PROTECT AMERICAN RIVER CANYONS
PARC
Celebrating 50 Years
1973-2023

THE CONFLUENCE

DECEMBER 2025

SR 49 Bridge Debris Removal Project Nears Completion

Drone image of debris field on October 25, 2024. *(Photo courtesy of Erik Bergen, Placer County)*

Drone image of debris field on November 10, 2025. *(Photo courtesy of Erik Bergen, Placer County)*

Continued on page 2

Inside this issue:

SR 49 Bridge Debris Update	2
Tribute to Canyon Advocates	3
H.S. Scholarship Contest	4
Outings and Events	5
Trail Bridge Update	6
PARC & ASRA Projects	7
We Love our Advertisers	8

Save the Date

See Page 5 for Details

Winter Solstice Hike.....December 20
New Year's Night Hike.....January 1
Lake Clementine Access Hike.....January 9
Confluence Hike.....January 12
New Year's Cleanse Hike.....TBD
PARC Spring Gathering.....February 20

SR 49 Bridge Debris Removal Nears Completion

Continued from pg 1

By Gary Estes *Photos by Gary Hughes*

Removing the debris from the washed out State Route 49 Bridge over the North Fork American River is planned (weather permitting) to be completed by December 31. The Placer County Public Works Department is managing the $8 million project funded by the State of California. According to a 1948 Caltrans article, the project is removing: "An aggregate of 780,000 pounds of structural steel, 113,000 pounds of reinforcing steel, and 1,215 cubic yards of concrete were used in this construction."

On December 23, 1964, the bridge was washed away by the failure of the partially completed Hell Hole Dam being built for Placer County Water Agency. The debris remained in the river because the never completed Auburn Dam Reservoir was supposed to cover it with hundreds of feet of water. The motivation for the debris removal was the public safety hazard to boaters floating downstream from the Confluence to China Bar and to swimmers recreating in the river. This section of river is eligible for inclusion in the National Wild & Scenic Rivers System as a recreational resource. Also returning the river to a more natural condition will improve the viewshed.

Four excavators pulling on steel cables connected to 10-foot tall steel plate girder.

Pile of 10-foot tall steel plate girders bound for recycling yard in Oakland.

View of river left (El Dorado County side): Pile of steel reinforced concrete roadway slabs beside river. Bulldozer coming down rock road built for access.

Excavator breaking up steel reinforced concrete roadway slab.

THE CONFLUENCE is a seasonal, or as needed, publication of **Protect American River Canyons.**
THE CONFLUENCE is included with basic annual membership. Visit our website to be added to our e-news list.

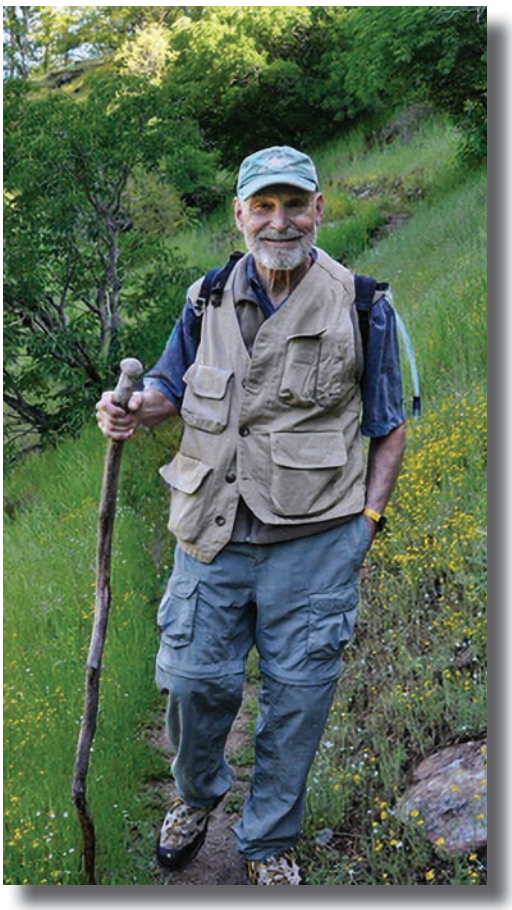
P.O. Box 9312
Auburn, CA 95604
http://www.parc-auburn.org
E-mail: eriverpeach@gmail.com

Articles and Editing by Eric Peach, Tim Woodall & Gary Estes
Layout by Alice Tenscher Dunbar
Printing & Mailing by APi-marketing

Thanks to our advertisers.

Special thanks to Laurel and LeAnn of Mystic Design.

Honoring Early American River Advocates. You Will Be Missed.



JIM FERRIS 1936 – 2025

Canyon Keeper Co-Founder

A whitewater rafting trip on the South Fork of the American River in the mid-1990's convinced Jim and his wife Norma to move to Auburn. Once here, Jim collaborated with Auburn State Recreation Area (ASRA) Superintendent Jill Dampier and PARC Board member Frank Olrich to co-found the Canyon Keepers in 1998. At that time recreation activity was growing rapidly in the ASRA and there was a need for a Friends of the ASRA group to meet and greet visitors at the Confluence on summer weekends, lead hikes and hold monthly meetings. Canyon Keepers served as the extra eyes and ears of State Parks rangers, to identify and report problems, and also to demonstrate to the public that the river canyons were valuable natural areas and people were present to help protect them. The public meetings included speakers that provided insight into the rich tapestry of natural, historical and recreational information about the American River.

An avid foothills hiker, Jim partnered with fellow Canyon Keeper Sheila Toner and ASRA Superintendent Mike Lynch to write and self-publish "American River Canyon Hikes - a Practical Guide to Trails in the North and Middle Forks of the American River." The book project also morphed into a self-guided Confluence Historic Bridges and Nature Walk with 10 trail markers installed to denote locations of special interest described in the accompanying brochure.

The long-term stability and accomplishments of Canyon Keepers owe a lot to Jim's early efforts to recruit, train and convince volunteers to invest their energies in American River conservation and education. Jim's enthusiasm was infectious. He had a knack for connecting with people, establishing quick friendships, and then roping them in to volunteer. Jim's long history of interest and involvement in multiple sports and outdoor adventures led him to also serve the Auburn community as an elected Board member for the Auburn Recreation District and as a marketing and business consultant. He also assisted Save Auburn Ravine Salmon and Steelhead and numerous other nonprofit and civic improvement organizations in our community. - Jim Lobue

SHEILA TONER 1941 – 2025

Canyon Keeper Leader

The Canyon Keepers and Auburn were a natural fit for Sheila Toner when she retired as a Colonel from her 27-year US Army career in 2002. While stationed in Germany she had been an enthusiastic participant in Volksmarching and explored many of the wild areas of Germany, Austria and Switzerland. Here in Auburn, she regularly led hikes for Canyon Keepers as well as Sierra Club Seniors and the American River Conservancy. She also frequently led Road Scholar tours of the Delta, Yosemite, Point Reyes, Monterey, Channel Islands and the Eastern Sierra. Sharing California history and natural history was her passion. Locally, that passion led her to co-author the "American River Canyon Hikes" book with Jim Ferris and Superintendent Mike Lynch for which she wrote most of the trail guides and many historical sidenotes. She enjoyed sharing "nature tidibits" on her hikes and took pride in becoming a certified California Naturalist.

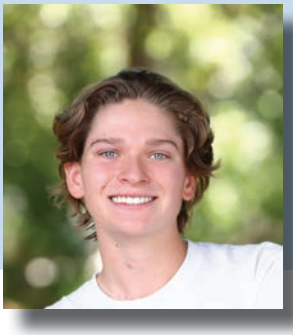
As the park evolved as a State Recreation Area, access increased, more trails were added, and visitation grew. Sheila saw a need for better maps and signage. The Knickerbocker area by Cool in particular was a network of un-named, unmapped trails and old ranch roads intersecting the Olmstead Loop and a few other named trails. She and Canyon Keeper Barry Anderson created the "Olmstead Area Trails" map, and Sheila pressed Auburn State Recreation Area (ASRA) to name, sign and improve its most durable, heavily-used trails. Catecroft, Cave Valley, Ranch Road, Knickerbocker Creek and Blue Oak trails are named and most are signed, thanks in part to her efforts. She was a member of PARC who contributed to our ASRA Trails Map and American River Guidebook.

Sheila's leadership was valuable to the park in other ways beyond trail-guiding. She mentored new volunteer hike leaders, kept our meetings on track and on time, and most of all could be relied on to have well-considered, sometimes vociferous opinions about future directions for Canyon Keepers and ASRA. Her leadership, foresight and planning abilities helped steer us, as there was always wisdom in what she had to say. We greatly appreciate her contributions over the years and will miss her friendship and guiding spirit. - Peggy Egli

14th Annual PARC Environmental Stewardship Scholarship

Over $31,000 awarded to local high school seniors since 2013!

Congratulations to the 2025 Scholarship Recipients!



The future of the American River and its canyons depends on the collective action of individuals, organizations, and communities. Protecting these lands is essential not only for their ecological health, which is home to countless species of wildlife but also for the generations to come who will have the opportunity to experience the beauty and serenity that I've cherished throughout my life. By supporting PARC's continuing efforts in environmental education and conservation, we can ensure that the American River remains a vibrant, protected space for all.

Zachary Nicholson, Oak Ridge High School

Camila Catron-Castillo
Union Mine High School

Zoe Ordway
Foresthill High School

Hannah Musgrove
El Dorado High School

Jason Michaeloff
Western Collegiate Academy

Michaela Lauren Balaban
Placer High School

$3,000 in Total Scholarship Awards for 2026

Students may apply for the PARC 2026 Environmental Stewardship Scholarship by either submitting an original video or essay describing their response to the following question about the North and Middle Fork American River canyons located upstream of Folsom Reservoir, in the Auburn State Recreation Area.

Why do you care about the American River and its canyons, and what should be done to help protect them for the future? Please describe any activities you have participated in related to the river or canyons."

Deadline for submission is March 15, 2026. Details and application forms for the 2026 PARC Environmental Stewardship Scholarship are NOW available on the PARC website https://www.parc-auburn.org/scholarship.html

To read this year's winning essays visit our website: https://www.parc-auburn.org/scholarship.html and click on the Scholarship page or scan the QR code.

American River Outings and Events

WINTER SOLSTICE HIKE, Saturday, December 20, 2025 10am

Celebrate one of the shortest days of the year with a hike in the Olmstead Area. The five mile hike will begin on the paved portion of St. Florian Ct. and will turn onto the Olmstead Loop and 'Secret Trail'. On this excursion, we'll explore rich cultural and natural beauty of the oak woodlands of the Olmstead Area with a focus birds and biodiversity. There will be an optional turn around on the paved portion for participants with strollers and wheelchairs or hikers opting for a shorter outing. Meet at 10:00 AM at the Olmstead Loop Trailhead behind the fire station in Cool, CA on St. Florian CT. Parking is $10 cash only or valid State Parks Permits. Bring water, optional trail snack, and essentials. Bathrooms available at trailhead. Friendly dogs on leash welcome. Rain cancels. No need to RSVP. ASRA Interpretive Specialist Joseph Shanahan, 530-863-8848 will lead the hike.

QUARRY TRAIL NEW YEAR NIGHT HIKE
Thursday, January 1, 2026 5:00 PM

Lights above & lights below. Take a New Year dusk hike along the Quarry trail gazing for stars above and biofluorescent creatures below. Easy 2.5-mile hike, stroller and wheelchair friendly trail. Meet at Quarry parking lot at 5:00pm. Regular parking fees apply. Bring water, flashlight & optional UV flashlight, and essentials. Dress warmly. Hot water will be available, bring your own tea or hot cocoa and mug. Dogs on leash are welcome. Rain cancels. No need to RSVP. Hike leader James Oslie ASRA Interpretive Specialist (530) 863-8848.

LAKE CLEMENTINE ACCESS TRAIL HIKE, Friday, January 9, 2026 10:00 am

This trail is the park's only route down to the "mid-section" of Lake Clementine - above the dam but below the day use area. A nicely graded service road, it offers good views of Lake Clementine, limestone outcroppings, and various habitats as it descends to a cove mid-way along the shoreline. Moderate pace, 3.2 miles out-and-back trail. From parking to trailhead requires crossing Foresthill Rd. We'll take a break at the lake before climbing 1.6 miles and 784' back up to our start. Plan on about 3 hr. Meet 10:00 am at the parking pullout at the intersection of Foresthill and Old Foresthill Roads. Coming from Auburn on Foresthill Rd, it is 3.1 miles from the signal light at Lincoln Way and Foresthill Rd. Look for the pullout on your right, just before the intersection with Old Foresthill Rd. Bring water, optional trail snack, and essentials. No dogs. Rain cancels. No need to RSVP. Canyon Keeper Peggy Egli 530-718-0448 will lead the hike.

WELCOME THE NEW YEAR CONFLUENCE HIKE, Thursday, January 12, 2026 9:00 AM

Begin 2026 with a classic Auburn loop that yields views Canyon Creek Falls, Mountain Quarries Railroad Bridge, and the Confluence of the North and Middle forks of the American River. The 4.6 mile route will begin the Native Garden Located at Auburn SRA Ranger Station (501 El Dorado Street Auburn, CA 95603), descend the park access trail to the Western States Trail and ascend ~700 feet via Stagecoach Trail and Manzanita Trail.

Hikers will explore the rich cultural and natural history of the American River Canyons and start the new year with fresh air, river views, and community. This route is not stroller and wheelchair accessible. Meet at 9:00 AM at the Auburn Sector Office (501 El Dorado Street Auburn, CA). Parking at trailhead is free. Bring water, optional trail snack, and essentials. Bathrooms available at trailhead and halfway point. Friendly dogs on leash welcome. Rain cancels. No need to RSVP. Interpretive Specialist Joseph Shanahan (530) 863-8848 will lead the hike.

NEW YEAR CLEANSE "POP-UP" HIKE, January (Date and time TBD) WEATHER DEPENDENT

Register online for details https://app.donorview.com/w8PYm
Welcome the New Year with positivity and renewal! Join Ami Stroud for a peaceful 2.5-mile hike to the South Fork of the American River, designed to release the old and invite the new. Along the way, you will gather acorns and leaves to represent any negative experiences or energy you wish to let go of from the past year. At the river, we'll symbolically set these burdens afloat, making space for a fresh start in 2026. To invite positive energy, we'll spend about 10 minutes practicing gentle standing Tai Chi on the riverbank before looping through Greenwood Creek and returning to the trailhead. Well-behaved children of all ages and dogs on-leash welcome. Meeting location Pilot Hill area. A detailed email will be sent once you register online https://app.donorview.com/w8PYm and again when date is set. Donations to ARC are welcome.

FEBRUARY PARC SOCIAL! - For the Love of the American River, February 20, 2026

Save the date! 7-9pm. Music by Tepid Cup of Cool. River Updates. River art sale and raffle. More information to follow.

PARC Ramps Up Auburn to Cool Trail Bridge Campaign

This year PARC has increased its efforts to motivate State Parks to initiate needed planning and engineering studies for the proposed Auburn to Cool Trail Bridge. The long-promised bridge would link the communities of Auburn and Cool through the existing trail networks on each side of the North Fork of the American River.

State Parks conducted a feasibility study in 2007 that evaluated six potential locations for the bridge and that identified a number of possible bridge designs. The study was limited in its analysis however, and did not provide enough information to make an informed decision on which of the six potential locations should be selected as the bridge site. State Parks paused any additional planning work on the bridge pending the completion of a new general plan for Auburn State Recreation Area (ASRA). That plan was completed in 2021 and included as a goal the construction of the proposed bridge.

Since then, State Parks has been reluctant to resume bridge planning, based on an inability under its current budget to either build the bridge or manage the additional recreational use the bridge will attract. While we understand State Parks' concerns, we believe the funding can be found to both build the bridge and fund the resulting increased operational costs. Several potential funding sources are on the immediate horizon. PARC is actively pursuing a bridge planning grant through the Sierra Nevada Conservancy, and is also working to secure bridge funding through the Climate Bond (Proposition 4) passed by California voters in November 2024. We will continue to seek other potential funding sources as well.

While the trail bridge project is an ambitious undertaking, we believe it represents a valuable and needed addition to ASRA's trail system. The proposed bridge has always enjoyed widespread public support, and an ongoing show of that support will be critical to the ultimate success of the project. Please visit PARC's website at parc-auburn.org to learn more about the Auburn to Cool Trail Bridge Project and opportunities for public engagement.

Alone With Spring Conditions

Sliding along, gliding along
on a snow-covered ridge;
alive, high hormone, high alive;
deep breathing,
bandana-sweat climb,
swish, swish;
at this moment, I haven't a wish.
Rucksack full.
water, snack, and anorak;
first aid, compass and shades.
Stop moment, prop moment.
Billions of crystals
reflecting, refracting.
I look at just one:
Sun, out of the blue,
beams through
splitting rainbows in my eyes.
Tee-shirt weather,
snow drip afternoon,
slush to mush,
tonight's freeze,
tomorrow's crystal.
A rhythm of sun cups
on the slopes.
The silence ignores wind-whispers
over the mountain's mat of pines,
but not the "yank-yank"
of a Nuthatch on another ridge.

-Roger Groghan

Membership, Donation and Estate Planning Opportunities

Please Renew your annual membership.

Your donations do so much for the American river.
(See just a few of our PARC accomplishments pictured on the following page)
For your convenience, please take a moment now to complete and return the enclosed envelope to renew your yearly membership. If you prefer to renew online, go to https://www.parc-auburn.org/donatejoin.html#membership or use this QR code:

PARC Scholarships Awards Over $31,000 to Since 2013!

Since its inception in 2013, PARC has selected between five and six local high school senior a year to receive the PARC Environmental Stewardship Scholarship. That has helped 65 seniors with college expenses. Please support the next generation of stewards of our American River and community by donating to the PARC Scholarship Fund. Use the envelope provided, https://www.parc-auburn.org/scholarship.html or use the QR code.

Your Support helps PARC Legacy Fund Reach $99,825!!

From its beginning in 2008, the PARC Legacy Fund has grown with your support to $99,825. Thank you! We are thinking about PARC's next 50 years as we marked our 50th anniversary in 2023. Consider making your year-end contribution to help us reach our goal of Over $100,000. You can contribute by mailing a check or going online to the Placer Community Foundation where the endowment is professionally managed.

Mail option: Make check payable to PCF/PARC Legacy Fund.
Placer Community Foundation, 219 Maple St. #200, Auburn, CA 95603.

Online option: https://www.placercf.org/parc-legacy-fund or scan QR code.

To Learn more about other estate planning options please contact Jessica Hubbard at Placer Community Foundation. She is available for free consultations to support your charitable interests and answer your questions. No obligation is necessary. jhubbard@placercf.org or (530) 885-4920.

Your PARC Support in Action

The view of the Confluence got a lot more comfortable this summer with the installation of a **new concrete bench** *with a backrest on the Stagecoach Trail to replace the broken wood bench. Facing east the bench is a great location to watch the sunrise or moonrise over the canyon. Funding for the bench was provided by PARC members.*

Five new **Auburn SRA trailhead map panels** *were installed at the Confluence, Olmstead/Knickerbocker, Ruck-a-Chucky and Stagecoach trailheads in 2025 to replace faded outdated map panels. Map designed by Mystic Designs, have updated information provided by park staff. The project funded by a State Parks Foundation grant and an Auburn Alehouse donation.*

ASRA's Junior Ranger interpretive program included an opportunity to make **clay animal silhouettes** for a future American River Watershed Mural at ASRA's Interpretive Center. The Junior Rangers studied the lifecycle and habitat needs of the animals they selected to create in clay.

Auburn State Park Completes Upper Clementine Road Improvements

Upper Clementine Road was well known as a drive that combined motion sickness with car eating potholes. No more! This year after several weather delays, the road was graded, received a new road base, graded again and then topped off like frosting on a cake with 2 coats of tar and chocolate chip size gravel. It's a road of beauty in a river-canyon of beauty. As funds become available Auburn State Recreation Area (ASRA) continues to make much needed canyon road improvements. Upper Clem Road was the focus of their efforts this year. **Thank you Superintendent Lauren Shoemaker and all the ASRA staff who worked on this project.**

A new twist was added to our **Annual Earth Day 2025 Celebration**. *With a grant from the State Parks Foundation and an in-kind donation from the City of Auburn we were able to transport volunteers to select trailheads in the Confluence Area. The volunteers then pruned and pulled invasive scotch broom from the trails and picked up litter along the way as they hiked back to the Confluence. Volunteers were treated to a delicious box lunch prepared by the Auburn Alehouse and high school student essays about their appreciation for the American River.*

American River Earth Day Cleanup 2026 will be Saturday, April 25th 8:00 am to Noon. Meet at the Confluence. We will focus on scotch broom removal and litter cleanup.

P.O. Box 9312 Auburn, CA 95604
www.parc-auburn.org

Protect American River Canyons (PARC) protects and enhances the natural, recreational and cultural resources of the North and Middle Forks of the American River through leadership and collaboration.

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