



# Hwy 49 Bridge Debris Removal Funding Approved!



Gary Hughes Photo

Photo demonstrates just some of the debris from the Highway 49 bridge that washed into the American River due to the failure of the Hell Hole Dam on December 23, 1964.

# THE CONFLUENCE

DECEMBER 2022

PARC’s campaign to remove the hazardous and unsightly wreckage of the former Highway 49 bridge from the American River met with success this past summer when Governor Gavin Newsom signed a bill authorizing \$8 million for the project. Approval of the funding measure was the culmination of a two year collaboration between PARC, state Senator Brian Dahle, and Placer County.

Key to the measure’s passage was Placer County’s agreement to manage the project. Initial efforts to convince Caltrans to accept responsibility for removal of the bridge debris met with resistance. This was a significant roadblock, overcome only when Placer County leaders committed to overseeing the removal process. The project will now be planned and executed by the Placer County Department of

Public Works.

Safely removing the concrete and metal debris will take time. The Department of Public Works will be working in 2023 on developing its plan for removing the debris, selecting a contractor to perform the removal work, and completing the environmental review process. We are hopeful the actual removal work can be completed in 2024.

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# River Debris Removal Funding Approved!

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Many thanks are due those who helped PARC achieve this important public safety milestone, including Senator Dahle and his staff, as well as Placer County Supervisor Cindy Gustafson, who was instrumental in gaining the support of both Senator Dahle and her colleagues on the Board of Supervisors.

We look forward to posting debris removal updates on PARC's website in the new year!



## PARC Celebrates its 50th Year of River Stewardship in 2023



PARC will be celebrating our 50th Anniversary in 2023! We're planning an event at the State Theater in Auburn which will include a documentary about PARC's history. Included in this celebration will be a Q&A panel with the early "PARCsters"; a display of river canyon art throughout the past five decades; the Haute Trash fashion show featuring river "collectibles"; thrilling white-water paddling footage on the North & Middle Forks of the American River and a few local films highlighting the beauty and challenges of our American River watershed. Date and details are forthcoming and will be posted on the PARC website and via our PARC emails.

**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.  
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# MOSQUITO FIRE ~ Beyond the Angle of Repose

The Mosquito Fire, California's largest wildfire of 2022, started on September 6 near Oxbow Reservoir in the Middle Fork American River Canyon below Foresthill. Suspected to have been ignited by malfunctioning PG&E equipment, the fire burned more than 76,000 acres before reaching 100% containment on October 22. As devastating as the Mosquito Fire was, it cleared the landscape of overly dense vegetation resulting from more than a century of fire suppression.

**The magic is in the soil:** While the Mosquito Fire was intense, it is estimated that approximately 65% of the soil experienced low intensity burn severity. Protecting the surviving soil communities of microbes, mycorrhizal fungi, microscopic organisms and insects that help decompose the remaining woody debris is essential for soil regeneration. Trees on the ground beyond the angle of repose will decompose more quickly, and the detritus will provide important minerals and nutrients to fire survivors and the next generation of majestic Sierra Nevada trees and plants.

**Good news for the threatened red-legged frog:** Most of the threatened *Rana draytonii* (California red-legged frog) colony in the Mosquito Fire footprint managed to survive despite its refugia being burned over extensively by the fire. A hearty number of adult and developing metamorphic stage survivors have been counted. Ongoing efforts are underway to restore their pond habitats with woody debris and chips, while erosion berms are being reestablished to protect their breeding habitat from sediment.

The California red-legged frog is a highly aquatic species typically found in cold water ponds and stream pools with overhanging riparian vegetation. Federally listed as threatened in 1996, it is California's designated state amphibian. The red-legged frog croaks under water and is rumored to be the frog hero in Mark Twain's "The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County."

**Western States Trail Update:** In collaboration with the USFS, Elke Reimer and others helped organize trail teams from two local endurance runs - the Canyons 100K and Western States Endurance Run - plus other volunteers from the moto, equestrian and trail running communities to meet on the Deadwood side of El Dorado Canyon along the Western States Trail. They focused on trail erosion mitigation with the

goal of winterizing the burn areas hit hardest by the Mosquito Fire. Fifty-six projects were identified and numbered by the evaluation team. On November 19th and 20th approx. 80 volunteers came together to install log and rock water bars. Volunteers also used sturdy McLeod rake/hoes to scrape berm for an outslope and widen the trail corridor. On behalf of the WST we enjoy and appreciate so much what these volunteers were able to accomplish. More work parties will be held in 2023.

**The Future:** What California's majestic pine and fir forests of the future will look like and how the mosaic of robust yet fragile Sierra Nevada Mountain ecosystems will continue to function in the face of climate change, drought, beetle infestation, residential encroachment, and growing recreational demand, is of great concern to all. While we are fortunate that the Mosquito Fire did not cause greater damage to the Middle Fork ecosystem or to nearby human communities, the threat of catastrophic wildfire remains very real in the American River watershed and throughout much of California. Fortunately in recent years federal, state and local public land managers, as well as many private property owners, have begun to ramp up efforts to reduce wildfire risk by expanding forest thinning and prescribed burning projects. Given the millions of acres of high fire risk lands in California that remain in need of fuel reduction treatment, it is vitally important that more resources continue to be devoted to this essential work.

Regenerating a forest ecosystem like the one damaged by the Mosquito Fire is also a complicated, technical and costly long-term commitment. Wise decisions about tree species restocking and spacing, when and to what extent salvage logging should be allowed, appropriate actions to protect endangered and other vulnerable species, and other helpful recovery steps will be critical to creating more fire resilient and healthy forest ecosystems.

## Red-legged Frog Refugia Before and After Mosquito Fire



# Eleventh Annual PARC Scholarship Essay Contest

\$22,500 Awarded to local high school seniors since 2013!



PARC Board of Directors would like to congratulate 2022 Contest Winners. From left to right: Emilie Brown, Placer HS; Wyatt Hamilton, Placer HS; Austin Wanlass, Placer HS; Kaela Peña, Placer HS, and Graham Neiman, Del Oro HS

## \$2,500 in Total Scholarship Awards for 2023 Essay Contest

The Essay Contest topic for high school seniors graduating in 2023 will be:

**What is your personal connection to the American River and its canyons, and how has a current concern, such as the COVID pandemic, climate change, social media influence, racial inequality, or another concern you have, impacted the American River and its canyons?**

Students can apply for the PARC Scholarships by submitting an original essay of no more than 500 words describing their response to the topic question about the North and Middle Forks of the American River and their canyons located upstream of Folsom Reservoir, in the Auburn State Recreation Area.

Deadline for submission is March 15, 2023. Details and application forms for the 2023 PARC Scholarship Essay Contest are NOW available on the PARC website [www.parc-auburn.org](http://www.parc-auburn.org).

To read this year's winning essays visit our Website: <https://www.parc-auburn.org> and click on their links on the Scholarship page.



Environmentalist Edward Abbey said, “Wilderness is not a luxury but a necessity of the human spirit,” and anyone who has visited the American River knows this is true. The River has given me more recreation than I can recount: from punishing Auburn runs during cross country, to spontaneous post-bike ride swims at the Confluence, to White water rafting in Coloma, it has always been a source of great enjoyment. Providing an amazing backdrop for fond memories, it serves as an escape from daily stressors.

--- Graham Neiman  
Del Oro High School  
2022 Essay Winner

# American River Outings and Events



## **OLMSTEAD LOOP WINTER SOLSTICE 5 mile loop hike Wednesday, December 21, 2022 10:00 am**

Led by Joseph Shanahan joseph.shanahan@parks.ca.gov 530-745-2202  
Meet at the Olmstead Loop Trailhead behind the Cool Fire Station at 10:00 am rain or shine. Dress for the weather. Dogs on leash welcome. This loop in an easy to moderate 5 mile hike that will focus on Knickerbocker Area natural features and the winter solstice; it's ancient significance and influence on our holiday traditions.

## **QUARRY TRAIL NEW YEAR 3 mile roundtrip hike Sunday, January 1, 2023 10:00 am**

Led by Joseph Shanahan joseph.shanahan@parks.ca.gov 530-745-2202  
Meet at the Quarry Trail Parking Lot at 10:00 am rain or shine. Dogs on leash welcome. Dress for weather. To kick off the new year we will hike out and back totaling 3 miles on easy, flat terrain. We'll discuss flora and fauna of the north facing slope of the Middle Fork Canyon and history of the Hawver Lens of Limestone. Wheelchair and stroller friendly.

## **DONNER RELIEF PARTY AMERICAN RIVER SOCIAL Friday, January 27, 2023 7:00 to 9:00 pm General Gomez Arts Center 808 Lincoln Way Auburn**

Come socialize and learn a bit of history from the members of The Donner Relief Expedition. After eight years of research, extreme athletes, Bob Crowley, Tim Twietmeyer, Jennifer Hemmen and Elke Reimer took on the challenge of following the rescue party's route from Johnson's Ranch (Wheatland) to Donner Lake on the 175th anniversary of the first rescue this past winter to honor and reflect upon the people who were willing to sacrifice in this selfless and desperate act to save others. This free event will also have a silent auction featuring local small businesses to raise funds for PARC. Bring your family and friends!

## **"THEY CROSSED THE MOUNTAINS: THE HISTORY OF THE WESTERN STATES TRAIL" Sunday, January 29, 2023 2:00 pm Auburn State Theatre**

Features a benefit documentary film for the Proposed WST Museum. On Sunday, January 29, 2023 at 2:00 p.m., the Auburn State Theatre will present a special showing of the documentary, They Crossed the Mountains: The History of the Western States Trail. The afternoon presentation will be a benefit for the new Western States Trail Museum, slated to open in 2023-2024. The showing will be followed by a question-and-answer session hosted by a panel of Western States Trail experts. The theatre is located at 985 Lincoln Way in Auburn, California. Tickets are \$10 and can be purchased at the door or online at AuburnStateTheatre.org.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Contact: Kate Riordan / irishkate@prodigy.net / 530.210.4667 cell



# Membership and Donation Opportunities

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**P**rotect American River Canyons is a river education and conservation organization dedicated to the protection of the natural, cultural and historical resources of the North and Middle Forks of the American River and its canyons. PARC is very active in the community, sponsoring a variety of social, educational and river service events each year. PARC remains vigilant to destructive development and political threats to the river and canyons. Visit our website [www.parc-auburn.org](http://www.parc-auburn.org).

Yes! I want to join/renew membership with PARC and help shape the future of the American River!

## ANNUAL MEMBERSHIPS

- \$25 Regular Member ~ Receive a PARC window sticker
- \$50 River Guardian ~ Receive waterproof version of PARC's Auburn SRA Trails & River Map
- \$100 River PARCster ~ Receive the American River Insiders Guidebook
- \$250 River Crusader ~ Receive the American River Insiders Guidebook and Cool Trails Bandana map
- \$500 River Champion ~ Receive Laws Field Guide to the Sierra Nevada
- \$1,000 River Angel ~ Receive both the AR Guidebook and Laws Field Guide to the Sierra Nevada
- I want to support the PARC High School Scholarship Program with an additional tax deductible donation of \$\_\_\_\_\_.
- I want to support the PARC Legacy Fund with an additional donation of \$\_\_\_\_\_.
- I want my entire donation to go to PARC. Please do not send a premium gift.

***For your convenience, please take a moment now to complete and return the enclosed envelope to renew your membership.*** If you prefer to renew online, go to [www.parc-auburn.org](http://www.parc-auburn.org) and click on "Join PARC." There is also a link on our website for contributing to the **PARC Legacy Fund and Scholarship Award Fund.**

PARC is a non-profit 501(c)3 organization. Donations are tax deductible to the extent of the law.

# Estate Planning and Leaving Your Own River Legacy

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**T**he PARC Legacy Fund is available for those who want to protect the American River and its canyons forever. This endowment fund will grow and provide PARC with a solid financial foundation to continue protecting this unique and irreplaceable environment. The Placer Community Foundation professionally manages the PARC Legacy Fund. There are many ways you can help. Your Giving Options for now or later include but aren't limited to: **Bequests, Retirement Plans, Securities, Real Estate, Life Insurance, Cash and Charitable Trusts.** To learn more about your

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](mailto:jhubbard@placercf.org) or (530) 885-4920.

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## Poem by Roger Groghan

### No Questions, No Answers

At the moment, I'm as much of a mystery as the rest of the universe.  
Maybe that's why I like watching water spilling over rocks,  
Or a field of people doing Tai Chi,  
Or imagining I can see the wind on a clear day,  
Sky blue reflected in a still pool.

Pelicans weaving a line along the horizon of sea and sky.  
For years I have sat on the sands of Salmon Creek beach and watched Bodega Head move north.

In the sea, the waves move and the water is still.  
In the river, the water moves and the waves are still.

I try to imagine a wave function collapse just down from water tumbling over rocks.

Continents are on the move,  
Stars are on their way to everywhere,  
Oceans and rivers are flowing,  
Everything is in the flow,  
It leads me to the importance of breathing.

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*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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## Ponderosa Bridge Replacement Project

The existing Ponderosa Way Bridge was constructed in 1935. The bridge is 12 feet wide and 222 feet long. A specialized underwater bridge inspection performed by the BOR in 2012 found that the existing bridge Pier 3 continues to scour out below the footing. Repair recommendations included correcting substructure problem at Pier 3, replacing the top layer of deck timbers and repairing the cable system. Due to the poor condition of the bridge and Pier 3, as well as the bridge's low load rating for large emergency vehicles, it was decided to replace the bridge. Construction of new concrete abutments, piers and a three-span steel plate girder bridge structure with a cast concrete deck is expected to take about one year.

Throughout this project, Ponderosa Road will be closed to vehicle and recreational traffic near the State Park boundaries on the north and south sides of Ponderosa Way. A Posted Order prohibiting vehicular and recreational traffic on this portion of roadway has been issued and may be viewed on the Auburn SRA's website.

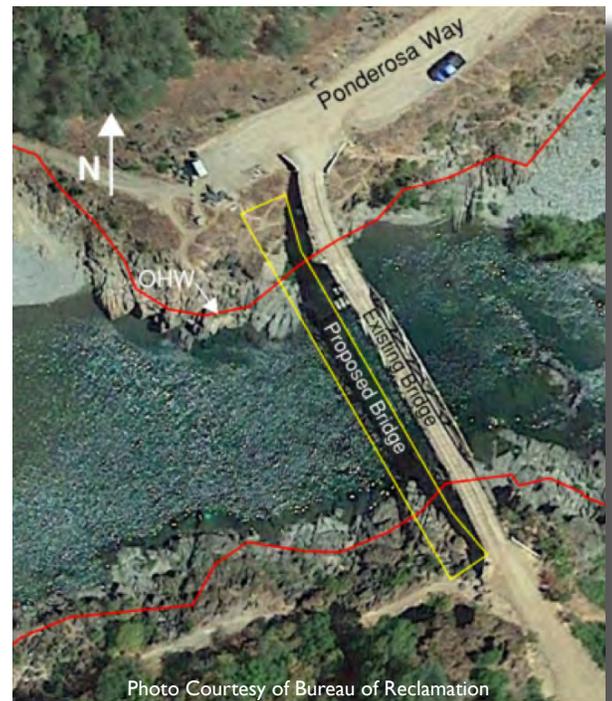


Photo Courtesy of Bureau of Reclamation

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