

*Why do I care about the American River, and what is my vision for protection of the river and its canyons for future generations? (500 words max)*

When I look back at some of my past summers, one day distinguishes itself among many as one of the purest and best. Not because anything out of the ordinary occurred. No, it was quite the opposite. It was just a simple day spent hiking with amazing friends down Stagecoach Trail and then out to one of the popular spots along the American River called Monkey Rock, filling a bag with fresh blackberries from one of the massive tangled bushes along the way. Once we reached our destination at the jumping rocks which had earned the moniker of monkey, we sat and basked in the sun, savoring our spoils and making the leap off the tall rocks into the cool, rushing river whenever the sweat pooling on our foreheads came to be too much to bear any longer. The day was spent removed from the deceitfully lulling calls of our phone and television screens, and out in the magnificent campus of nature that we are so lucky to call our backyard. It was the perfect day, and exemplifies how important the river is in my life, as well as my community's, and how important it is to protect it.

The American River is important because it offers us one of the most remarkable treasures afforded to humans, a connection to nature. This connection has transformative and educational effects and, in my opinion, is vital to our health. But I fear that with the onset of more and more technology and distractions, the connection with nature is an experience and blessing that less and less people will take advantage of. This terrifying prospect, that our amazing river might lose our interest is one that is overshadowed only by the possibility that we might lose our river. Urban sprawl is an ever-spreading plague on our planet's natural landscape and resources, and though it might not be imminent, the threat that the hands of urbanization might encroach upon our American River is indeed a frightening one.

It is my opinion and my passion that we should protect the American River and canyon from this fate, so that future generations can gain from the natural beauty and education it provides. Possible steps to achieve the protection of the river include designating it a legally protected wilderness area, opposing the creation of a dam, educating the community on its geological, ecological, and recreational significance, and also encouraging the community to go out and enjoy the many rejuvenating opportunities that are available to them in the canyon, from hikes, to river raft trips, to events such as the Confluence Festival and more.

I'm positive that if enough people are exposed to the marvel that is the American River and canyon and to the issue of preserving it, then there will no doubt be an awesome force pushing for its conservation. Together, as a community, we can help to protect this magnificent expanse of nature, so that future generations can reap the immense benefits it provides.

499 words