



Volume 10, Issue 1 - January 14, 2020

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Director's Corner

Welcome to 2020 and Thank You for Making 2019 a Strong Year for FOR!

By Eric Wesselman, Executive Director

First, I want to thank all of our supporters (volunteers and financial donors alike). Thanks to our financial supporters, and matching support from Patagonia, we are starting the year in a great position and looking forward to leveraging that to protect rivers and keep building momentum. There's no shortage of work to do!



Second, I'm so excited about Friends of the River's River Advocacy Training School (RATS). This is the fifth year of this incredible and intensive five-month program that trains and deploys volunteer organizers to build grassroots support for our work. Training for the new cohort starts this week!! Thanks to this program, with superb leadership by Toby Briggs, we now have organizers and local advocates across the state. RATS are going on to do great things from joining FOR's board and staff to spearheading special projects for campaigns and taking on new academic pursuits to launch a career in river protection, restoration and management.

This is just one of the programs people like you make possible. Almost 80 percent of FOR's funding comes from individuals like you and we are extremely grateful. Just like an ecosystem, having a diverse array of members makes FOR more resilient. If you haven't already, please consider being a part of the FOR ecosystem.

News and Updates



Thank You!

Last month, Patagonia set the environmental non-profit world into a fundraising frenzy when they announced that they would MATCH all donations to their current grantees if made through their website. We at Friends of the River were so excited to take advantage of this amazing opportunity and were even more excited to see the strong community of supporters step up to help us raise funds to save rivers with climate resilient water solutions.

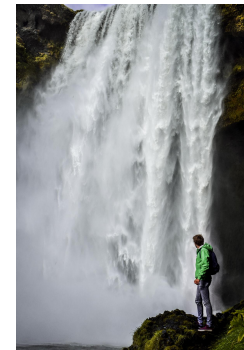
With your support, **we raised nearly \$100,000** which will be matched by Patagonia!

This is huge! This boost in funding will help us add capacity to advocate for rivers, expand our volunteer base through the River Advocacy Training School, and launch a media campaign that will reach millions of Californians. We certainly couldn't have done it without you, we thank you!

Environmental Personhood

By Colton Johnson, On-River Program Associate and Wild and Scenic Liaison

Environmental Personhood: A legal concept that can designate certain environmental entities with legal personhood. The concept in regards to the legal system is rather new, however the concept of environmental entities being a living thing has been around in indigenous cultures for a long time.



In 2014 Te Urewera National Park in New Zealand was declared Te Urewera. At that moment it stopped being owned by the government and instead was viewed as its own free and inalienable land. In 2017 New Zealand continued to use this legal idea to protect its wild spaces by recognizing the Whanganui River as a person. The Whanganui River is now addressed as Te Awa Tupua. These moves recognize long commitment by the Maori tribes to protect their lands and waters.

The concept has come to the states too! The Yurok Tribe recognized the Klamath River as a person in 2019. The Yurok tribe has relied on the Klamath as a major source of food. In the past 100 years the health of the rivers ecosystem have been declining. Dams, diversions, and climate change have resulted in fewer salmon. The personhood of the river will mean it now has a right to exist, flourish, and naturally develop.

The move towards greater acceptance and use of environmental personhood marks a greater path to protection for our natural resources.

Get Involved!

Planning is underway for the 2020 season river programs

- Rafting Planning Retreat—February 1st @ 10 am-3 pm in Sacramento

Please email Toby Briggs (tobybriggs@friendsoftheriver.org) if you would like to participate in the planning for the canoe or rafting program or are interested in volunteering next season.

River Currents

By Ron Stork, *Policy Director*

[View Full River Currents Article!](#)

All quiet on the Shasta Dam raise front?

I'd like to say that for the first time in years there is no news to report regarding Westlands and the Bureau of Reclamation's efforts to raise Shasta Dam. Well, not quite.

It is true that Reclamation's schedule to issue construction contracts in December 2019 apparently did not happen. Their project timeline remains on their website. Their FAQ contains an admission of some problems though, stating "Reclamation is aware that some entities have raised concerns about the implications of Section 5093.542 of the California Public Resources Code and are working with the state to address them." We suspect, but don't know, if the last bit (working with the state) is true, but we suspect not. But it's good they have heard of the California Wild & Scenic Rivers Act....



Dueling Members of Congress on Shasta Dam Raise

Of course, there was quite a fracas on Shasta Dam in December. Congress, late as usual, was trying to pass the appropriations bills needed to fund much of the federal government, which is always a good time for hostage-taking.

So this year, Capitol Hill was abuzz over the effort by House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy (R-Bakersfield) to insert money for the Shasta Dam raise in HR 1865, one of the "minibuses" that was being put together to fund parts of the federal government...

Federal Fiscal Year 2020, the Drama, the Pathos

For many years now, Congress has been unable to get the thirteen appropriations bills out in the regular order: separate bills, committee reports, going to conference with the other body of Congress, passing a final bill and signed by the President before the start of the federal fiscal year (October 1). Instead, they have resorted to omnibus bills where whatever scraps of bills are taken, modified, and crammed into one bill and voted on with limited debate in December or even later, all played out against the specter of a government shut down...

Slush funds, Dam Subsidies, and Robbing the Treasury

Let's face it, with the already dammed and redammed rivers of America, modern-day dam proposals are just dead-beat dams looking for a hand out.

Enter the WIIIN of 2016. It established a slush fund for dam-construction financing, controlled by the Secretary of the Interior, created with advanced payments on capital debt owed by federal water contractors diverted from a U.S. Treasury account controlled by the Congress. But during its short history, the slush fund has been funded by Congressional appropriations — so much for studying this dam, so much for pre-construction and design, and so much for construction...

What Voice do Californians Have?

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And speaking of dam proposals

In the coast range above the town of Patterson is Del Puerto Canyon. There's a little road that winds up there, and it's a nice place for birding and wildflower appreciation.

Click here to read the January [River Currents](#) article by Ron Stork

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Thank you for supporting rivers by staying informed.
We can't wait to see you at our next event!

Sincerely,
the FOR Staff: Eric, Ron, Brittney, Toby, Kellie and Colton

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