



**2019**

ANNUAL IMPACT  
— REPORT —

# ABOUT FRIENDS OF THE RIVER

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- **Eric Wesselman**, Executive Director
- **Ronald Stork**, Senior Policy Advocate
- **Toby Briggs**, Engagement Director
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- **Colton Johnson**, River Program Coordinator
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## OUR MISSION:

Friends of the River protects and restores California Rivers by influencing public policy and inspiring citizen action.

## ABOUT US:

Friends of the River was founded in 1973 during the struggle to save the Stanislaus River from New Melones Dam. Following that campaign, we grew to become California's statewide river conservation organization.

***Friends of the River is dedicated to preserving and restoring California's rivers, streams, and their watersheds and advocating for sustainable water management.***

Friends of the River is nationally recognized as an authority on the adverse impacts of dams on rivers and ecosystems and is the most effective grassroots organization working on behalf of rivers. We have led successful campaigns for the permanent protection of many outstanding California rivers and streams - including the Kings, Kern, Merced, Tuolumne, upper Klamath, West Walker, East Carson, Sisquoc, and Big Sur Rivers, as well as Sespe Creek and Cache Creek.

# — A LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR —

## A Thankful Look Back at 2019

Given all that's happening in the world today it's easy to look back on 2019 with fond memories of simpler times. Yet, more and more people are realizing that instead of returning to normal, we need to create a new normal where people come together to tackle daunting and global challenges. In this light, current events bring new clarity and urgency to the work we did in 2019 and our need to evolve and grow as an organization and a movement.



First and foremost, we focused on protecting California rivers from the Trump administration - the greatest threat our rivers have confronted at the federal level since we were founded in 1973. When the Trump administration and the Westlands Water District announced that they wanted to expand Shasta Reservoir, which would flood the protected McCloud River and the remaining land of the Winnemem Wintu tribe, we took Westlands to court and stalled out their planning process. To protect the Yuba River, we won a legal ruling against the Trump administration for deciding they did not need to protect endangered fish in that river. In 2020 we must see this work through and more.

At the same time, we played more offense in 2019 because holding the line isn't enough. It has become crystal clear in the last few years that the warming climate is bringing increasingly catastrophic droughts, fires, and floods that can destroy rivers and the communities they flow through. To advance a sustainable water future, we convened and activated more than 250 businesses, environmental groups, farmers, and water agencies to engage on Governor Newsom's initiative to craft a statewide water resilience portfolio plan. Our recommendations focused on sustainable solutions that take pressure off of rivers and accelerated restoration of climate resilient watersheds.

We also helped build support for support new wild and scenic rivers in California as part of a larger coalition effort. There are now three bills that would add more than 650 river miles in California to the national system. All three of these bills passed through the House Natural Resource committee in late 2019.

As always, everything we do for rivers is made possible by people like you. In addition to individual financial supporters, we have now recruited and trained more than fifty organizers through our River Advocacy Training School and we brought volunteers from across the state to Sacramento to give rivers a stronger voice in our State Capitol.

Thank you for making all of this possible!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Eric Wesselman'.

Eric Wesselman - Executive Director

# — 2019 EVENTS —



## California River Awards

The 2019 California River Awards was a beautiful evening held at the Marines Memorial Club and Hotel on October 12th.

We were thrilled to honor author and artist Obi Kaufmann, who gave us an inspiring reflection on the human connection to nature. A special performance by Nancy Cassidy livened up the evening. Plus, a tribute was made to legendary river advocate Don Briggs, who used his talent for film-making and photography to capture and inspire an environmental movement. It was great to see so many new faces along with many longtime friends.

The California River Awards is Friends of the River's signature fundraising event, raising more than \$180,000 in 2019 to support climate-resilient water solutions.



## Point Positive: Capital River Awards

A great day at the Capitol was followed by a lovely evening to celebrate Senator Robert Hertzberg and Regina Hirsch, two powerhouse individuals working to make Point Positive a way of life in California.

Attendees joined us from local water agencies, water technology businesses, graduates from the River Advocacy Training school (RATS), and river lovers from all over the state. The evening raised over \$40,000 towards our work to protect rivers by advancing sustainable water solutions in a warming climate, and we met our funding goal to purchase a new raft and helmets for the rafting program!



## Point Positive Day: May 15th

The day kicked off with an opportunity to Meet your Legislators. These legislative visits were attended by 40 advocates representing 25 organizations and businesses. Advocates completed 28 scheduled meetings and 31 Senate drop-in visits. They also delivered 102 personal support letters for SB 332 to 22 offices.



The Point Positive Water Solutions Expo organized by Friends of the River gathered 18 organizations to showcase how companies and individuals are using water technologies and natural infrastructure to address climate change realities.

During the Expo, a press conference was held that brought together Senate Majority Leader Robert Hertzberg, Orriana Bretschger CEO and founder of Aquacycl, Jamie Smith UP of Marketing of Flume Tech, and Eric Wessleman from Friends of the River to highlight the day's activities.



# ON RIVER PROGRAMS



## Canoe

Friends of the River was thrilled to offer another wonderful canoe season which included 9 canoe events. We took 63 guests with us on various Canoe Adventures, Fundamentals of Canoeing class, and Salmon Paddles. This was made possible by our amazing volunteers, 10 of whom contributed 2 or more days of their time to support the program.

Canoe Adventures offered trips on the Lower American and Cosumnes Rivers with an expert speaker invited to teach. We held one 2-day Fundamentals of Canoeing class. A new event was built in partnership with Effie Yeaw Nature Center called 'Nature of Things' speaker event. The 2-day lecture and field excursion explored the ways people have interacted with the Lower American before and after the 1849 Gold Rush. The lecture was followed by a full day paddle to connect the talk to the landscape. The season concluded with two Salmon Paddles on the Lower American River. Participants observe salmon as they created their redds (nests) and spawned.

This year FOR raised over \$6,000 from the sale of canoes donated to the program. Although beautiful and valuable, they were not suitable for FOR's programmatic needs.

The season concluded with a gear maintenance day and potluck hosted by Judy Roberson.



## Rafting

Friends of the River's 2019 rafting season was another success. We offered 13 days of rafting and took 91 guests down the South Fork American. Our wonderfully dedicated volunteers led and supported our trips. 30 volunteers contributed a collective 95 days of their time, while 22 of them supported 2 or more trips!

The rafting season began with a Gear Love event where we prepared and assessed our equipment for the season. The abundance of snowpack in the Sierra created a highwater season on the South Fork. Because of this, Basic Guide Training was delayed until July. Jeremy Anderson led the training with the support of a great crew of volunteers. Nine new guides were trained including River Advocate alumni, children of FOR members and new friends.

Friends of the River continued the tradition of engaging legislative staff on river. This year we focused heavily on Governor Newsom's Water Resilience Portfolio. The participants from various legislative offices and committees were thrilled to see that Friends of the River was so engaged in making recommendations.

Through our efforts in brewing and fundraising with our Point Positive Pale Ale, we were able to add a new 14' NRS Otter raft to our fleet. We were also able to purchase 10 new helmets and we received a donation of 12 embroidered thwart straps!

The rafting season closed with a Volunteer Appreciation Day. FOR volunteers were invited to raft during the day and join us for a dinner prepared by FOR staff. Friends of the River is proud to continue the tradition of connecting people to rivers we work to protect.



## River Advocacy Training School

The River Advocacy Training School (RATS) trained the sixth cohort since it began in 2016. The nine River Advocates started with a 4-day intensive training in January at Camp Lotus, Lotus, California. The training focused on growing their background of the complexities of California water, developing their advocacy toolbox, and building community.

The cohort enhanced FOR's outreach to environmental organizations during the spring. Cumulatively, the RATS increased the list of organizations endorsing the Climate Resilient Water Agenda from 52 to 108 organizations. The Climate Resilient Water Agenda was developed by 2 dozen organizations the previous fall before Governor Gavin Newsom entered office and was a useful tool when people met with legislators at Point Positive: May 15th, 2019. With the successful completion of the cohort, FOR has trained 49 River Advocates.

# POLICY AND ADVOCACY

## Water Policy and Advocacy in 2019

In a big effort, we quarterbacked or helped to quarterback a number of groups' comments to shape the Governor's water policy — the Water Resilience Portfolio.

In court and administrative venues, we attempted to defend California's ability to protect water quality in the state, against an appeals court gone mad thinking the feds had pre-empted the federally required duties of the State Water Resources Control Board. On the bright side, we persuaded the California Supreme Court to overturn one decision and got the same Supreme Court to grant review when the lower court went wrong again on the same case.

In related efforts, we threw our best arguments at FERC in four cases in the last year arguing against their interest in waiving the state's water quality certification role, but success will probably have to come through elections here.

Dams were also on our mind. We helped lead a coalition of groups to beat back (for now) an attempt by the Westlands Water District to partner with the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation's attempt to expand Shasta Reservoir into a portion of the McCloud River protected by the California Wild & Scenic Rivers Act.



istock photo: South Fork Trinity River

## Wild and Scenic Rivers

Friends of the River was a part of a larger coalition effort supporting three wild and scenic river bills in California. These bills would add more than 650 miles to the National Wild and Scenic River system, if they were signed into law. The Central Coast Heritage Protection Act, Northwest California Wilderness, Recreation, and Working Forests Act, and the San Gabriel Mountains Foothills and Rivers Protection Act all passed through the House Natural Resource Committee in late 2019. In a stunning move of bipartisan support, Representative John Curtis (R-Utah) spoke on behalf of the Northwest California bill, saying "Although there are things I would do differently, there are a number of things I was impressed with." A House floor vote on these bills is expected in early 2020.

Friends of the River also created and published a comprehensive and interactive web map that contains both state and national wild and scenic systems. This map will be a valuable resource in the coming years to help build a visual element to both wild and scenic river systems in California.



## Point Positive Campaign 2019

Three endeavors intersected to Point Positive in California in 2019: gaining the support of more than 100 organizations, organizing a 5th annual day of action and advocacy at the Capitol, and facilitating 3 coalition efforts to develop input to the Governor's Water Resilience Portfolio.

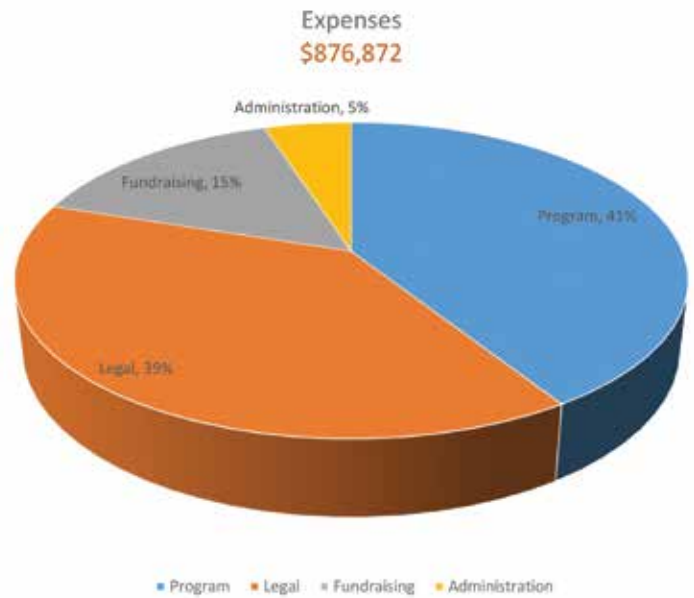
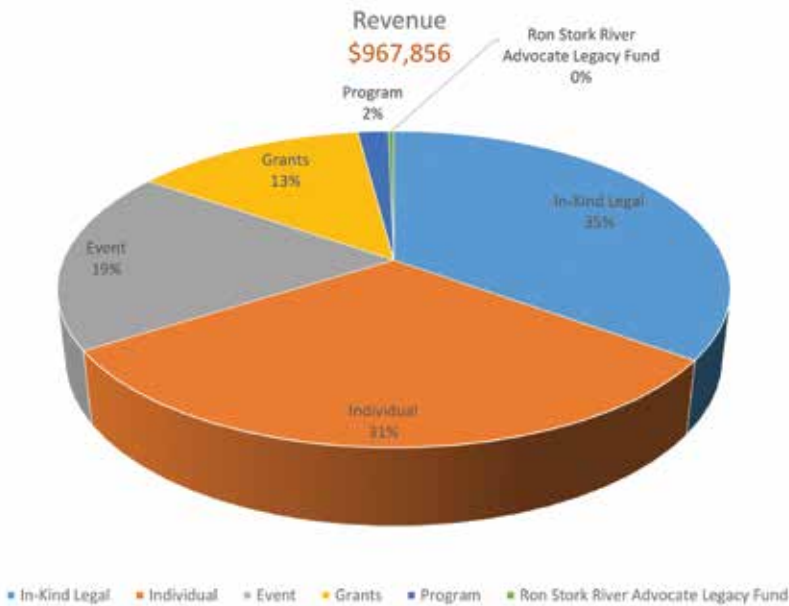
After convening allied organizations to develop the Climate Resilient Water Agenda for Governor Newsom in the fall of 2018, FOR built support for it from more than 108 like-minded organizations throughout the state with the help of our River Advocates. The convening was the genesis of the One Water Network.

The Water Agenda support strengthened the 5th annual day of advocacy and action at the Capitol for Point Positive: May 15th (formerly California Rivers Day). The day-long event engaged 40 advocates from 25 organizations to meet with legislators, showcased innovative and water-saving technology at the Sustainable Water Technology Expo on the Capitol lawn, and brought more than 100 people together for a celebration that evening at the Capital River Awards.

FOR's Point Positive campaign was buoyed in late April when Governor Newsom issued an Executive Order directing the state to develop a Water Resilience Portfolio plan (Portfolio) intended to allow Californians to meet our water needs while protecting and restoring watersheds. FOR saw this as a unique opportunity to Point Positive towards innovative, sustainable water solutions and away from the destructive water approaches of the past.

FOR invested in engagement on the Portfolio by leading or participating in three separate stakeholder groups: the One Water Network, the Portfolio Recommendations Group, and the Sustainable Technology Group to generate constructive input on the Portfolio. We engaged hundreds of key stakeholders from environmental and fishing groups, innovative businesses, academia, and forward-thinking water agencies. The One Water Network, formed to build a more powerful water movement, collaborated on its first collective action to provide input to the Portfolio. A staff member helped facilitate the Portfolio Recommendations Group, which convened stakeholders from water agencies and environmental groups. The Sustainable Technology Group convened 70 stakeholders for an in-person workshop in August. Resources Secretary Wade Crowfoot, Cal EPA Secretary Jared Blumenfeld, and Nancy Vogel, Director of the Portfolio Program attended to craft specific recommendations. Each group submitted recommendations to Nancy Vogel to be considered in the State's draft Water Resilience Portfolio plan.

# 2019 FINANCIALS



## WE THANK YOU!

Friends of the River relies on support from individuals, corporate giving, and foundation grants. We could not continue to protect rivers throughout the state without these generous contributions.

We would like to send our deepest gratitude to the foundations that provided much needed support this year:

**Appleton Foundation**  
**Contra Costa Water District**  
**Emigrant Trails Greenway Trust**  
**Getty Foundation**  
**Goldman Foundation**  
**Leonardo DiCaprio Foundation**  
**Patagonia**  
**Rose Foundation**  
**William and Flora Hewlett Foundation**

*Your help has been invaluable in making Friends of the River a powerhouse for river protection!*

# — PLAN YOUR LEGACY OF GIVING —

You have the power to make a lasting impact in the future of California's rivers. Years from now, as people enjoy and revere these beautiful rivers, our hope is that some will look back and say "Thank goodness that people had the foresight to realize that some things should be protected forever."

The generous gifts of our legacy donors are dedicated to keeping Friends of the River at the absolute forefront of river conservation in America.

## **There are many ways to include Friends of the River into your future planning:**

- Include Friends of the River in your will or trust
- Make Friends of the River a beneficiary of your retirement plan
- Set up annual donations from your donor advised fund
- Set up annual distributions from an IRA plan if you are over 70 ½
- Contribute to the Ron Stork River Advocate Legacy Fund

Bequests large and small speak powerfully to future generations about who you are and the causes and places that are important to you. Each bequest received by Friends of the River has served as a powerful boost to our ability to advocate, organize and operate effectively. You may also qualify for significant tax benefits, even under the new tax laws.

To learn more about planned giving options, please call our office at 916-442-3155 ext. 214 or visit <https://www.friendsoftheriver.org/support-for/planned-giving>.

