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Volume 10, Issue 2 - February 6, 2020

### This issue includes:

- Director's Corner
  - What's the deal with overhead?
- News & Updates
  - Save the Date: Point Positive Day
  - Welcome aboard 8 New River Advocates (RATS)!
  - Environmental Personhood in the United States
- Get Involved!
  - Check March's River Advocate for Summer calendar
- River Currents

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## Director's Corner

### What's the deal with overhead?

By Eric Wesselman, Executive Director

Overhead expenses often get a bad rap at non-profit organizations. We certainly work to keep them low at Friends of the River, but these investments enable all of the work we do for rivers. Where would we be without computers, phones, desks, chairs, and an office? More importantly, where would we be without people who make sure we all have the tools we need for this trade and that they are all functioning well? Since 2018, Kellie Dawson has been just that person at FOR—a fundamental member of the team.



Just a few of her absolutely vital responsibilities include:

- Getting donations in the bank and acknowledging donors like you.
- Pulling us together for staff meetings to ensure we're communicating and coordinating our work
- Keeping the lights on by making sure our bills are payed on time
- Making sure we have the tools we need to do our job
- Being a center fielder—someone who can step in and make key plays when the team needs an extra pair of hands.

When this work is done well, it is truly glamorous and something to behold. That's exactly what we get to enjoy every day with Kellie on the team. Perhaps most importantly, Kellie sets a tone for the office with her positive and practical attitude, and her delightfully cynical sense of humor!

So when it comes to overhead expenses, I say “hooray for Kellie Dawson.”

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## News and Updates

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### Save the Date! Point Positive Day

A day of education and outreach at the State Capitol to elevate Point Positive Solutions

**May 13, 2020 8 am to 8 pm**  
State Capitol and California Museum  
Sacramento, CA

3 ways to join us:

#### Meet your Legislators

Meet with your legislators to discuss current legislation. Friends of the River offers a morning training on current issues and best practices for meetings.

#### Water Resilience Expo

Meet the people who are innovating and forwarding solutions that lead to a resilient water future for California.

#### Point the Way Party

Finish the day with a fun gathering at the California Museum with local beers and wine. Stay for tasty food, a short program, live music and fun!

[Learn More](#)

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### Welcome aboard 8 new River Advocates (RATS)!

We are pleased to have recently trained 8 new River Advocates (RATS) in mid-January up at Camp Lotus. The RATS come from a variety of places and backgrounds ranging from the Central Valley to the Central Coast to the Kern River and Merced River to the Greater Sacramento Area. Each RAT brings skills and interests that diversify and enrich the reach of their work.

Our RATS this season are supporting Point Positive: May 13th –a day of advocacy and outreach at the State Capitol by reaching out to businesses who support the idea that it is critical to invest in ecosystem health if we hope to have a thriving economy as our climate becomes more variable.

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## Environmental Personhood in the United States

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



In the last River advocate we touched on a few examples of environmental personhood outside of the United States, and how recently the Klamath River had been granted personhood by the Yurok Tribe.

Since that piece we received a lot of questions and began to look more into the concept of environmental personhood here in the United States. While the Klamath may be the most recent natural entity to be granted legal personhood in the US, it certain isn't the only entity.

Here is some of what we found:

- The Ho-Chunk Nation of Wisconsin amended their constitution to include the Rights of Nature in 2017.
- In 2018 the White Earth Band of Ojibwe of Minnesota adopted the rights of Manoomim. This protects the rights of wild rice and the freshwater they need to survive.
- In 2019 the citizens of Toledo, Ohio approved a referendum to grant legal personhood to Lake Erie.
- As recently as 2017 the people of Colorado attempted to grant environmental personhood to the mighty Colorado River.

So what do these new entities gain in a legal sense? Well it's hard to tell since it is so recent. Since these natural entities are gaining the legal recognition of a person they will be afforded the same rights and protections a person is granted. As we move forward and more rivers, lakes, and plants are gaining legal personhood there may come a time when these rights are challenged. We must continue to stand up with and for our natural environment as it is facing the reality of manmade climate change. "

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## Get Involved!

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Check March's River Advocate for our Summer Calendar

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## River Currents

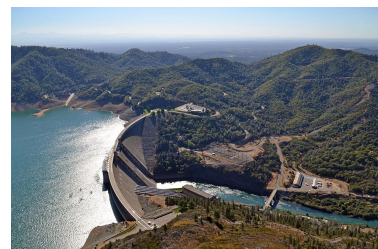
By Ron Stork, *Policy Director*

[View Full River Currents Article!](#)

### Shasta Dam raise progress report

Until this week, the big news on the Shasta Dam raise was that the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) updated their Shasta Dam raise website. For some real news, see the "Raiding the storage..." below

The project timeline now is more simple: now they are working on design work and the record of decision for their



five-year-old final environmental impact statement (EIS) and upcoming is all the rest. It's a far cry from a month by month timeline with a begin-construction date in December of 2019. Of course the project FAQ still calls for the completion of the project by 2024, but it's hard to expunge all the dates from their website

### **Another dam proposal gets serious**

Flying under the radar screen of most environmental groups has been the proposal to place a half a billion dollar, 260-foot tall dam at the mouth of Del Puerto Canyon, a coast-range watershed northwest of the City of Patterson. The federal appropriations process is obscure to all but the most inside of insiders. As a result, more than a million dollars for studies for the dam popped into this year's minibus bill to subsidize studies.

Still, in California, building dams means a public process...

### **The California Supremes to the rescue?**

California and the states have long been able to influence non-federal hydropower dam decisions through the use of their ability to make sure that licensing decisions by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission meet the state's water quality requirements. That ability has been affirmed repeatedly in the federal courts.

It was thus quite a surprise when the Third Appellate District, a California appeals court, asked for briefs on whether the legal remedies over disputes regarding the state's water quality decisions in the relicensing of the state's own dam facilities were federally pre-empted...

### **San Joaquin Valley Congressmen**

It's pretty easy to be a San Joaquin Valley Congressman. Your job is to support dams and canals and state and federal subsidies to pay for them. Even the newbies learn this quickly.

So when former Republican Representatives Denham and Valadao lost their races to current Democratic Representatives Josh Harder and T.J. Cox, it wasn't long before the freshmen congressmen were working to help to create new authorities to build and reconstruct sinking Valley water projects, build slush funds for the Secretary of the Interior, at his discretion, to fund storage and canal projects, and to fill the authority with new appropriations...

### **Raiding the storage slush fund for dams and canals**

And speaking of slush funds, House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy (R-Bakersfield) proudly announced this week that the Department of the Interior was supplementing Congressional appropriations for the Friant-Kern Canal repair (an \$11 million supplement) and the Shasta Dam raise pre-construction and design activities (an \$8 million supplement).

The source of the supplemental funding apparently came from the Secretary's "Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation Act of 2016" (WIIN) slush fund, officially called the Water Storage Fund. Setting aside the legalities (canals are not storage projects, and the slush fund came from direct appropriations rather than WIIN advanced payments to retire capital debt of the CVP), this may be the first use of the slush fund by Secretarial action rather than by outlays from the appropriations committees...

### **Get out, see the California spring**

Groundhog Day came and went. It's not just a day about a cute, sleepy marmot. It's meant to celebrate a cross-quarter day, a day half way from the winter solstice to the vernal equinox. The days are getting noticeably longer. And in California, especially after a warm and dry January, spring is in the air...

**Click here to read the February [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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