SAVE THE AMERICAN RIVER ASSOCIATION

RiverWatch

VOLUME 59, ISSUE 1
WINTER-SPRING 2020

Endangered Winter-run Chinook Salmon

this issue

Remembering American River Advocate Burt Hodges

Burt Hodges, a long-time member of the SARA Board of Directors, died unexpectedly on Nov. 19, 2019, at age 86.

SARA Vice President Warren Truitt recalled that "Burt was very dedicated to SARA's mission and expressed his love for the American River and Parkway during his many years of service on the SARA Board. He was often among the first to volunteer for SARA projects."

Truitt commended Burt's devotion to his wife Marilyn. "As Marilyn began to experience various health issues, Burt was there for Marilyn 24/7," Truitt added.

Since retiring in 1990, Burt had been active in many areas. In addition to advocacy work with SARA, he was one of two

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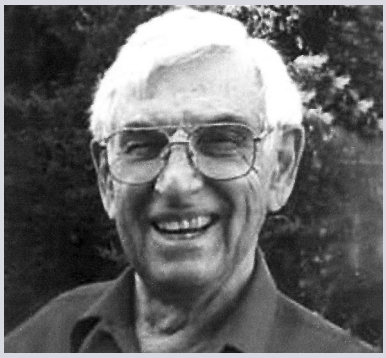

Burt Hodges

New Management Plans are Needed For California's Freshwater Ecosystems

BY STEPHEN GREEN

There is a growing consensus among scientists that California's freshwater ecosystems are changing – and the trend is not positive.

The changes are occurring in response to water and land use, pollution, introduction of non-native species, and climate change. Declines in native biodiversity of plant and animal species are the most direct measure of these changes, with numerous species now protected by state and federal endangered species acts, and many times more likely to need protection in future.

For the past 40 years, the endangered species acts have played a prominent role in managing the state's freshwater ecosystems. While this approach has prevented extinctions, it also places an emphasis on reducing harm to listed species, rather than improving overall ecosystem condition necessary to recover their populations.

The Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC) recently issued a report concluding that the endangered species acts are not forward-looking enough to help species adapt to changing climate and reduce future species listings. The report, titled "A Path Forward for California's Freshwater Ecosystems," maintains that a new approach is needed if Californians are to maintain the benefits we derive from freshwater ecosystems – and arrest the decline of native biodiversity.

PPIC recommend that the state adopt the principles and practices of ecosystem-based management. That involves the simultaneous management of water, land, and organisms to achieve a desired ecosystem condition that benefits both native biodiversity and human well-being. The goal of ecosystem-based planning is to develop a shared vision for the ecosystem, agreement upon a common set of facts, and a unified plan to achieve it. PPIC did not propose major reforms to state or

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Ecosystem

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federal endangered species acts. Instead, they recommend a shift in the way these acts are implemented.

Ecosystem-based management must rely on robust governance frameworks that are transparent, collaborative, and supported by science and secure funding, PPIC said. Actions needed to achieve ecosystem-based objectives include setting aside water budgets for the environment and using this water to improve ecosystem condition and create multiple benefits. Binding comprehensive agreements between regulatory agencies, stakeholders, and water users — developed as part of sustainable watershed management plans — should guide implementation. Those plans can be used to align agency actions and permitting and can be adopted by the State Water Resources Control Board as water quality control plans.

"California needs to change course in how it manages freshwater ecosystems to protect the many beneficial uses they provide, PPIC concluded. "Ecosystem-based management offers a more comprehensive, flexible, and adaptive approach, and one that is compatible with existing laws. We believe this approach is better able to improve ecosystem outcomes that benefit both people and nature, and respond to today's challenges while preparing for an uncertain future."

The full report can be read on the PPIC website: www.ppic.org. ■

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THE PUBLIC POLICY INSTITUTE OF CALIFORNIA

Burt Hodges

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SARA representatives on the Citizen's Advisory Group for the Aerojet/Rocketdyne Superfund cleanup of contaminated groundwater in Sacramento County.

He also was involved with the Carmichael Water District, SIRS (Sons in Retirement) and Sacramento Steps Forward which assists homeless people.

For years, Burt and his wife Marilyn designated Wednesdays as an "Adventure Day" when they would hike and explore areas throughout Northern California. On other days, they'd take 20-mile bike rides on the American River Parkway and occasionally they would bike up to 100 miles.

Burt grew up on a wheat farm in Northwest Kansas. He met Marilyn while both were in high school in Oakley, Kansas. He earned his B.A. from Kansas State University and later his M.A. from Syracuse University.

At Kansas State, he was in R.O.T.C. and he was commissioned in the U.S. Air Force the day he was graduated in 1956. During more than 22 years of service, Burt had remote duty assignments in Greenland, Korea and Vietnam. Later, he took his family to an assignment in Ankara, Turkey.

At one time, the family has stationed in the Sacramento area where they returned when Burt retired from the Air Force in 1978. Burt then went to work for UC Davis where he served at the Medical Center and later in the Dept. of Chemistry.

In addition to Marilyn, Burt is survived by sons Jeff, Scott and Eric; grandsons Ken, Dan, Brian and Jason; and great-grandson Landon. ■

U.S. Supreme Court Allows Boise Decision to Stand

In mid-December, the U.S. Supreme Court refused to hear a major case on homeless campers. Without comment or dissent, the justices let stand a 9th Circuit Court decision from Boise, Idaho, last year which said homeless people have a right to camp or sleep in public places if no other shelter is available to them.

As a result, law enforcement will continue to have few options for removing homeless people from parks and public places unless they are involved in criminal conduct.

The City of Sacramento and Sacramento County were among dozens of municipalities that filed the appeal with the Supreme Court. They argued that the broad nature of the Boise decision made it difficult "to balance the needs of its homeless residents with the needs of everyone who uses public spaces." Prior to the Boise decision, for example, the City of Sacramento allowed homeless people to camp on the City Hall grounds at night. But they had to leave during the day.

The homeless population in the Sacramento County area now numbers more than 5,500 people and it has been growing. Despite expanded efforts to provide housing and services to homeless people in the area, local officials say there will never be enough resources to serve all who need help.

A homeless man is seen dumping unknown substances in the American River. Photo by Barry Alan

Gov. Gavin Newsom has repeatedly noted that many homeless people have drug or alcohol problems, or suffer from mental disorders such as bipolar disorder, schizophrenia or paranoia. "Our homelessness crisis has increasingly become a public health crisis," the governor said.

Last year, Newsom created a Commission on Homelessness & Supportive Housing to address issues homeless people face. Sacramento Mayor Darrell Steinberg heads the commission.

Sacramento has a Pathways to Health and Home program that identifies people who frequently visit emergency services facilities. The staff pairs them with community health workers who help clients schedule medical appointments, get help with addiction and enroll for public aid. They also help them apply for jobs and find housing if it is available.

Twelve other California cities have programs similar to Sacramento's and they currently receive federal funding. Gov. Newsom has committed the state to help fund the programs. ■

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The Cheapest Water is Water We Save

BY HEATHER COOLEY
DIRECTOR OF RESEARCH, PACIFIC INSTITUTE

California is at a water crossroads.

We can continue our costly, 100-year-old pattern of trying to find new water supplies, or we can choose instead to focus on smarter ways of using – and– reusing what we already have.

With a population projected to top 50 million by mid-century, a booming economy and a changing climate, there is no question we need to shore up our water systems. But we don't need an all-of-the-above strategy that sacrifices affordability and environmental health. Just like with energy, we must focus on the solutions that are better for our planet and pocketbooks.

The cheapest water is the water we save.

Californians have made real strides to conserve over the past several decades. San Francisco and Los Angeles use the same amount (or less) water today as they did 30 years ago, despite substantial growth.

And farmers have dramatically increased economic output over the last 30 years while using the same amount of water – effectively producing more food and income for every drop of water.

But far more can be done.

Research at the Pacific Institute found that appliance and fixture upgrades, leak repair and landscape changes could reduce urban water use by up to 5 million acre-feet annually – enough water to supply more than 13 million families for a year.

On farms, precision irrigation and other water-wise practices could reduce water use by 6 million to 7 million acre-feet annually while maintaining food production and farmer income. This untapped potential for water efficiency should always be our first step towards water security.

There are also new, innovative sources of local supply.

Less than 20% of urban wastewater is being reused. There are still more than a million acre-feet of treated water we could reclaim to meet local needs. Water reuse opportunities can be found across the state, but are especially important in coastal areas, where waste(d) water is discharged into and pollutes estuaries and the ocean.

Urban runoff is another viable local option. Our cities were designed to remove rainwater to reduce flood risk, literally flushing freshwater down storm drains. Rain gardens, green streets, and parks can help us catch and store more rain.

While gray infrastructure like pipes and pumps will continue to play an important role in our water system, green infrastructure can turn urban spaces into a sponge that allows water to sink into the ground to replenish underground aquifers for later use.

Water efficiency, reuse and rainwater capture not only save money compared with costly sources like seawater desalination, they also save energy and reduce greenhouse gas emissions, which will be key for avoiding unmanageable climate impacts.

Water conservation during California's last drought saved enough electricity to power the cities of Berkeley, Burbank and Santa Cruz for a year. Less energy use means less power plant pollution, helping California achieve our clean air and climate goals.

There are other benefits to consider as well. Reuse reduces the need to divert water from streams already stressed by rising temperatures and shrinking snowpack and can curb ocean pollution associated with sewage outfalls. Plants used to soak up runoff also filter out oil, fertilizer and other chemicals before they reach our water supply. And, of course, green spaces help to cool and beautify communities while providing a place for people to enjoy the outdoors.

California has a chance to model what a truly resilient water system looks like, combining nature and technology to make the most of every drop and dollar. Just as we are doing in the energy sector, we should be focusing on no-regrets water projects that make economic and environmental sense.

As state leaders work to meet Gov. Gavin Newsom's call for 21st Century California water plan, I urge them to focus on sources that are both cost-effective and climate smart.

Ms. Cooley wrote this commentary for the CalMatters newsletter.
http//calmatters.org ■

SARA Membership Donations *October — December 2019*

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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 a donation honoring the memory of the following friends:

ERNEST CARBONI
BURT HODGES
JOANNA JENSEN

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.

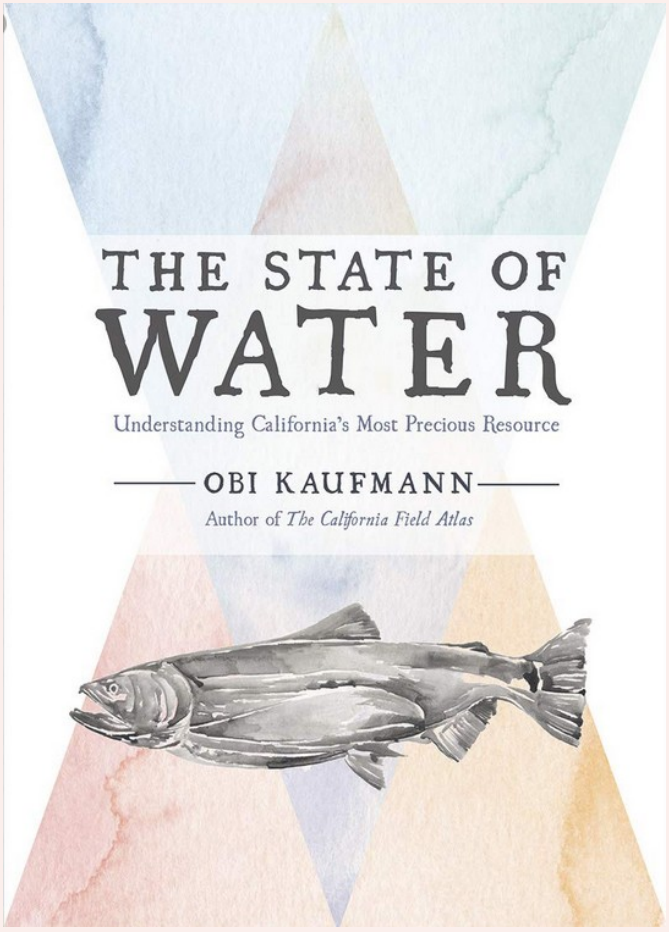
The money is used to further SARA's advocacy work on behalf of the Parkway. Contributions may be made by check or online via SARA's website.

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

BOOK REVIEW

The State of Water: Understanding California's Most Precious Resource

WRITTEN AND ILLUSTRATED BY OBI KAUFMANN; HEYDEY BOOKS; $13.89 HARDCOVER; $8.69 KINDLE.

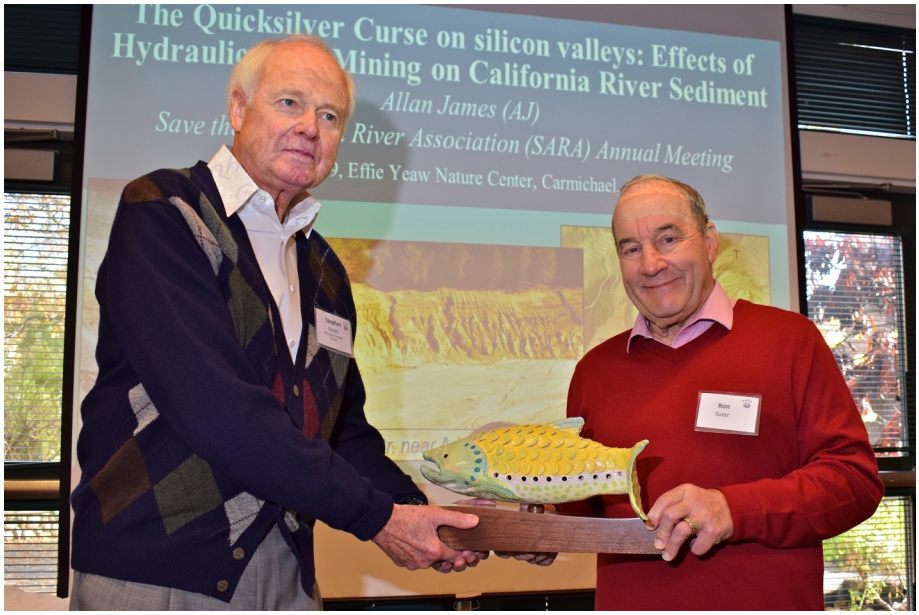


Obi Kaufmann has given artful and analytical attention to the Golden State's single most complex and controversial resource: water. Full-color maps help explore California's water infrastructure and ecosystems, and the history of unlimited growth in spite of finite natural resources – a history that has led to the current precarious circumstances.

Kaufmann argues that conservation and restoration efforts are necessary not only for ethical, but also as a matter of human survival. He offers nine perspectives to illustrate the most pressing challenges facing California's water infrastructure, from dams to species revitalization.

He concludes that California can continue to support agriculture, municipalities and the environment if appropriate measure are taken. The analysis is interspersed with poems and 40 paintings of wildlife.

■



At SARA's annual meeting, Ron Suter (right) was honored for his outstanding service as Director of Sacramento County Regional Parks. SARA President Stephen Green presented him with a fish sculpture. Photo by George Nyberg

Northern River Otters Are Thriving Here

By the early 1960s, Northern River Otters *(Lontra canadensis)* were overhunted and nearing extinction in Northern California. But hunting restrictions allowed the species to recover, and today they are found in rivers, large streams, marshes and estuaries from the Sierra Nevada foothills to the coast. They also are found in eastern Sierra Nevada drainages in Alpine, Mono and Inyo Counties.

Despite the common name, Northern River Otters are equally comfortable in either coastal marine or freshwater habitats. And they are thriving along the Lower American River.

The otters are part of the weasel family. They have dense hair, long whiskers, and can range in size from 26-to-42 inches, sport a 12-to-20-inch tail, and can weigh up to 31 pounds. They have both claws and webbed feet that help them in the water and on land. When submerged, otters close their nostrils and ears, and can stay under water for about eight minutes.

Otters tend to be loners but occasionally form groups called rafts. They get together during mating season or when a mother is caring for her pups.

Dads don't stick around after mating season. The females nest in burrows and cavities in banks, rocks, trees, hollow logs, stumps and deserted beaver burrows. Some have been known to tunnel under a water body and line their nests with dry vegetation.

In California, the pups are born about 60 days after mating, usually in March or April. But delayed implantation can occur for months when the embryo attaches to the uterus. The mother usually delivers two or three pups, but sometimes there will be five. The mother plays with the pups and trains them to survive, and then releases them when she's getting ready to mate again.

The otters are carnivores. They hunt fish, crustaceans, frogs, salamanders, waterfowl and their eggs, aquatic insects, reptiles, mollusks and small mammals. They sometime eat fruit, but avoid carrion.

They can range for a considerable distance while searching for food. The average range for each animal is about 15 miles. Some may travel 50-to-60 miles along rivers and streams during a year.

A Northern River Otter takes a snooze by Willow Creek near Lake Natoma. Photo by Barry Strother

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 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 ■

SARA

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May we publish your name as a SARA member in a future *Riverwatch* issue?
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$ _____ (Please indicate your TOTAL contribution) Check _____ VISA _____ MC _____

Insert credit card info below or go to our secure Web site to donate — www.sarariverwatch.org.

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