



Volume 11, Issue 1 - January 27, 2021

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Director's Corner

Friends of the River Welcomes our New Board Chair!



I'm thrilled to present **Donnie (Donni) Morgan** as FOR's new Board Chair! Donni has been serving as co-chair with Bob Cushman since June of last year and formally took the reins as Chair this month. Thankfully, Bob is still very much involved in all things FOR, and he is passing the baton after putting this organization on a trajectory for tremendous growth through his remarkably tenacious leadership.

Donni picked up that baton with great enthusiasm at an exciting time. As we look back at all we've accomplished over nearly fifty years, we are now gearing up for the next fifty. Poised for growth, it's time to take FOR to the next level to revolutionize water in California to protect rivers and bring forth a climate resilient water future. Our ability to succeed depends on extraordinary people. People like Donni.

Donni's love for rivers stretches back many years. She got the bug for river rafting after law school and remains an avid boater today. On one of her early trips, she saw the FOR sign at Camp Lotus on the American River and joined. She been an active member ever since. A few years later her law firm retained a financial advisor by the name of David Shore who also happened to serve on FOR's board at the time. The two became fast friends and she soon met other storied board members through David and their river adventures.

Ready for the next chapter of her life, Donni signed up for our River Advocacy Training School in 2017 and joined the board later that year. As a board member and co-chair, Donni has led us through a strategic planning process, raised thousands of dollars to help build the organization, and delved into the organization's finances. She has also been invaluable to me, providing advice and assistance across the board from human resources and fundraising to program planning and moral support.

As a successful attorney she also brings tremendous legal and business management experience. Perhaps even more important, Donni is an enthusiastic optimist who makes us laugh and inspires us to dream and believe that anything is possible. Then she digs in on the work it requires to make dreams come true. Please join me in welcoming Donni in her new role at donelle@friendsoftheriver.org.

Sincerely,
Eric Wesselman
Executive Director

News and Updates



Thank You for Your Support!

We are humbled by the generosity of donors this past year. With your support we have surpassed our goal of \$30,000 to enhance our growth in 2021. This puts Friends of the River in the position to expand staff and programs to build a stronger force for protecting rivers in the future. That means more muscle to ensure we plan for a sustainable and climate-resilient water future where we have more water flowing down rivers.

Stay tuned for more updates on our progress!

River Currents

By Ron Stork, *Policy Director*

[View Full River Currents Article!](#)

End of Year Wrap Up — the Congress

The end of a year can be consequential — especially when a Congress ends and in a Presidential election year. Consequently, California river issues can get buried in the COVID-19 and Presidential misbehavior headlines, so let's go a little deeper and tease them out.



First, some good news:

- The Shasta Dam raise and the Temperance Flat dam didn't get their Secretarial feasibility determinations, **effectively ending** their status as Water Infrastructure for

the Nation Act of 2016 (WIIN) projects. To move forward, they'll have to rely on the creation of a new authorization statute to be fashioned by the incoming Congress.

- House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy's effort to hold the federal FY 2020-21 omnibus appropriations bill hostage for construction funding for the Shasta Dam raise **failed**.
- The California wilderness and wild & scenic river package **passed** when the Congress overrode President Trump's veto of the National Defense Authorization Act.
- Senator Feinstein's reauthorization of the WIIN (S. 1932, the so-called DRWSIA) was **not passed**.
- **No override** of the National Wild & Scenic River protection of the Merced River or California Wild & Scenic Rivers Act protection of the McCloud River was passed by the Congress.

Elections

Yes, there were national elections this year, elections that have had some cliff hangers. President and Vice-President Joe Biden and Kamala Harris, in spite of the violent storming of the Capitol building incited by President Trump and resistance by some GOP Senators and a majority of GOP House members, were inaugurated on January 20, 2021. Ever since the President Nixon southern strategy that essentially flipped the "solid south" to solid GOP...

Staffing the new Federal Administration

We can expect some substantial house-cleaning of the key positions of the Federal Government. For positions requiring Senate confirmation, there will be some delay, of course, since contrary to long-established tradition, the currently GOP-led Senate has neither held hearings on President-Elect Biden's cabinet picks nor confirmed any before inauguration day. (Some may recall...

Some more on the McCloud River

Readers here will remember that the McCloud River, protected by the California Wild & Scenic Rivers Act, has been imperiled by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, Department of the Interior, for a couple of decades, with the peril intensified under the Trump Administration.

The state of California, a small band of environmental groups, and the California Attorney General have risen to fight that challenge. After the giant Westlands Water District lost in Shasta County Superior Court...

Santa Clara Water District Full of Cash?

The proposed Pacheco Dam in the foothills east of the Santa Clara Valley was a late entry to the projects vying for the \$2.7 billion in funding for what it appears to have been proposals for deadbeat dams in need of cash infusions from state taxpayers. The Santa Clara Water District (Valley Water) quickly put together a proposal for a \$969 million dollar dam, for which they received an allocation of \$485 million from the Commission — that is, assuming they can come up with commitments for 75% of the rest of the money by January 1 of next year...

More Water Project Subsidies

Rivers generally suffer when subsidies make the cost of dam and diversion construction cheaper. It was thus with some alarm that the trade press proudly announced that water agencies throughout the west are telling the incoming Biden Administration that they hope that federal funds can be devoted to new water storage facilities and addressing the regulatory constraints that make their construction difficult.

These requests and expectations are predictable no matter what administration or Congress holds the levers of power in Washington DC...

Water Storage Projects Stumble: What Should be Done With the "Spare" Taxpayer Subsidies?

The California Water Commission has a problem. California voters in 2014 voted to put up \$2.7 billion of taxpayer dollars to fund the “public” benefits of water storage projects. The Commission picked eight projects, four of them reservoirs. But as predicted some of these arguably “deadbeat” dams were bound to stumble.

The Temperance Flat Dam has withdrawn its application. The Pacheco Dam might be struggling with its costs ballooning. Some of that bond money robbed from the general fund...

Clean Water Act Blues News

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission has never liked the fact that states and certifying tribes have the authority under the Clean Water Act to impose conditions on new hydropower license operations to meet a state’s or tribal water quality standards. So when the Hoopa Valley Tribe v. FERC decisions gave them the authority to waive certification, they went with it — and drawing three lawsuits from a group of California environmental groups...

California’s Green and Golden

We are well on our way to another dry winter. Yet we have also seen enough rain to bring the verdant green to California’s mountains and foothills. The next few months are a prime time to haul your camera to your favorite river vistas. Share your images with the Friends of the River office.

Click here to read the full 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, and Amy

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