

# The River Advocate

## Friends of the River

The voice of California's Rivers  
[friendsoftheriver.org](http://friendsoftheriver.org)



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## FOR News

**Saving California Rivers is Up to Us**



*Del Puerto Canyon geologic formation. Credit: Elias Funez*



*Flowers bloom in the American River, FOR Archives.*



*Sunset on the South Fork American. Credit: Bob Cushman.*

## **Money is being followed**

This past September, we heard the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) would be winding down its California water program and losing two key staff attorneys. For the last few decades, the outstanding NRDC attorneys, Doug Obegi and Kate Poole have been a powerful legal force behind many critical environmental water lawsuits, for saving the Bay-Delta, restoring the San Joaquin, stopping Sites reservoir, and many others. Then in mid-November we heard NRDC was laying off dozens of employees. Last month the New York Times ran a story titled “Environmental Groups Cut Programs as Funding Shifts to Climate Change” which highlighted the staffing cuts and changes in program priorities at NRDC, Defenders of Wildlife and the Sierra Club. These funding cuts by the large national environmental organizations are directly impacting the California environmental organizations working on water. It means we are shifting more of the costs for litigation, policy analysis and expert science testimony onto our already very tight budgets.

## **Your support is vital**

Now more than ever, FOR supporters are vital to continue the work of saving California rivers. You understand that saving rivers is how we adapt to climate change. You understand that climate change is water change. Saving California rivers is up to us. With your support, we can work together to restore flows where excessive diversions reduce flows, to improve hydropower operations to benefit people and fish, to fight destructive reservoirs, and to strengthen river protections. You are the principal funder to for these efforts.

**Saving California rivers is up to us. Please donate to FOR today.**

[DONATE](#)

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## ***Headwaters* - FOR's Online Magazine**



*North Fork Merced confluence with mainstem Merced. Mike Osborn.*

## ACCEPTING SUBMISSIONS

Friends of the River's *Headwaters Magazine* is a beautiful repository of articles about rivers and river recreation, opinion pieces, policy analysis, river news, art, photographs, and more.

We welcome submissions of articles that speak to the six areas in which we work for the protection of California's rivers. These areas are hydropower reform, saving and storing water, restoring flows, flood management, legal and regulatory protections, and inspiring citizen action.

We also welcome submissions of visual art, creative writing, poetry, and photos that are centered around rivers and nature more broadly.

Not sure what to submit? Let's work together. More info [here](#).

Please email [keiko@friendsoftheriver.org](mailto:keiko@friendsoftheriver.org) to discuss a submission.

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## Currents: Victories and Threats

### The Bay Delta Plan Staff Report and the Real "Healthy Rivers Alternative"

*By Keiko Mertz*

The California State Water Resources Control Board (Water Board or Board) recently released its Draft Staff Report for the Phase II Update of the Bay-Delta Water Quality Control Plan (Bay-Delta Plan or Plan). This report, and the process to update the Bay-Delta Plan, will have critical implications for the health of California rivers and ecosystems. Unfortunately, the Staff Report outlines several options that will fail to protect the Delta and its tributary rivers...

[Read more](#)





*Aerial view looking south along Old River; in the center is Fay Island, part of the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta in San Joaquin County. March 08, 2019. Credit: Ken Jones, CA Dept. Water Resources.*

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## Disrespecting Republican Icons



*President Ronald Reagan. While Governor, Reagan signed the California Wild and Scenic Rivers Act into law. WhiteHouse.gov (public domain).*

*By Ron Stork*

Republican California Governor Ronald Reagan signed the legislation creating the California wild & scenic river system in 1972. In 1989, California Governor George Deukmejian (the Duke), also a Republican, signed legislation providing similar protection for the McCloud River under the state Wild & Scenic Rivers Act. Current House Republicans are working to dismantle these protections...

[Read more](#)

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## More Federal Appropriations Bill Mischief



California Department of Water Resources and Department of Fish and Wildlife tag spring-run Chinook salmon at the Feather River Fish Hatchery in Oroville. Credit: Kelly Grow, Department of Water Resources.

*By Ron Stork*

H.R. 4821, the Interior Appropriations bill, proposes to substitute what should be a scientific conclusion — that the Central Valley Improvement Act (CVPIA) is “complete” — for a Congressional “expert” political opinion. Among CVPIA’s goals were the doubling of natural stocks of salmonid fish...

[Read more](#)

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## Continuing Efforts to Protect the Smith River

*By Dan Kanner*

The Smith River is the largest entirely free-flowing river in California. Unfortunately, the Smith River National Recreation Area and wild & scenic river designations exclude the North Fork Smith River watershed in Oregon. Although relatively small in area, the northern headwaters of the Smith River supports a unique landscape, miles of pristine rivers and streams, and priceless recreation opportunities...

[Read more](#)



North Fork Smith River in Oregon. Credit: Jon Parmentier

[Read all December Currents HERE](#)

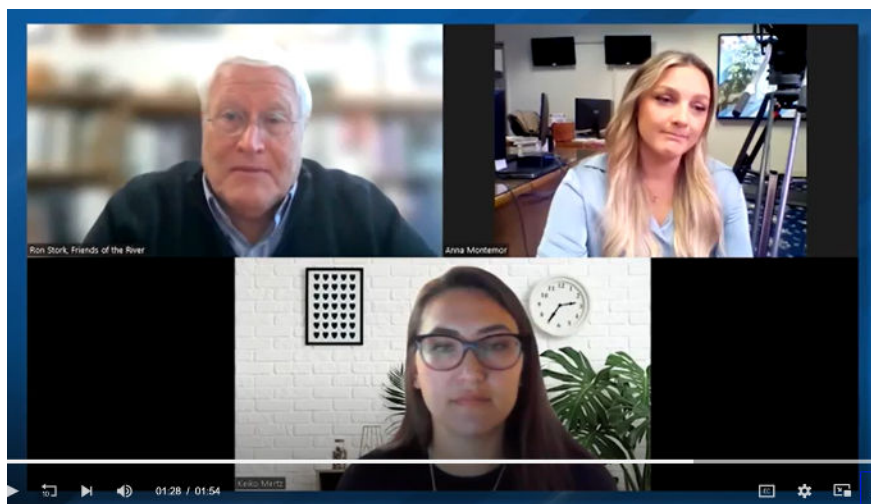
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# FOR in the News

## California's Sites Reservoir project: sparking mixed feelings in the Northstate (KRCR Chico)

FOR's Ron Stork and Keiko Mertz were recently featured in a news interview about the controversy surrounding Sites Reservoir. In this interview Ron and Keiko described why Sites is not "green infrastructure" of the future, but rather, a bad investment for taxpayers.

Watch [here](#)



*FOR Policy duo Ron Stork and Keiko Mertz featured on a segment with Anna Montemour, KRCR Chico.*

## Environmentalists blast Newsom again, this time for 'streamlining' Sites Reservoir in the Sacramento Valley ([Sacramento News and Review](#))

Policy Director, Keiko Mertz, is quoted: "The Newsom Administration unfortunately jumped the gun by certifying the Sites Project for judicial streamlining. Sites does not pass the test as a 21st century water solution. It's expensive, carbon intensive, and distracts from lasting and sustainable solutions for California water security."

## 'Deep disappointment': Global climate envoy Newsom is alienating environmentalists at home ([Sacramento Bee](#))

Policy Director, Keiko Mertz: "Do we need a really expensive new reservoir that won't provide very much water and has all these negative impacts? The answer is clearly no. We should be saving taxpayer dollars."

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Friends of the River has been working hard on our media strategy to ensure that California rivers are represented in the public dialogue. Many of our press features are chronicled on our Sites webpage, under "In the News." [Read more.](#)

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## Remembering Brent Blackwelder



*Brent Blackwelder at a Friends of the Earth Event, 2007. Credit: Wikimedia Commons.*

*By Ron Stork*

Brent Blackwelder recently passed away. He had a long and important career as an environmental leader in our nation's capital. His passing is worth publishing a trinity of short remembrances by three of us who worked with him.

I met Brent in the 1980s at a few of the old Dam Buster's conferences put on by, or at least loosely sponsored by, the American Rivers Conservation Council (now American Rivers). Brent was a pretty dynamic east-coast kind of guy — complete with red slacks and much to say. I will always be grateful to Brent for the help he provided Friends of the River and our American River Coalition partners in defeating the early Auburn dam authorization bills in the Congress.

[Read more memories from Ron Stork and others](#)

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## Reflections and Directions





## Time to hire an Executive Director

Friends of the River is still recruiting for an Executive Director to lead the policy and advocacy work of restoring California rivers and fighting for a sustainable water future. As our threats and opportunities have expanded this year, our work and staffing need to expand also. FOR is looking for a passionate and experienced river advocate, a strategic water leader who can ensure FOR shows up effectively to influence the public processes so critical to shaping our river systems for the future.

Please share this opportunity widely within your professional contacts in the water world. [Please see the job description](#). Applicants please submit a cover letter and resume to [amy@friendsoftheriver.org](mailto:amy@friendsoftheriver.org).

Please Donate

Please consider a generous gift to help FOR meet our end of year fundraising goal. We must raise a significant amount of funds each November and December, and every dollar counts.



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