

Maggie Swett, Placer High School

I have lived in Auburn California my entire life, spending many days exploring the natural beauty of the canyons and enjoying the river. I feel blessed to have the beauty of nature in my own backyard. From the moment I learned to swim, my Mom shared her love of the river and introduced me to whitewater kayaking on the American River. There is no more exhilarating experience than guiding a kayak through the water and embracing the push and pull of the river. I was also able to explore more of the canyon when I ran cross country for Placer High School.

I attended kayaking camps over the summer at the South Fork where I was able to improve my skills and also contribute to the community. The power of the river may flip the kayak, but learning to cope with this power is personally empowering. We spent time cleaning up the trash and litter carelessly left by others who fail to realize the damaging effects this debris can cause. The river is a gift to all and we are fortunate to play and explore the vastness, but this joy is accompanied by the responsibility to care for the natural beauty. Without conservation efforts, debris will hurt the species that inhabit the environment. In addition to the amazing river, the canyon provides an abundance of breathtaking trails. During my senior year, I ran cross country and was able to explore more of the canyon. Running and pushing myself to limits I never thought possible was a wonderful feeling. Weaving up and down and in and out, always finding new trails that led to breathtaking views is something for which I will always be thankful.

It is our responsibility to keep the river in the best condition possible for the species who live their and for the community who takes full advantage of it. To improve our rivers and peoples opportunities and knowledge of it we can implement promotions through social media. Through Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and other outlets we can reach out to the community to encourage trash clean ups, safety water days, and group hiking. We can implement programs in our elementary schools where they are taken out to pick up trash and keep the river clean so they will know how important and vital our river and canyons are to the Auburn community. Another idea would be to build a whitewater park in the canyon for kayakers to play in and for people interested in learning more about boating. This would draw more of the community to enjoy the canyon and showcase the possibility for fun on the river. I will always cherish the playground I was lucky to have available to me my whole life and want to do everything possible to keep the river and canyon clean, protected and safe for everyone.