

Anna Reimers, Colfax High School

Rafting down Tunnel Chute, paddle boarding on Lake Clementine, hiking down Robie Point. These are some of my fondest childhood memories, and they all have one thing in common: taking place in the American River and its surrounding canyons. I have grown up exploring the canyons with my family and friends, from No Hands Bridge to the dam site. I close my eyes and can smell the dust of the trails I've run, and I can hear the rush of the water at the Confluence where I swim with my friends in the summer.

The American River and its canyons are a breeding ground for memories and connect our community. Protecting them now is not just important; it is crucial for ensuring their future. The first step in conserving our rivers and canyons is to plant a love for them in our community's younger generations. It's imperative to sustain the passion this community has for the canyons, and to do this, we must educate others on how to respect the environment by leaving no trace and how to appreciate it to its fullest extent. In order to protect, we must educate. Educate how to enjoy these areas to their fullest extent. Educate what every one of us can do to take care of them. Educate the importance of maintaining our canyons and rivers.

One useful approach to begin the education is to create specific designations. Designating sections of the river as wild, scenic, or recreational can help keep the water clean, protect the land along the river, and limit damage. Having a collective understanding of what activities and efforts should be at varying points in the river can allow us to continue using the rivers for recreation while protecting spaces for wildlife and maintaining a pristine environment.

The canyons are just as significant and deserve the same measures as other natural wonders in the Auburn State Recreation Area. Spreading the word about leaving no trace, staying on trails, and encouraging future generations to explore can help keep the canyons active and safe. It is vital to teach trail etiquette as it plays a powerful role in sustaining the desired standards of behavior on trails. Our actions as individuals and a community directly affect the conditions of these paths and the status of wildlife. Trail work days that involve trimming bushes, picking up trash, and clearing can promote accessibility while conserving natural spaces.

As co-president of the Environmental Club at Colfax High School, I have led campus clean-ups, educated the local elementary school, and participated in many Earth Day fairs. The protection of our earth and environment is incredibly important to me. I hope to continue rafting down the North Fork, hiking the Stagecoach trail, and exploring our wonderful area alongside my community. With the support of our neighbors to prevent, preserve, and appreciate the American River and its canyons, my children will one day create memories as fond as mine.

PARC High School Essay Contest Winner, 2024