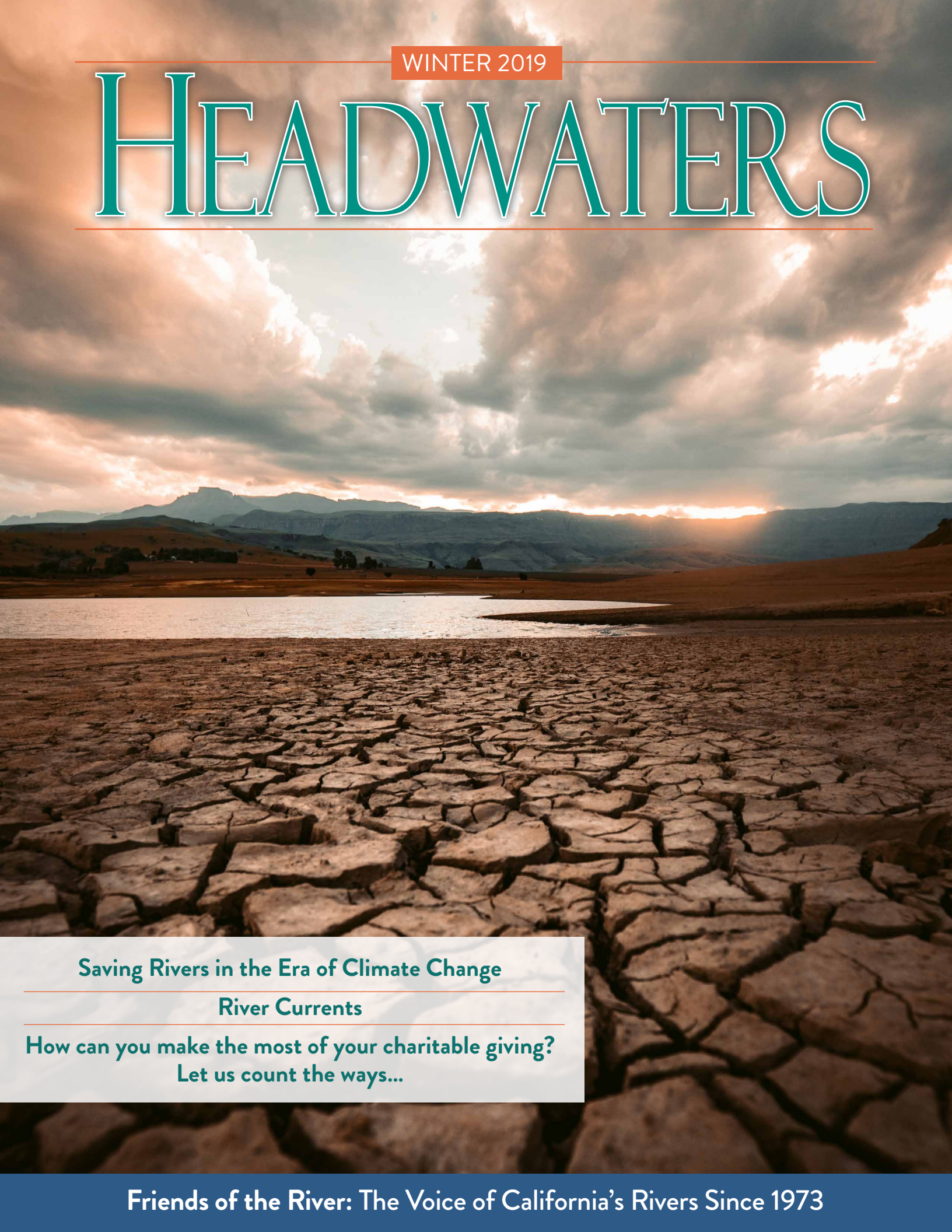


WINTER 2019

# HEADWATERS



**Saving Rivers in the Era of Climate Change**

**River Currents**

**How can you make the most of your charitable giving?  
Let us count the ways...**

**Friends of the River: The Voice of California's Rivers Since 1973**



Friends of the River:  
The Voice of California's  
Rivers Since 1973

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## UPCOMING EVENTS:

- Dec. 11 NGO RATS application deadline



## TRAIN TO BE A RIVER RAT!

Friends of the River is excited to announce the 7th cohort of the River Advocacy Training School. Each year FOR receives dozens of applications for this unique opportunity. It attracts people of all ages and backgrounds. After the selection process, FOR offers a 4-day training on the quiet shores of the South Fork American River in January (a contrast to the bustle of summer). Advocates will get a deep dive into California water issues, advocacy techniques and learn about how to support the current FOR campaign.

In previous years, we have taken field trips to see the series of dams and diversions along the Merced River, the proposed sites of Auburn Dam and Temperance Flat Dam as well as the Bay Model in Sausalito.

This year RATS will be supporting the Point Positive campaign furthering the work of the previous cohort and supporting next steps on the advocacy around the Water Resilience Portfolio.

**Applications for the NGO RATS is open until December 11th.** Staff or volunteers from water-related nonprofits are invited to apply to attend a 2-day abbreviated version of RATS training. Cost--\$250.

Apply now--[friendsoftheriver.org/get-involved/river-rats/](http://friendsoftheriver.org/get-involved/river-rats/)

# SAVING RIVERS IN THE ERA OF CLIMATE CHANGE

By Eric Wesselman, Executive Director

Friends of the River is gearing up to save rivers in the face of climate change. Higher temperatures and changing precipitation patterns are bringing increasingly catastrophic droughts, fires, and floods that can often destroy rivers, the communities they flow through, and people's lives. Increasingly "squeaky wheels" with the Governor's ear want the state to respond to this new reality by spending billions of dollars to build the kinds of water projects that dominated the last century and took a great toll on most of the rivers in California—more dams, diversions, levees, pipelines, tunnels, and canals.



Eric Wesselman giving a media interview during the Sustainable Water Solutions Expo in May

These are frequently the same voices that call climate change "a hoax". Their disingenuous and flawed argument claims that because of climate change, California should scrap environmental protections and go back to a time when destructive water projects could be built without regard for the ecological balance that our lives depend on. The voices will get louder as the impacts of climate change become more severe.

## Isn't there a better way?

This is pretty bleak vision, but FOR can paint a brighter one! Fifty years ago, an inspired effort got people to the moon and it forever changed our perspective on our blue planet. There can be no doubt that in 2020 a group of similarly inspired people can successfully reach for a future in which we meet our water needs and sustain healthy and vibrant rivers. FOR is an important part of that group. We are the people we've been waiting for and we are not going back. Full speed ahead!

## California can lead the way to a resilient water future.

FOR's Point Positive campaign is focused on making California a leader on climate resilient water solutions. The state is already doing this on energy. None of our state leaders are talking about weakening air quality protections so that we can go back to building coal-fired power plants. Instead, Californians took a huge leap forward by committing to 100 percent carbon-free electricity by

2045. It is time for a similar approach on water.

We have already started down the path toward climate resilient water solutions, but there remains enormous untapped potential for water reuse, efficiency, conservation, and a whole host of other innovative approaches. Point Positive seeks to scale up these approaches and then ensure enough of the water that we save actually stays in rivers and aquifers.

## What will it take to get there?

To make California a leader in water resiliency, FOR is working to build political alliances and strength, plus leadership that motivates and supports innovative thinking and a scientific approach. At the same time, acting defensively, we must prevent efforts that take us backwards, such as environmental rollbacks and the movement to build yet another dam on a river that already has five (Temperance Flat on the San Joaquin). To do this, FOR is building the strategy and the team to have a strong offense and defense with a particularly good ground game focused on building grassroots support. Real leadership on water will only emerge when there is sufficient public demand.

## Is Governor Newsom leading the way?

The Newsom administration is governing at a critical time. Climate change is here, and the impacts will only increase. We are standing on the tracks, a train is barreling down on us, and there is a pitfall trap behind us. The Newsom administration can preside over a water and extinction crisis or move us forward in a positive direction. We were very encouraged when the Governor ordered the state to develop a Water Resilience Portfolio plan. The plan will say a lot about where this administration wants to take us, and we should see it soon (perhaps by the time you read this). We were also encouraged when the Governor dropped the plan to build two massive water tunnels through the San Francisco Bay-Delta.

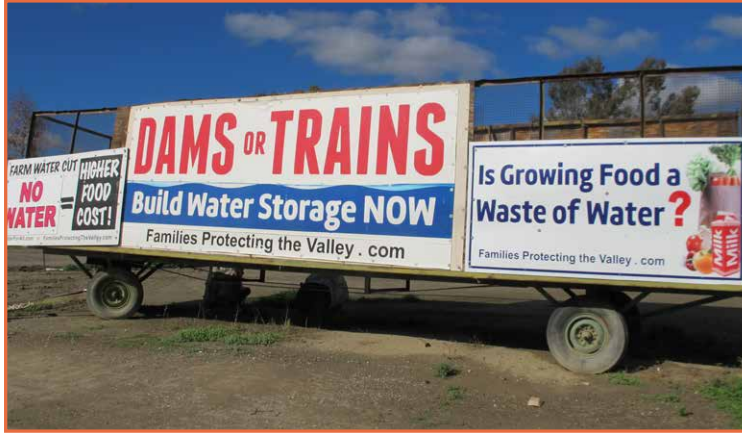
Unfortunately, there have also been troubling developments. The administration is now working on a plan for a single delta tunnel that could be just as destructive as two. Then the Governor vetoed SB1—a bill that would have protected California's rivers from the Trump administration's environmental rollbacks.

Last month, we were very pleased to learn the Newsom administration plans to sue to block a Trump administration rollback of endangered species protections for imperiled fish, but they simultaneously proposed an operations plan for the State Water Project that resembles parts of the Trump plan.

It is not yet clear yet where the Governor will go on water policy that recognizes and addresses problems of climate change, but it is very clear that we need to ramp up our campaign to Point Positive to alternative solutions that can save our rivers, as well as provide sufficient clean water for our citizens. At Friends of the River we say "full speed ahead!" As always, we ask for your support in our highly critical efforts on behalf of California Rivers.

# RIVER CURRENTS

By Ron Stork, Senior Policy Advocate



Driving I-5 in Kern and Fresno Counties, it's impossible not to see the signs. I mean the crudely made "Congress-created dust bowl," "dams not trains," "is using water to make food wrong" and their related ilk signs alongside farmers' fields. Of course the signs are parked next to hundreds of thousands of acres of corporate farms profitably growing citrus, pistachios, and almonds irrigated with state or federal water project water. So what is going on here?



## Adults in the room?

The Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) is the most significant change in California water law in my lifetime. Of course with change comes both opportunity and peril. Here's why.

Passed in 2014, SGMA requires priority groundwater basins (really sub-basins) to establish the boundaries of each basin and to form local groundwater sustainability agencies (GSAs), which by 2020 or 2022 have to create state-approved groundwater sustainability plans (GSPs) that can have as much as twenty or more years to manage their groundwater to avoid "undesirable results."

We'll see the first wave of plans in the coming months and few years. Predictably, the GSA boards of directors are often made up of the water oligarchs who created the unsustainable groundwater-mining operations in the first place. Not surprisingly, this happens in southern

San Joaquin Valley, where the highest magnitude of the state's groundwater mining occurs.

The problem is a big one; there's as much as a million acres of farmlands that were planted on the premise that groundwater was endless and free for the taking by any land owner who could afford a well driller and the electricity bill. The assumption was incorrect, and now these growers are facing the consequences: either use a lot less water in their operations or pull the orchards out for solar farms or take the farmland back into rangeland.

Of course there's that other option, the dream of many Valley boys and girls: damming your way to Paradise. Find some distant river to dam or dam the same river over and over again, and pump and canal the water to the fields — although under SGMA rules don't expand farmed acres beyond what the river and groundwater can supply, something they haven't done in many, many decades.

Of course, it's hard to find unspoken-for distant rivers nowadays. And it's hard to squeeze out much more water from rivers that have already been dammed and diverted. The question is going to be whether the state is going to let the GSPs rely on dreams.

## San Joaquin Valley Blueprint, blueprint for extinction?

The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation's Friant Dam project on the San Joaquin River provides water to more than a million acres of farms along the east side of the southern San Joaquin Valley. Its farmers both within the district and outside of the district are also responsible for a lot of the state's groundwater overdraft. And as they pump, the ground sinks and the canals no longer work as designed.

So speaking of dreams, the Friant Water Authority has a "solution" to the Valley's SGMA problem: ignore the state's Delta Reform Act calling for reduced reliance on San Joaquin/Sacramento River Delta (Delta) pumping, and import more water from the north state — and a lot more, at least two million acre-feet more of it (good water-year deliveries have recently ranged between four and six million acre feet).

The problem is you can't just do that by recklessly pumping the San Joaquin/Sacramento River Delta harder, although that is definitely in the plan too. No, you need some more infrastructure. That means stuff like (1) reconstructing the federal Friant-Kern Canal, (2) expanding the federal Delta-Mendota Canal (DMC), (3) building the Mid-Valley Canal to connect the DMC to the verdant fields of Reclamation's Friant Unit, (4) tapping north-state reservoirs harder, (5) building the giant Temperance Flat Dam on the San Joaquin River, a river so over-tapped that no more water rights are available, (6) expanding the Cross Canal near Bakersfield, (7) integrating westside water operations with those on the east side of the Valley (8) building more or expanded reservoirs everywhere possible, from Shasta Dam on the Sacramento, Sites dams off the Sacramento, Del Puerto dam in

western Stanislaus County, San Luis Dam off the state and federal aqueducts, and who knows what more.

These ideas to pump more water from the Delta and to dam and deliver more water to the southern San Joaquin Valley have always had powerful champions in the current federal administration. So the Friant Authority has launched a charm offensive at the Newsom Administration to support largely federal or proposed federal facilities with massive amounts of state taxpayer dollars.

More pumping of Delta waters is not going to help important state fisheries there, so some have renamed these proposals the “Blueprint for Extinction.” And hold on to your wallets too. Pat Brown, Jimmy Carter, and Ronald Reagan’s requirements that the beneficiaries of such water projects should bear the costs of the projects are not in the minds of elected officials nowadays.



*The McCloud River, photo credit: Tracey Diaz – Cal Trout*

## A respite for the McCloud River?

If there is one thing for certain, the current U.S. Department of the Interior and the nation’s largest water district, the Westlands Water District, don’t believe that wild and scenic rivers acts should get much respect.

During the Obama administration, the Department’s Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) prepared a final environmental impact statement (EIS) with a preferred alternative to expand Shasta Dam’s reservoir over an undammed reach of the McCloud River protected by the California Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. Not good, but at least the last administration did not have a recommended alternative, in part because the state could not participate because it was illegal to do so.

In 2016, Senator Feinstein carried legislation, the Water Infrastructure for the Nation Act (WIIN) that resolved some of Interior’s Obama-era hesitations about moving to construction but left intact Reclamation’s obligations to follow environmental and state law — and required Reclamation to have cost-sharing partners for WIIN dam projects. The next administration was not concerned about any of that and used the new authority granted to the Secretary of the Interior by the WIIN to declare the project was ready to commence construction. In late 2018, Westlands began an environmental impact report (EIR) to support cost-sharing the dam raise, which then drew lawsuits from the California Attorney General and two groups of

environmental and fishing groups, including Friends of the River, represented by Earthjustice.

The lawsuits resulted in a preliminary injunction against the EIR and a trial scheduled in April 2020. Westlands dropped the EIR, and the litigants reached a settlement that ordered Westlands not to do an EIR, sign cost-sharing agreements, or acquire more property around Shasta Reservoir if doing so would violate the California Wild & Scenic Rivers Act.

Of course it does, but Westlands has said it disagrees, so the effect of the settlement and resulting court order is uncertain. If you care about the McCloud River and the integrity of wild and scenic rivers systems, check out Friends of the River’s website for the latest developments and fact sheets and join up.

## Whither goest the San Joaquin River Gorge

In late 2014, the U.S. Department of the Interior’s Bureau of Land Management completed its EIS and record of decision to recommend the San Joaquin River gorge above Millerton Reservoir as a national wild and scenic river. Sounds good, but there’s a catch. The Department’s powerful Bureau of Reclamation has other plans for this river: earlier that year they issued a draft EIS to drown it behind what would be the second tallest dam in California.

This seems like an unlikely idea. After all, in government lingo, this river is fully appropriated: there are no more water rights left to hand out to aspiring dam owners. And the dam is expensive, nearly three billion dollars (before cost overruns) and is projected to only increase the water deliveries of the federal Central Valley Project (CVP) by 1% (assuming that Reclamation could get water rights). With a remaining CVP capital debt of a billion dollars and change, this dam is no bargain.

But that matters little to Reclamation and the dam’s true believers. All it takes is to get federal and state taxpayers to pay for it, and then it doesn’t matter what its true costs and benefits are. California taxpayers are already in for \$171 million (assuming the dam could get water rights), and the new Temperance Flat Reservoir Authority (the TFRA, made up of mostly eastside Friant water users) is counting on the federal government to chip in half the costs with hopes of more grants from the state and federal governments. Once the subsidies are tallied, then the TFRA will tap the “investors,” including westside mega-farm owners.

Consistent with the subsidy theme, the TFRA is drawing up operation plans for the dam that flout Reclamation law to guarantee that cheap water will still flow down the canals that depart from Millerton Reservoir. Well, what else would you expect? I know, I expect that they will be courting the governor and the legislature for more taxpayer money.

**For more information, check out Friends of the River’s website, including fact sheets and two videos.**

# HOW CAN YOU MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR CHARITABLE GIVING? LET US COUNT THE WAYS...



More and more people are planning their legacy gifts to organizations they care about. Friends of the River has recently seen an uptick in early legacy giving. That means more people are making charitable contributions from their estate plans right now and seeing immediate tax deductions and the impact their gifts have on rivers.

You have the power to make a lasting impact in the future of California's rivers. There is urgency right now to ensure that the Governor hears our voice over the lobbyists of the Big Ag industry. Climate change is here, and our need to secure a sustainable water supply without destroying rivers has become even more crucial. We are also faced with constant anti-environmental policies coming out of the Trump Administration. All of this adds up to the need for a stronger resistance as we advance a more positive vision.

Gifts large and small speak powerfully to future generations about who you are and the causes and places that are important to you. Your gift will serve as a powerful boost in our ability to advocate, organize, and operate effectively in these challenging times. You may also qualify for immediate and significant tax benefits, even under the new tax laws.

## **There are many ways to include Friends of the River in your estate plan for gifts now and in the future:**

- Include Friends of the River in your will or trust
- Make Friends of the River a beneficiary of your retirement plan
- Set up annual distributions from an IRA plan if you are over 70 ½
- Set up annual donations from your donor advised fund
- Contribute to the Ron Stork River Advocate Legacy Fund endowment
- Give appreciated stock or mutual funds held for more than one year (avoiding capital gains tax)

It's so easy to include Friends of the River in your estate plan. To learn more about additional giving options or to set up an early legacy gift, contact Brittney McMahon at 916-442-3155 ext. 214 or visit <https://www.friendsoftheriver.org/support-for/planned-giving>.



## **KEEP THE RIVERS FLOWING BECOME A SUSTAINING MEMBER**

As a Sustainer, your monthly contribution will provide a predictable revenue source, allowing FOR to plan and execute successful coalition campaigns throughout the year while helping us cut down on overhead expenses and staff time.

**It's a no-fuss way to keep the rivers flowing!**

**Use the enclosed envelope and check the Sustainer box, or give online at [Friendsoftheriver.org](http://Friendsoftheriver.org).**

*Contributions to Friends of the River are tax deductible to the full extent of the law. Tax ID 94-2400210*



## **GET THE LATEST NEWS**

The best way to stay up to date on our work is to subscribe to our monthly e-newsletter the River Advocate. Sign up on the homepage at [Friendsoftheriver.org](http://Friendsoftheriver.org) or send back the enclosed envelope with your email address.

## PROTECTING RIVERS THROUGH THE WILD & SCENIC SYSTEM

Friends of the River has been dedicated to preserving rivers through the wild and scenic system since our founding. Over the years, Friends of the River has helped to protect more than 2,000 miles through the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. Our work hasn't stopped though. In 2018, the state of California added the Mokelumne to the state wild and scenic system. This is the culmination of over 25 years of hard work and dedication from various entities, including Friends of the River.

### What we're working on now

Our newest staff member and Wild and Scenic Liaison, Colton Johnson, has been involved with the three national wild and scenic bills in California. These bills have been in the works for the past decade if not longer in some cases. For more information about these bills visit our website.

### Interactive Wild & Scenic System Map now available

We have been hard at work building and compiling an interactive map. This map is available on our website, and features both the state and national wild and scenic systems. Each river segment displays a popup when selected. This pop up shows the date of designation, length, and more. Colton has been mapping the potential designations in the current language of the three House bills. Once completed, the new layer will be able to show what these new protections would help preserve.



map displaying national and state wild and scenic rivers in CA

We will continue to improve upon our Wild and Scenic Rivers Map in 2020. By adding more feature layers and improving the ones currently in use, our goal is to help people understand and broaden their knowledge of all things Wild and Scenic. Through coalition work and grassroots organizing, we hope to see these bills continue to make their way through both houses and ultimately signed into law.

## RIVER PROGRAM SUCCESSES IN 2019



RATS Daisy Schadlich and Alex Guzman holding bottles of Point Positive Ale

In mid-November we enjoyed our last river trip of the season. Friends of the River continued our tradition of connecting people to rivers through hands-on advocacy trips.

The Canoe Program finished its season with the wildly popular Salmon Paddles with expert speakers bringing to life the hustle and struggle of the salmon life cycle. The Rafting Program trained 9 folks at the Basic Guide Training in July.

Other successes included the purchase of a new whitewater raft through the combined efforts and funds from the 2018 Gear Swap and a beer brewing adventure creating Point Positive Pale Ale. The finished beer was given as a gift at the Capitol River Awards in May. The Canoe Program raised funds from the sale of boats generously donated to the program, including a 1950s cedar Willits canoe and an ultra-light Kevlar Wenonah Spirit.

### Next Season Planning

After a brief hiatus, planning for the next season will begin for each program. The Canoe Program starts building its calendar in early January. The Rafting Program builds its calendar in early February. If you would like to volunteer with either program next year and would like to help set the course for next season, please contact Toby Briggs, Engagement Director for more details.

### Here are some fun stats from 2019:

#### Rafting Program

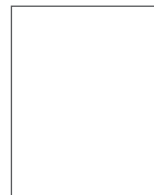
- 40 volunteers contributed 95 volunteer days supporting river trips, cooking meals and organizing gear
- 12 customized thwart straps were donated to secure gear in our boats
- 10 new river helmets were purchased to keep our noggins safe

#### Canoe Program

- 58 river lovers joined us on the river
- 10 volunteers contributed to 31 volunteer days of gear maintenance, canoe instruction and guided river trips
- 9 trips down the Lower American and Cosumnes Rivers



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# VOLUNTEERS —NEEDED—



## Interested in helping FOR grow?

FOR is looking for volunteers to help in the following capacities:

- Digital Image Curator
- Photography
- Data Entry as needed
- Phone banking
- Political Cartoonist
- Social Media Maven

If you have the time and ability to help out, we would love to hear from you.

Contact Kellie at  
[kellie@friendsoftheriver.org](mailto:kellie@friendsoftheriver.org)  
or 916-442-3155 x202  
for more information.