



Volume 10, Issue 5 - May 8, 2020

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Director's Corner

New Friends of the River Board Members

By Eric Wesselman, Executive Director

Board Developments

Friends of the River (FOR) is extremely fortunate to have a number of strengths that are helping us weather the new and unforeseen challenges we are facing in 2020. In this case I'm referring to our Board of Directors. FOR's board is extremely engaged and active on program work, fundraising, and administration of the organization. Throughout this stay at home period, the Board is holding monthly virtual meetings with more frequent committee meetings in between to ensure we persist with our mission and help find a successful line through this Class V rapid. On top of this, FOR has added three extremely talented board members over the last few months and I'm thrilled to introduce them to you.



Charlie Center grew up on the banks of the South Fork American River in Lotus, California where he heard plenty of talk about river protection from his parents who helped found FOR in 1973. Charlie fell in love with kayaking at an early age and began paddling professionally at eighteen. While attending law school he took a sabbatical to co-create the environmental documentary *The Last Descent*. Upon completion of the film, Charlie finished law school and became a prosecutor. Charlie recently launched a new chapter in his life when he and his wife Crystal decided to return to Lotus where they now have three wild young kids. While running Camp Lotus with help from his mom, he finds time to offer his support as a pro bono environmental lawyer for nonprofits including FOR. He

now joins FOR as a Board member to help steward and defend the rivers and canyons of our great state with his own kids listening in and bouncing into video conference calls on occasion.

Garrick Chang, living most of his life in California, has explored it's mountains, deserts, rivers, marshes and seashore while fishing, hunting, hiking and paddling. His adventures inspired a deep appreciation for the state's fish and wildlife, and concern as he witnessed significant decline of their habitat. Since transitioning from a career caring for people with cancer, he is now putting his energy towards caring for the places and critters that have given him so much joy. Last year that inspired him to join FOR's River Advocacy Training School to learn more about California water issues and how he could help make a difference. After building support for our climate resilient water agenda and engaging in Point Positive Day at the State Capitol he was ready to take his commitment to the next step by joining the Board.

Ravi Kurani has dedicated his career to water quality and safety. From his early days as a pool boy for his father's pool and spa business, Ravi has always wondered why everyone can't have clean water. This feeling solidified when he was in India with First Light Ventures Fund and Village Capital—A microfinance private equity initiative that invests in social enterprises that provide goods and services to low-income customers in emerging markets around the world. Ravi went on to found Sutro and built a sensor-connected app to monitor water quality. The technology is being used to maintain healthy swimming pools and has much broader application potential to save chemicals, water, energy and money in agriculture and municipal drinking water systems. Ravi believes that being an entrepreneur is an honor he must earn daily since it gives him the ability to solve problems that not only make money but help society. He now brings that same entrepreneurial spirit and dedication to FOR as a member of the Board.

News and Updates



Join us on May 15th for a Virtual Rafting with the Legends

This event, usually held in May, has been one of the most popular auction items at the California River Awards for years and has been traditionally only available to a limited number of people. Now we are taking it virtual for an evening riverside chat with some of the real legends of the river movement.

Hosts: Bob Cushman, FOR Board Chair and
Scott Armstrong, longtime Board member and owner of All Outdoors

Moderator: Mark Dubois, Board Emeritus and former Executive Director

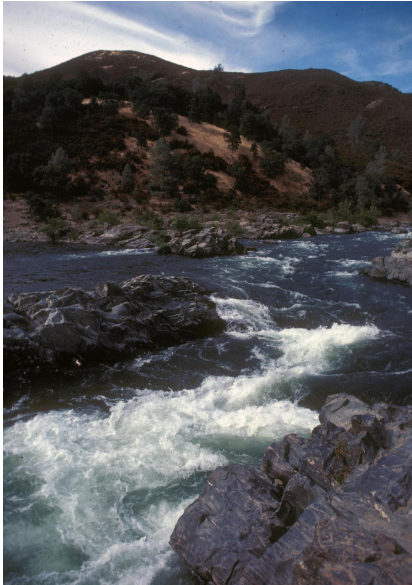
River Legends: George Armstrong of All Outdoors

Bill McGinnis of Whitewater Voyages

Joe Daly of Echo: The Wilderness Co.

May 15, 2020, 7:00 pm

[Register Now](#)



More trouble on the South Fork American --refighting a fight from 20 years ago.

Twenty years ago the El Dorado Irrigation District (EID) sought and won an assignment of a 1927 state water right filing for some 17,000 acre-feet per year of water from the South Fork American River. Of course, there were protests filed at the State Water Resources Control Board.

The District worked to resolve the protests with small upstream counties concerned about their tourist economies if EID, the new owners of two heavily used reservoirs there, did not accommodate recreation well. The project, as proposed, was envisioned by EID to allow for diversions in upstream of reaches of the South Fork with small seasonal and extensive year-round recreational use. The protests were resolved by agreeing to this water right by having the point of diversion in Folsom Reservoir

So again, the now peaceable kingdom prospered with happy people. So we were surprised when EID published a Notice of Preparation to undertake an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) to add upstream points of diversions to the project. Good grief, this was settled two decades ago! [Read EID's documents](#).

Well, that puts us in a position play the EIR and water-rights protests games again. We are working on detailed comments, but you can to join in too. **Scoping comments are due by 5:00 p.m. on Monday, May 18, 2020.**

And the message is simple:

1. More upstream diversions mean less water for recreation and fisheries downstream of these diversions.
2. California water issues are complicated enough, but they are made even more difficult when water agencies cannot be relied upon to abide by their commitments.

Send your comments to:

E-mail: P21112@eid.org |

Comments provided by email should include the name and mailing address of the commenter in the body of the email and include "Water Right Permit 21112 Project" in the subject line.

OR

El Dorado Irrigation District
2890 Mosquito Road
Placerville, CA 95667

Attn: Brian Deason, Environmental Resources Supervisor
Phone: (530) 642-4064

The original workshop on May 21st received so much interest that we are offering a second one.

Storytelling Workshop | MAY 27TH @ 7:00 PM PST

Led by Rose Johnson of Nimble Roots

Kickstart your story writing during this 1.5 hour workshop. Learn more about how to make your story vivid, meaningful and flow well. Meet other FOR folks in the process!

The workshop is followed by a story coaching session and an optional story share with people in the cohort. The workshop is free and donation are welcome. **Please register to hold your spot!**

[Register Here!](#)

Featured Story

The Throughline.

by Laurie McCann

The River Beckons

One day in June 1973, a small yellow raft pushed onto the beach at Rose Creek, four intrepid paddlers spilled out of the boat, tossed their horse collar PFD's on the beach and headed up the creek to make like otters in the water slides. I stepped off the back of the boat, shucked off the wet tennis shoes and collapsed on the beach.

Until that day, the Class II section of the Stanislaus River, from Parrott's Ferry Bridge to the tailwaters of the old Melones reservoir, constituted the sum total of my rafting experience. Miraculously, with no river experience, no training and no idea of what was awaiting us downstream, we had managed to navigate Death Rock, Widow Maker, and Bailey Falls.

Alongside the mental fatigue and physical exhaustion, an unfamiliar and almost intangible sensation of wonder and well-being reverberated through my body. I fell asleep in the warm sand, until the hikers returned. Back into the boat, paddle forward! And my life was changed forever: "Simply messing...about in boats—or with boats. In or out of 'em it doesn't matter." -- Rat, *Wind in the Willows*

What's the most important?

In September, I found myself hustling shoppers in Marin County to qualify..[Continue reading](#)



Get Involved!

Navigating the 'Corona Summer' Rapid - An update on summer river events

We hope this finds you well even as we continue to shelter in place and practice physical distancing!

We originally cancelled river events through May. FOR has made another tough, but necessary choice to cancel rafting and canoe events through August. Depending on how factors shift this summer, we may be able to offer canoe trips starting in September.

We have made the tough decision to carry our boats around the 'Corona Summer' rapid for the safety of you, our participants and staff. Complying with physical distancing leaves some important obstacles on our throughline like managing shuttles, moving, rolling, lifting and transporting gear in safe ways, plus others. If there is an emergency in the water, we would act, but in the process not be able to maintain our distance.

We are working to roll out other ways to stay connected with our amazing river community this summer. Keep an eye out for future emails from us regarding other ways to stay involved. In the meantime, call/message a FOR river friend and see how they are faring!

River Zen

By Colton Johnson, River Program Coordinator

You may have seen some of our recent emails or social media posts and been curious about what river zen is. The beauty in river zen is that everyone can define it in their own personal way. For us at Friends of the River, river zen is that feeling of calm and peace brought by sitting by the lapping banks of a river. That moment of relaxation and sweet embrace before you take that nap in the sun. River zen is our attempt to help show that even during these wild times we can still connect.



Over the past month we have received lots of photos. From beautiful waterways right outside your home to the wacky and wild adventures you have had on rivers in the past. We love the stories and the smiles that you have been sharing.

If we haven't featured your photo yet, FEAR NOT! The time will come, we have so many great submissions to choose from. That being said we can't wait to continue to share this zen with you. Please keep sending us your laughs, smiles, and your deep breaths. We welcome all forms of river zen and the stories that accompany them!

Submit photos to Kellie kellie@friendsoftheriver.org with a story or explanation and we will share it!

River Love, from all of us at Friends of the River.

River Currents

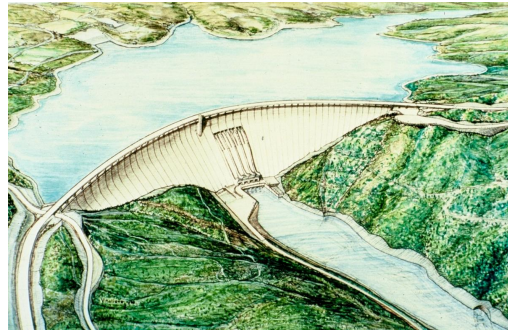
By Ron Stork, *Policy Director*

View Full River Currents Article!

Real Fairytales

Once upon a time, there were decades of struggle to protect nearly 50 miles of the American River above Folsom Reservoir (and above the state capital) from the giant proposed Auburn Dam.

Many black knights were trying to carry away the damsel in distress (the American River), and knights willing to defend her were few....



The McCloud river and Shasta Dam raise news

The California Wild & Scenic Rivers Act makes the Shasta Dam raise illegal. Federal law requires that the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation follow state law in these matters. So why has this matter been the lead story in Currents for so long? Well, that's because the Bureau of Reclamation and the Westlands Water District still want to inundate more of the McCloud River under this reservoir — and are prepared to try to get around the law to do it...

FERC's Office of Dam Safety and Inspections turns up the rhetorical heat on slackers

A number of us have commented on FERC's increased attention to their dam safety program after the near disaster at the Oroville Dam spillways in 2017. Letters have been flying out of FERC on small and large issues, even during the COVID 19 stay-at-home orders. Among the small was checking on some of PG&E's purported seismic-safety calculations and discovering they did not apply to one installed project facility (by a factor of 10). Among the larger was FERC's recent order to the Santa Clara Water District to drain their largest municipal reservoir for seismic-safety reasons. (Disturbingly, Santa Clara replied that their drain valve might not be able to safely drain their reservoir without sustaining significant damage — itself something that should be an issue of concern to FERC)...

Confessions

No, this is not about St. Augustine's Confessions. That was 1,600 years ago, and I don't think my confessions are about sins.

Rather, I confess that I am a plant guy, so it was with some pleasure that I received an email alert from the California Native Plant Society (CNPS) to write to the California Fish & Game Commission put the Shasta Snow Wreath on the California Endangered Species Act candidate list. And although they misspelled "endangered" in one place, the alert and the prior effort met with success, and the web alert was promptly updated to reflect that...

Sites Dam and Reservoir gets facelift

There's two big dam proposed projects in the Sacramento Valley spawned by the prospect of taxpayer cash from California's Proposition 1 and the federal Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation Act (WIIN): the Shasta Dam raise (the WIIN) and the Sites Reservoir Project (Prop 1 and maybe the WIIN).

The Sites project is a proposed offstream reservoir in the inner coast ranges to be filled by water pumped from the Sacramento River. But at five or six billion dollars, it's been looking a bit dodgy in recent years. Most spending than income can do that to you..

Reclamation helping out the needy

When the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation thinks of charity after the passage of the Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation Act of 2016 (WIIN), they have tended to think of needy dam projects. So it was no great surprise when we saw that it was starting an environmental impact statement (EIS) to support a Secretarial gift of 25% of the costs of the Del Puerto Water District's half a billion dollar proposed Del Puerto Canyon dam...

Trouble on the South Fork American

The Sacramento Municipal Utility District (SMUD) holds the lion's share of reservoir and hydroelectric diversions in the watershed of the S.F. American River (plus some Middle Fork water). El Dorado Irrigation District operates an old project there with some storage reservoirs and a diversion. PG&E operates the last dam before the Coloma Valley and thus regulates the flows between here and Reclamation's Folsom Reservoir.

It's a well-plumbed watershed. And from PG&E's Chile Bar Dam to Folsom Reservoir is the most used whitewater river in California. So when SMUD decided to end its license-required recreational white water releases in the upper watershed on the basis of COVID 19 restrictions, folks took note, phones lines got hot, and Zoom got some more business...

Clean Water Act bules and a cry for help

Over the past few years, Currents has spent bits of your time providing some news of the ever steepening slope of the state's loss of its powers and responsibilities to properly administer Section 401 of the Clean Water Act.

We've tended to emphasize the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission's (FERC) role in ever broadening its supposed powers granted by the Hoopa court to waive the state's water quality certification authority in hydroelectric dam licensings and relicensings. But this is not just happening in FERC world. The EPA is undertaking the finishing touches in proposed regulations that purport to give federal agencies in other realms the power to waive water quality certifications...

The wages of sin are...taxpayer subsidies

The southern San Joaquin Valley is the center of California's groundwater overpumping lands. Farmers, who until recently had evaded measures to regulate groundwater pumping, for decades had been inexorably been drawing down the groundwater table and the land the groundwater had held up.

Yes, in addition to drying up shallower wells, the land itself has been lowered and interfering with the irrigation canals that serve the farmers with them — including federal canals that the Valley farmers had agreed to maintain...

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

Sign up for email updates

Contribute

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

