

# RIVERWATCH

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

VOLUME 44, ISSUE 2

SUMMER - 2006

## **UPDATING OF THE EXISTING 1985 PLAN FOR THE AMERICAN RIVER PARKWAY**

By Frank F. Cirill, SARA President Emeritus

The Sacramento Board of Supervisors and the Sacramento City Council initiated in 2003 the Update Citizens Advisory Committee (Update Committee) for the purpose of updating the existing 1985 American River Parkway Plan.

The vehicle for this process was a charter enacted by the County and City of Sacramento which described the tasks, roles and responsibilities of the members of the Update Committee.

The 25 members of the Update Committee consisted of five county representatives, four city representatives and the remainder being representatives from parkway user groups and environmental organizations.

The staff for the Update Committee consisted of several planners from the Sacramento County Planning Department. Sunny Williams, County Planner, acted as the Project Manager. Representatives from the Center for Collaborative Policy were facilitators.

The staff provided all agendas, organized meetings, and field trips which were open to the public. Comments from the public were encouraged. The Update Committee in June 2006 completed its 2½ years of work. During this period of extensive discussions at the many meetings the Update Committee provided policy recommendations to update the existing 1985 American River Parkway Plan.

The Parkway Plan is a policy and action document. It is written to ensure preservation of the naturalistic environment while providing limited developments to facilitate enjoyment by Parkway users. The Plan acts as an information document and provides basic policy guidance for the future of the Parkway.

Because of changes that have occurred in the Parkway over the past twenty years, the Committee determined that changes to the plan were necessary. Some of these changes are described below:

- The large population increase in Sacramento County caused a corresponding increase in the amount of Parkway users.
- Request for new recreation activities which were not previously permitted. The most notable are - dogs without leashes and off-paved trails bicycling i.e. mountain biking.
- The necessity to provide public safety and protection within the Parkway. This has become more difficult because of the large increase in Parkway use - both legal and illegal. At times the limited funds which have been provided to the County Parks Department have prevented staffing a full complement of County Parks Rangers.
- The need to curtail recreation activities which degrade the natural terrestrial and aquatic habitats.
- The problems relating to accommodating the large influx of additional users without the possibility of acquiring more land to increase the size of the Parkway. (continued on page 4)

Please go to Page 3 for an important article by Alan Wade, SARA President, about the July 4<sup>th</sup> fracas and the **BOS** subsequent **ban on alcohol** during the 3 summer holiday weekends.

**Editor's Comments**

by Elke Guenter

***Just 6 Lightbulbs***

If every household in this country substituted 6 compact fluorescent bulbs for 6 regular lightbulbs, it would be the equivalent of taking 7 million vehicles off US roads for one year!! (Environmental Defense.org) Put another way, 2 compact fluorescent bulbs used for their entire lifetime, approximately 15,000 hours, will keep 1 ton of carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere!!

So, where does the American River and Parkway fit into this scenario?

As global warming continues on its deadly, ever-widening path, nothing on this fragile, finite earth will escape its grave, life-threatening consequences.

At no time in human history has the fate and very survival of our entire planet been in our hands!! (Aside from the nuclear threat). But, unlike the continuing nuclear threat, global warming has been squarely placed on our collective shoulders—ON ALL OF OUR COLLECTIVE SHOULDERS!!

So, JUST DO IT!! Change 6 lightbulbs or more, and then take it one step further—send an e-mail to at least 6 others, urging them to take the same 2 steps. In fact, be daring and check out websites like environmental defense as well as others, to see what else you can do. I suspect that many of you already are participating in this endeavor in more ways than one.

Albert Einstein once wrote, "We shall require a substantially new manner of thinking if mankind is to survive."

***Ron Suter's Retirement***

Congratulations and our very best wishes go to Ron Suter, Director of Sacramento County Parks, as he embarks on a brand new and exciting journey — **RETIREMENT!** Ron and **SARA** have collaborated on many issues over the years in our ongoing efforts to enhance, preserve and protect the American River and Parkway.

Gary Kukkola will serve as Acting Director until further notice.

***A GREAT EPIE'S RACE***

by Alan Wade

This iconic Sacramento event took place in the Parkway, as it has now for 33 years, on the usual hot Saturday morning of July 15. SARA was there in various ways.

Board members Jack Sohl (our treasurer), Alan Wade, President, Betsy Weiland (our volunteer coordinator), and Lynda White assisted at our booth Friday evening and after the race on Saturday. President Emeritus Frank Cirill, a member of the Race Committee, secured a shady spot for us on the green at Goethe Park, the location of the race finish. We signed up almost 2 dozen new SARA members with our special offer: Buy a Parkway Pass for \$40, and get a free one year SARA membership! We welcome each of our new members!

Bob Hanna and Bill Griffith, past and present SARA board members, both merit congratulations for being on winning teams. A quick calculation suggests that the cumulative total of SARA board members' participation in Epie's races is well over 100 years.



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**MEMORIAM**

Peter H. Smurr, who served for many years on the SARA board and was a past president, passed away on July 4, 2006, his favorite holiday. He was an attorney and a life-long Sacramento resident, who was passionately devoted to the river and the Parkway. He was an outspoken advocate against the inequities in our society. He gave freely of his legal knowledge to SARA's advocacy work, and we shall miss his many contributions.

## ARE SUMMER HOLIDAYS ON THE PARKWAY OUT OF CONTROL?

Alan D. Wade, SARA President

Parkway Coalition volunteers, numbering around 20, handed out thousands of trash bags to rafters on the Fourth of July, and did yeoman service in picking up the mess at various finish points along the way. Joined by most of the County Parks ranger force, the Metro Fire Department, and Rancho Cordova cops, our volunteers played a part in keeping an estimated 10,000 drunken revelers from doing even more damage than they did.

I believe that alcohol should be totally banned on the entire Parkway—a ban is already in place on the downriver section from Cal Expo to Discovery Park. Banning alcohol in parks is hardly a new idea! At least we might urge a temporary, “trial balloon” alcohol ban for the next big holiday—Labor Day weekend.

A common reaction from staunch Parkway supporters and every day users (who told us they would not even think of coming near the river on the Fourth of July) is, well, “boys will be boys (and girls will be girls) and, forbidding alcohol is not fair since it would punish everyone for the sins of an alleged few. And, furthermore, “we all like to sit by the river and have a beer.”

Reports from law enforcement, volunteers, and other observers indicate that the situation was far removed from such romantic fantasies.

**It was much more dangerous, destructive, and harmful to the river and its environment than could be imagined...**

*if you were not there to see it.*

Rowdiness, hooliganism, personal assaults, indecent exposure, and widespread flaunting of authority were at the point of getting beyond control. No arrests were made in the Parkway or on the river itself, in part because cops were stretched too thin along the seven or eight miles of major action to take the time to make any arrests. Dave Lydick, county parks chief ranger, described the situation as “close to riot conditions.”

**UPDATE:** On August 8, 2006, the Sacramento County Board of Supervisors agreed on an ordinance that would ban the consumption of alcohol within the boundaries of county regional parks, (including the Parkway) on the three major summer holidays. The vote was 3-0 (MacGlashan, Peters, and Nottoli).

Four SARA board members were joined by an additional SARA member, John Barris, and Annemarie Vincent, ARPF executive director, in testifying in favor of the ban. All had observed the Fourth of July fracas first-hand. No one spoke in opposition to the ban.

While the ordinance will be announced as a limited “ban on alcoholic beverages,” it is actually a ban on consumption and possession of open containers on Parkway land. The County has no jurisdiction over these activities on the river itself. A ban on consumption while in rafts on the river would require state legislation, a more difficult goal.

Our conclusion: the ordinance is a step in the right direction. It might help control the crowds on Labor Day, a less challenging prospect than the Fourth of July. As for next year, we’ll have to wait and see. Or take action, if enough Parkway advocates and users become disgusted.

The challenge facing us who love the Parkway is this: Do we want to be known as the statewide home for drunken and disorderly brawls on summer holidays, masquerading as “fun on the river?”

If stern measures are not taken now to send the message that this will not be tolerated, the river vandalism will surely escalate. Many of the drunks were from out of town. With the exponential expansion of information technology (cell phones, internet chat, e-mail, etc.), it is certain that the word will spread throughout the state that the Parkway is the place to come for unfettered and uncontrolled rowdiness.

What harm does all this do? There is not only the damage to the river and to wildlife, but damage to all of us in the sense that a bunch of young hooligans are preventing the rest of us from enjoying the river. We are really losing a part of what we hold dear.

The issue is complex, and solutions difficult to envision and enforce. Nonetheless, we’ve got to help find a way to prevent a repeat of this type of behavior or next year’s orgies will be far worse.

**Your thoughts are welcome.**

## Update of American River Parkway Plan, from page 1

The Update Committee also had to resolve several issues which were very controversial. These issues used up a large amount of the Update Committee's limited time. They are described as follows:

- The Sacramento Area Dog Owners Group, (SACDOG) through its member on the Committee, requested that the Updated Plan provide an area of approximately twenty five acres in the Woodlake area of the Parkway to be used by dog owners with unleashed dogs.

The Update Committee did not support the SACDOG's request. The Committee's decision was that all dogs in the Parkway shall be on a leash no longer than six feet in length in accordance with the Sacramento County Parks ordinance.

- The Sacramento Area Mountain Bike Association (SAMBA), through its member on the Committee, requested that mountain biking be allowed on unpaved trails in certain areas of the Parkway.

The Update Committee agreed that off-pavement bicycle use may be permitted on existing reconfigured maintenance and emergency roadways in the Woodlake and Cal Expo areas at the discretion of the Parkway Manager. A public approval process will also be required.

Off-pavement bicycle use may be further expanded to other areas of the Parkway after a 3 year trial period and evaluation, subject to the discretion of the Parkway manager.

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### The Ricky Dickerson Trust Fund

Several months ago, a brave Rancho Cordova Park Maintenance worker came to the rescue of a Hagan Park visitor who was being assaulted by a group of 5 men. In the following melee, he was severely beaten and critically injured. While the park visitor was saved through Ricky's actions, and the perpetrators arrested, Ricky has not yet recovered. Ricky is married and the father of four children, who are trying to recover from this ordeal. The Cordova Community Council has organized several fund raising events but individual donations will also be greatly appreciated. Donations may be sent to:

#### THE RICKY DICKERSON TRUST FUND

c/o American River Bank  
9750 Business Park Drive  
Sacramento, CA 95827

- The California Indian Heritage Center Task Force in 2004 requested that the Update Committee consider a proposal to construct a 60,000 square feet museum, offices and curatorial facility on riverside Parkway land in the Woodlake area. The proposal was discussed during several meetings of the Committee. The majority of the Committee members concluded that a facility of this size and type was inappropriate for the Parkway and therefore did not support the request.

In the spring of 2006 this issue was resolved without the use of any Parkway land when the City of Sacramento, by resolution, agreed to support and provide land for the California Indian Heritage Center within its Richards Boulevard Redevelopment Area.

The following is a summary of actions needed to complete the Update of the existing 1985 Parkway Plan.

- \* Initial endorsement by elected officials - date not determined
- \* Environmental review (Allow 1 year)
- \* Adoption by elected officials - (Sacramento County Board of Supervisors, Sacramento City Council) date not determined
- \* Adoption by Urban American River Parkway Act - State Legislature - date not determined

We will keep our members informed in future issues of the Riverwatch as the Plan Update Process continues.

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"It is easy for us to criticize the prejudices of our grandfathers from which our fathers freed themselves.

It is more difficult to distance ourselves from our own views so that we can dispassionately search for prejudices among the beliefs and values we hold."

Peter Singer, Practical Ethics, 1993

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### MEMBERS!

PLEASE CHECK THE **RENEWAL DATE** ABOVE YOUR NAME AND ADDRESS. THE DATE INDICATES WHEN YOUR DUES EXPIRED OR WILL EXPIRE. PLEASE HELP US BY RENEWING BEFORE THAT DATE.

**THANKS!!**

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## 2006 American River Parkway Financial Needs Study Update

by Warren Truitt

The 23-mile American River Parkway (ARP) has long been recognized as an extremely valuable community asset and has now grown to comprise 4,615 acres. Since the passage of Proposition 13 in 1978, and the subsequent shift in funding responsibilities to the Counties, **Quality of Life** budget categories – that which the Parkway falls within -- have been adversely affected. The American River Parkway thus has suffered disproportionately with the ups and downs of the California economy.

Annual ARP visitors are estimated to exceed 5 million. A report commissioned by Sacramento County in the mid 1980's enabled the County to estimate that visitors to the Parkway by 2025 will exceed 12.4 million visitors per year. It is estimated the 2006 annual economic benefit of Parkway visitors will exceed \$364 million for direct and indirect spending for all Parkway related goods and services and \$163 million in direct visitor spending.

### 2000 ARP FINANCIAL NEEDS STUDY

The original American River Parkway Financial Needs Study was completed in 2000, with an objective to determine funding required to restore open space and recreation values within the Parkway. The study developed best management practice benchmarks for key functions – compared to other similar parks in California as well as identify possible long-term funding options. The 2000 Study recommended a total augmentation of almost \$1.8 million was recommended to bring the Parkway budget to best practices standards.

Since 2000, the County has not been able to adequately fund the Parkway. In fact in 2003 it was thought the Parkway might need to be “closed” for lack of funding. This threat led to the January, 2004 **Parkway in Peril** emergency town hall meeting at Effie Yeaw Nature Center --- with approximately 350 citizens in attendance – on only 3 days notice. This meeting, in turn, led to the formation of the American River Parkway Coalition, made up of representatives from (**SARA**) Save the American River Association, the American River Parkway Foundation (**ARPF**) and the American River Natural History Association (**ARNHA**).

### 2006 ARP FINANCIAL NEEDS STUDY UPDATE

This update of the 2000 study was commissioned to focus on updating the 2000 benchmarks, identify remaining deficiencies and long-term needs, and revise augmentation strategies. Current funding sources provide 80% of the \$7,401,361 Fiscal Year 2005-06 operating budget – an annual shortfall of \$1,514,787.

Over the next 10 years, it is estimated the Parkway will need an additional \$85,954,270, of which \$40,000,000 in potential funding sources have been identified. This leaves an approximate \$46,000,000 in need of a funding source.

The 2006 study identified several funding options to cover this shortfall. The two most promising were identified as:

1. County-wide special benefit assessment district with funds earmarked exclusively for the Parkway. This requires a 50% weighted vote by property owners.
2. A one-eighth cent sales tax increase, which is estimated would bring in over \$26 million annually, and would be shared amongst County Parks, the cities, and special park and recreation districts.

The challenge to keep the American River Parkway preserved and protected as its founders intended continues. More than ever, SARA needs your support to continue the fight to safeguard this magnificent ribbon of earth with a river running through it.

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**NOTE:** Source: American River Parkway 2006 Financial Needs Study Update – Executive Summary. To view the full study, go to:

<http://www.sacparks.net/our-parks/american-river-parkway/index.html> and click on **Update 2006**.

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**“Live loudly and fiercely...**

**apathy is not a choice.”**

Lane Rettig, UC Berkeley Medalist

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**Save the date - Saturday, December 2, 2006,** Plan on attending the SARA Annual Meeting, to be held in the Effie Yeaw Community Center in Ancil Hoffman Park.

## **AMERICAN RIVER PARKWAY FUNDING FORUM**

by Betsy Weiland, Volunteer Coordinator

On July 13, 2006, The American River Natural History Association (ARNHA) sponsored a public forum on behalf of the American River Parkway Coalition to explore ways to improve the shaky financial health of the Parkway. Without a permanent funding solution in place, our irreplaceable treasure, the American River Parkway, faces a funding shortfall of between 50 and 85 million dollars over the next 10 years (Dangermond Report, 2006).

The panel of experts including Ron Suter, Director of County Parks, Larry Kaplan, Los Angeles Area Director of the Trust for Public Land, Jerry Meral, former Deputy Director of the State Department of Water Resources and former director of the Planning and Conservation League (PCL), and Paul Hahn, Development Director for Sacramento County, spent two hours explaining various ways to secure the financial future of the Parkway.

Mr. Kaplan was very excited about bringing the Trust for Public Land's extensive expertise to the table to help citizens launch a grassroots' effort to raise money for the Parkway. Mr. Meral felt that it would take a "bottoms up" approach to lend the necessary urgency to solving the chronic budget shortfall.

One idea presented for funding the Parkway was a County-wide special assessment district with funding earmarked exclusively for the Parkway. An engineering study conducted by the County would help determine the reach of the special assessment district. This funding mechanism requires a 50 percent weighted vote by property owners.

A second idea discussed was a County-wide 1/8 cent sales tax increase estimated to bring in over 26 million dollars annually to be shared by Sacramento County parks, including the American River Parkway, the cities, and the special park and recreation districts. This would require a two-thirds majority vote.

Whichever funding mechanism is selected, each panelist stressed the importance of cooperation and support from the public as well as all of the appropriate governments and agencies.

The forum was well attended by Parkway supporters as well as representatives from the County and the City of Sacramento. Everyone left with good information and much food for thought.

## **CHROMA GALLERY EVENT TO BENEFIT SARA**

by Marilyn Rose

Artists of the Sacramento area and surrounds are fortunate to have many beautiful spots to paint along the American River Parkway, and the artists at the Chroma Gallery feel especially so. They are excited about an upcoming opportunity to give back to the river and to its watchdog organization, Save the American River Association, (SARA). There will be a series of paintouts in various locations along the Parkway where the artists will set up their easels and paint the scenery while passers-by are encouraged to stop, watch and chat.

The paintings produced during these sessions will be exhibited for sale at the Chroma Gallery in the spring of 2007 and a percentage of the sales will be donated to SARA. The Chroma Gallery artists love to get out and paint together and they invite all of you to come out and see what they do, get to know them and understand ***plein air painting***—and then enjoy the day on the American River Parkway.

***Plein air painting*** is painting the landscape on location, capturing the fleeting light on canvas.

**Here are the dates and locations of the paintouts.**

### **August 13**

Ancil Hoffman Park, Tarshes Dr. off California Ave.

### **August 17**

S. Bridge St., off Sunrise, south of the river.

### **September 10**

Pennsylvania Avenue

### **October 19**

Nimbus Dam area near Lake Natoma

**Chroma Gallery is located in Fair Oaks Village  
10030 Fair Oaks Blvd., Fair Oaks, CA 95628**

**Phone: 966-6020**



### ***Special note:***

Our next issue of the Riverwatch will include an article about "The South Delta Improvement Program," by Felix Smith, SARA board member.

**THANKS TO OUR SUPPORTERS!!**

**SARA** is very grateful to all of our supporters, not only our regular members, but to those who continue to help us throughout the year with special donations.

The support we receive from **Print Tech** and **Jet Express Mail** is invaluable. **Print Tech** donates the printing of our stationery and the **Riverwatch**. **Jet Express Mail** processes the newsletter for mailing. They help us to continue publishing this newsletter.

Other regular supporters include **The Wheelmen, River City Paddlers, Sacramento Bike Hikers, Granite Bay Flycasters, American Fly Fishing Co., Fly Fishers of Davis, American River Raft Rentals, Central California Canoe Club**, and various members who prefer to remain anonymous, but remain committed to helping us protect and preserve the Parkway. **Thanks again!**

**SARA OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS**

Alan Wade.....President  
Warren Truitt.....Vice President  
Elke Guenter.....Secretary  
Jack Sohl..... Treasurer  
Frank Cirill.....President Emeritus  
Jim Jones.....Past President

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Burt Hodges.....Gary Keill  
Mary Beth Metcalf.....Jim Morgan  
Kevin Regan.....Felix Smith

Betsy Weiland.....Volunteer & ARNHA Liaison  
Dan Kopp.....CGNA Liaison  
Bob Burrows.....Advisor  
Howard Ross.....Advisor  
Elmer Aldrich.....Advisor

**LOCATION FOR SARA BOARD MEETINGS**

SARA's Board meetings are held on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of each month at 7:00 p.m. Meetings are currently being held in the Conference Room in the County Parks and Recreation Dept., located at 3711 Branch Center Road. From Bradshaw Road turn right onto Ecology Lane - Turn right again into the first parking lot. Please call ahead of time for possible changes to date or location.

**(For information, please call Wanda at (916) 383-1298)**  
**All messages will be answered as soon as possible**

SARA phone & fax line (916) 387-1763  
SARA E-mail: riverwatch@comcast.net  
SARA Website: www.sarariverwatch.org

Word Processing and Layout by Wanda Denson

NOTE: BECAUSE SARA IS THE PRIMARY ADVOCATE APPEARING BEFORE GOVERNMENT & COMMUNITY AGENCIES ON BEHALF OF THE AMERICAN RIVER PARKWAY, YOUR MEMBERSHIP DUES AND/OR SPECIAL DONATIONS, ARE NOT TAX DEDUCTIBLE.

**PLEASE MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO: SAVE THE AMERICAN RIVER ASSOCIATION, INC. (OR SARA)**  
**MAIL TO: SARA - P.O. BOX 277638 - SACRAMENTO, CA 95827-7638**

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

**SUMMER - 2006 ISSUE**

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**CALENDAR OF COMING EVENTS**

**SATURDAY - SEPTEMBER 16 — GREAT AMERICAN RIVER CLEAN-UP**  
CALL 486-2773 OR SIGN UP ON THE WEB AT: [www.arpf.org](http://www.arpf.org)

**SATURDAY & SUNDAY - OCTOBER 14 & 15 - SALMON FESTIVAL**  
CALL 486-2773 OR SIGN UP ON THE WEB AT: [www.arpf.org](http://www.arpf.org)

**FIRST SATURDAY OF EVERY MONTH**  
**>>>>>> WEED WARRIORS - INVASIVE PLANT REMOVAL <<<<<<<**  
Contact Ken Myatt ([kmyatt@arpf.org](mailto:kmyatt@arpf.org)) or call 456-7423

**HOLD THIS DATE!!**  
**SATURDAY - DECEMBER 2 - SARA ANNUAL MEETING**  
**ANCIL HOFFMAN COMMUNITY CENTER**  
**10 A.M. TO 2 P.M.**