betsy Weiland Named "Outstanding Volunteer, 2010"

By Stephen Green

Betsy Weiland, who spends countless hours working on behalf of our regional parks, has been named "Dept. of Regional Parks Outstanding Volunteer, 2010" by the Sacramento County Board of Supervisors.

A resolution adopted by the board last month commended Weiland for her years of volunteer work and "service to the County of Sacramento Department of Regional Parks and to the people of Sacramento County."

The resolution noted that she chairs the Parkway Coalition which is made up of stakeholders from neighborhoods adjacent to the American River Parkway. In the last decade, she devoted many hours to the update of the American River Parkway Plan. And she currently is active in the Grass Roots Working Group with a mission to secure stable, long-term funding for regional parks and open space.

She "has volunteered for numerous special events and fundraisers for the



Betsy Weiland
Department of Regional Parks
Outstanding Volunteer, 2010

Effie Yeaw Nature Center – her specialty being preparing gourmet foods for events at the Nature Center," the resolution continued. She also serves on the Center's Advisory Committee.

The resolution also noted that she is Volunteer Coordinator for Save the American River Association and an Associate Board Member for the American River Natural History Association.

In Memoriam

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

Robert D. Burrows

Bill Berry

Van R. Parker

Burgess Ward "Bud" Heacox

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.

SARA Membership Donations

January-March 2011

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Charles & Jane Pivetti

Pete & Shirley Rombold

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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 Parkways since 1961*. Beginning with this issue, new and renewing members will be listed in *Riverwatch* according to their preference (indicated on the membership/renewal form).

Hawk's Hunting Ground is Threatened

By Stephen Green

The City of Sacramento's Dept. of Parks and Recreation has proposed covering a grassy mound at Sutter's Landing Park with an array of solar photovoltaic panels.

The 100-acre site is atop of closed landfill near 28th and C Streets and is adjacent to the American River Parkway. It also is prime hunting ground for a pair of Swainson's Hawks – classified as a "threatened species" by California and a "species of concern" by the Federal Government. The pair has raised seven chicks at near the mound in the last three years.



www.swainsonshawk.org
Photo Courtesy: George Robertson

The Sacramento Audubon chapter also takes people on field trips in the area. Friends of the River Banks gathers children and their families on the second Saturday of the month to take hikes and hear naturalists share their knowledge of plants and animals.

Betsy Weiland, Volunteer Coordinator for Save the American River Association, is working with Friends of the Swainson's Hawk and Friends of the River Banks to defeat the solar array project. The array is in direct conflict with American River Parkway Plan policies protecting valuable habitat lands adjacent to the American River and Parkway.

In addition, Weiland said, the project **conflicts with the City of Sacramento's Sustainability Plan** which sets a goal **"To increase the amount of publicly accessible and protected green space and riparian corridors, to expand the urban forest, to preserve farmland and habitat resources ..."**

City Councilman Steve Cohn has voiced support for putting the solar installation at the site. Opponents are urging City of Sacramento residents to write their council members and express their opposition to the project.

They point out that there are other locales in Sacramento area where solar panels could be installed. At the SMUD headquarters, for example, solar panels have been installed above a parking lot.

"Swainson's Hawk biologists report that the most important foraging for nesting success is within one **mile of a nest."**

Jude Lamare
President of Friends of the Swainson's Hawk

The mound is fenced off and is the home to rodents and rabbits – prime food for hungry hawks. It is heavily used by birds and raptors as well as coyotes.

It is rare to find nesting hawks in an urban area, said Jude Lamare, president of Friends of the Swainson's Hawk.

"The pair has been observed foraging in the grassy mound very frequently during the nesting season," Lamare said.

"Swainson's Hawk biologists report that the most important foraging for nesting success is within one mile of a nest."

Lamare noted that deer, raccoons, turkeys and many other wild creatures frequent the area, and the park is a popular place for people who want to observe wildlife. Her organization hosts two events at the park each year to **introduce people to the Swainson's Hawk** and its presence in the region.

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
- 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

Polemic: Industrial Lake Natoma

By Dan Winkelman

“There may be some who believe without question that any and all forms of construction and development are intrinsic goods, in parks as well as anywhere else, who virtually identify quantity with quality and therefore assume that the greater the quantity of traffic, the higher the value received. There are some that who frankly and boldly advocate the eradication of the last remnants of wilderness and the complete subjugation of nature to the requirements of – not man – but industry ... It is also insane.”

Well, that’s Ranger Ed Abbey, whose thought on park management, American culture and saving wilderness have become or should become the conscious of planners addressing the practical use of parks in an industrial age. The pressure to yield to economic interest over preservation of wilderness is unrelenting.

Who among us can stand strong against the will of the mall, car and theme park culture asserting that **“Parks are for People.”** That’s code for people in the convenience, safety and comfort of automobiles, who stop to shop for T-shirts while viewing nature at the visitor center.

I have been privy to false vision during my career working in parks and sometimes risked the label of

malcontent to protest outrageous park planning decisions made by the uncivilized masquerading as saviors of the wild. For all the violent damage that the industrial age has caused to the Lower American River, we still have a quiet little reservoir named Lake Natoma that preserves something like a wilderness. Should I voice concern for the future? Here is an idea that has been given grant funding from the state Natural Resources Agency.

To accomplish the disability access described in the Lake Natoma Waterfront Enhancement Project, a 500-foot ramp is necessary to meet the eight percent slope standard required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Do we really think that a disabled person would want to use a ramp that is nearly two football fields in length

to access the shoreline?

Nearby Willow Creek and Negro Bar provide drive-up accessibility with ADA compliant rest rooms. This trail will remain unused by the disabled except in rare instances and then with unhappy results. The real reason to create ADA accessibility for this project is to lay the foundation for future development of the shoreline. This state park would become an amenity for commercial development near the lake. What an eyesore the ramp would be from the lake and for no good reason.

The four major user groups of the current shoreline path will be discouraged from returning to the park. Runners, avoiding ballistic action to their joints, prefer the current dirt path to pavement. Equestrians certainly prefer dirt

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Bluffs near Folsom, Lake Natoma
Photo Courtesy: Ray Wilson Vaughn

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Polemic: Industrial Lake Natoma

paths over pavement. Mountain bikers enjoy the challenging steep dirt path, but will still use the paved path at high speed to return to dirt paths. Hikers enjoy the natural feel of the area and value the opportunity to walk on the earth without pavement under their feet.

Where to stop? Lake Natoma does provide for the people with hiking, horse and bicycle trails. It is considered one of the premier paddling experiences in the country. **Let's go easy on the lake by** stopping ideas that claim accessibility by catering to the needs of economic development.

"There will be those, I hope, who share my basic assumptions that wilderness is a necessary part of civilization and that it is the primary responsibility of park systems to preserve intact and undiminished what little still remains."

Edward Abbey

Chief Ranger Steve Flannery Retires

By Stephen Green

Chief Ranger Stephen J. Flannery retired in March after 33 years with the Dept. of Regional Parks.

"Steve is a gifted leader who did much to improve the professionalism of the ranger staff," said Warren V. Truitt, president of Save the American River Association.

"He was active not only in law enforcement," Truitt continued, "but in natural history interpretation and resource protection. He wrote the ordinance prohibiting glass beverage containers with the American River Parkway. And he didn't hesitate to go after a county judge who cut down or damaged heritage oak trees on the Parkway."

Flannery came to law enforcement as a Park Ranger Assistant while completing a degree in Biological Conservation at California State University, Sacramento. He was promoted through the ranks over the years.

In 2007, Flannery became Chief Ranger and soon faced cutbacks in his ranger staff. Today, there are half as many rangers to police the regional parks.

Flannery also worked well with the local news media to raise the visibility of regional park issues, and he **appeared in Huell Howser's California Golden Parks program, "American River Parkway."**

Flannery's successor also has given distinguished service on the ranger staff. Kathleen Utley is another CSUS graduate with a degree in Environmental Studies and a minor in Geology.

After working as a reserve office with the City of Colfax Police Dept., she joined the ranger staff in 1989. In addition to ranger duties, she has been an investigator and developed the

"We feel quite confident that Kathleen [Utley] will continue Steve's tradition of distinguished service."

Warren Truitt
SARA President

Field Training Officer Program. She became Park Ranger Supervisor in 2008.

Her colleagues talk about the time she had to wrestle with a fugitive at Sailor Bar who went for her gun. He got a bullet in his stomach for the effort and was captured after trying to escape in his vehicle and crashed—twice.

"We feel quite confident that Kathleen will continue Steve's tradition of distinguished service," Truitt said.

Kathleen's replacement as Park Ranger Supervisor is Randy Lewis who worked at the Effie Yeaw Nature Center as a naturalist before joining the ranger unit in 2001.



Retired Chief Ranger Stephen J. Flannery (left) and new Chief Ranger Kathleen Utley (right)



50th Anniversary Issue
1961-2011
*Guardians of the American
River and Parkway Since 1961*

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- Renewal New Membership Non Membership Donation
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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 MasterCard are 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)*

- | | |
|-------------------|----------------------|
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