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Join us for the California River Awards





26th Annual

California River Awards

Friday, April 26, 2024 | 5:30pm

The Verdi Club, San Francisco
Dinner | Cocktails | Live Auction

Online Silent Auction April 1st - April 26th

 www.auctria.events/2024FORCRA 

The Voice of California Rivers for Over 50 Years





Please join us for an unforgettable evening at the 26th Annual California River Awards. This gala event is not only a celebration of the rivers that have shaped our beautiful state but also a crucial fundraiser for our ongoing advocacy efforts.

Click the links below to sponsor, donate an auction item, or purchase tickets for the live event.

Stay tuned for more information on the silent online auction, which will run from April 1st to April 26th. This is a fantastic opportunity to bid on some amazing items and experiences, all while supporting our mission.

[Buy Tickets](#)

[Donate an Auction Item](#)

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Reflections and Directions



Jann Dorman, Executive Director

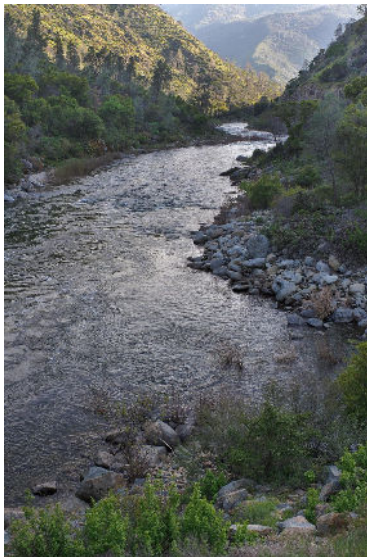
[Subscribe](#) to our email list.

The end of the year is always a critical time for any non-profit. At FOR your December donations represent about 20% of our annual revenue. Thanks to all of you who donated, FOR hit December budget goals and 2023 is paid for. We are so grateful to all of you who donated, and so proud of your confidence in us to do the work you care about.

Fighting the Triple Threat to Rivers

We are fighting 3 big threats to California rivers. The Sites Reservoir, the Delta Tunnel, and the Voluntary Agreements (VAs) will degrade the Delta, accelerate salmon extinction, and destroy the California river ecosystems that we all depend on and love. This is not the California we want to live in, or to hand down to the next generation. Friends of the River is the voice of California rivers and **we are raising our voice!** We are vigorously organizing, advocating and litigating. WE NEED YOUR HELP TO FIGHT THIS TRIPLE THREAT AND RESTORE CALIFORNIA'S RIVERS.

December and January have been intense. In December FOR (in collaboration with 5 partner NGOs) filed a lawsuit challenging the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) certification of the Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR) for the **Sites Reservoir**. In January, FOR filed a lawsuit (with 7 partner NGOs) challenging the CEQA certification of the FEIR for the **Delta Tunnel**. We also filed extensive comments on the **Bay Delta Water Quality Plan**. A strong water quality plan for the Delta is critical to ensure the health of all the tributaries of the Sacramento and San Joaquin systems, and the Bay Delta estuary itself. The Voluntary Agreements, one of the proposed alternatives for the Water Quality Plan, would pose a catastrophic threat to the entire Sacramento – San Joaquin – Bay Delta system.



North Fork Merced confluence with mainstem Merced. Mike Osborn.

These 3 threats are linked, as Sites would store the water, to be shipped South through the Tunnel, under the VA provisions. All three are a package that will destroy the rivers we need for our future. It is with infinite sarcasm that I share with you, the news that the Voluntary Agreements have been re-branded as “Agreements to Support Healthy Rivers and Landscapes.” If we can stop Sites, we have a better chance of stopping the Tunnel. If we can stop the Tunnel, we have a better chance at restoring the Delta and managing the upstream watersheds for greater environmental sustainability.

We all know the situation for California Rivers is dire. California leads the nation with the most endangered species, many of which need riparian habitats. The salmon fishing season was closed this year. Low flows, harmful algae blooms, fish kills, flood risk and many other problems plague our rivers. This environmental catastrophe is man-made, the result of past water policy which took place under relatively benign climate conditions.

Our existential challenge in the West is not the future decreases in water supply. These decreases can be managed, through conservation, recycling, storm water capture, nature-based solutions for storage and flood, instream flow management, etc. Our most important work going forward is addressing the unjust and unsustainable system of water laws, regulations, and power politics. **California must develop the will to balance the demand for consumptive water, with the needs of the environment, the public trust, and vulnerable communities.**

The Chinatown Playbook has 3 steps; 1) Create panic about running out of water. 2) Offer big public works project to bring more water and get panicked taxpayers to pay for it. 3) Use the big public works to take the water from local communities and deliver it to wealthy landowners somewhere else to make money growing profitable crops or developing real estate. The people of California have been the repeated victims of this bait and switch play.

This year, 2024, will be critical for our rivers. Our work for sustainable storage, hydropower reform, restoring flows, multi-benefit flood management, and legal/regulatory protections, generates the nature-based alternatives to destructive diversions, big dams and reservoirs. Our work fighting the Triple Threat to Rivers with litigation, advocacy, and organizing will take all of us working together. Please join me in supporting FOR and the restoration and protection of California Rivers.

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

DONATE

Currents: Victories and Threats

They Abducted a River in California. And Nobody Stopped Them. - New York Times ([link](#))

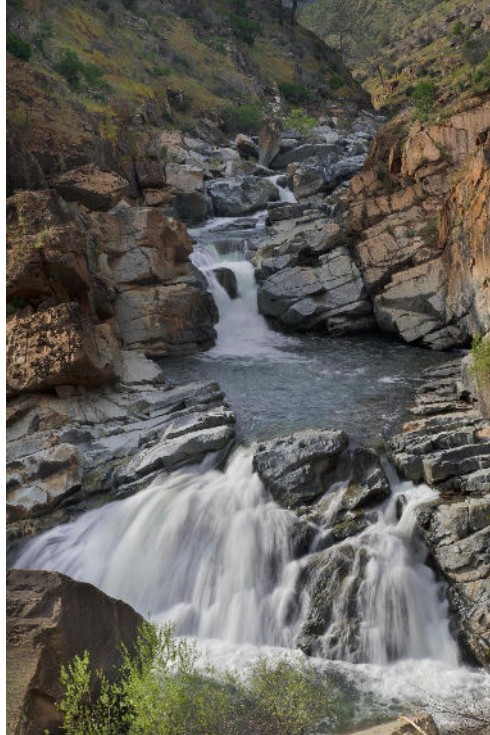
By Keiko Mertz, Policy Director

Late last year, I got a tip from a colleague that the Merced River, the 14th biggest river in California, ran completely dry for four months near its confluence point with the San Joaquin River. The river, which serves essential habitat for listed species including spring-run Chinook salmon and steelhead, was impassable. *And somehow, nobody really knew about it.* The issue had been reduced to bickering between state and federal resource agencies, with the State Water Resources Control Board (Water Board) ultimately failing to take action to protect the river.

My gut instinct told me that this issue needed sunlight. And, considering the fact that the Merced River flows out of the majestic Yosemite Valley, I thought it might be of national interest. That's when I decided to take the story to the New York Times, which picked it up and ran with it ([read that story here](#)). We

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also [submitted a letter to the Water Board](#) urging it to adopt year-round regulations to protect the river from being pumped dry.



North Fork Merced River. Mike Osborn.

This is just the beginning of a new phase of FOR's work to protect the Merced River. FOR has previously led a successful campaign to designate a stretch of the Merced River as a federal Wild and Scenic River, participated in hydropower relicensing, and successfully litigated related Clean Water Act issues. Stay tuned for more.

Read also: [Group Urges State Water Board to Prevent Merced River from Drying Up Again](#)

Opportunities

Restoring the Stanislaus Watershed Symposium

We want to share the news from our friends at [Restoring the Stanislaus](#). FOR still holds the Stanislaus in a special place in our hearts. Restoring the Stanislaus Watershed Symposium will be held April 6, 2024 at the Sonora Elks Lodge, Sonora, California. [Register here](#).

Headwaters - 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

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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 to discuss a submission.

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 janndorman@friendsoftheriver.org.

Please Donate

Please consider a generous gift to help FOR fighting the Triple Threat to Rivers. This will be a critical year to stop Sites Reservoir, the Delta Tunnel and the Voluntary Agreements.

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