

## **Kimberly Lum, Oakmont High School**

Ever since I joined Girl Scouts in Kindergarten, I have been to the rivers, beaches, campgrounds, hiking trails many times over the last 12+ years. Naturally, I grew to appreciate and care immensely about our local areas at North and Middle Forks of the American River and their canyons located upstream of Folsom Reservoir, in the Auburn State Recreation Area.

My Girl Scout troop and I go to the river almost every summer and do hiking on the beautiful trails near the canyons by Foresthill. While enjoying the water at the American River, we always admire the magnificent view of the Foresthill Bridge over the North Fork. I love to stay cool in the hot summer by swimming, paddle boarding, finding rocks and shells, looking for fish and water plants at the American River. I have hosted birthday parties, troop summer badge work, and hangouts there. I observed that people litter trash on the ground in the canyons and recreation areas, some even throw bottles and nasty trash into the river. So, whenever I go to the American River or hiking up the canyons, I always bring a trash bag with me to do my part!

During the pandemic, my troop and I went hiking up the canyon near Foresthill and saw so many plants burned and destroyed from the fire. It was quite upsetting to see our beautiful canyons get scorched from a careless backpacker visiting our local gem. Seeing and wanting to keep our environment, especially local trails, American River and its canyons clean and nice, my troop and I have been participating in trash clean-ups along creeks, rivers, and trails for years now.

My troop and I participated in the "Leave No Trace Behind" challenge to explore and identify issues in our local environment, implement solutions, and motivate changes in the community. I collaborated with my Girl Scout troop to make a badge using camping and backpacking experience. It contains building a nature quest website teaching fire safety, respect for nature, and waste disposal. I drew a badge design and the social media mascot. We planned and led Leave No Trace events for Scouts and harvested new native plants to encourage eco-conscience behavior toward our community's environment.

I would like to propose to have more clean-up events for American River and its canyons annually and spread more education following the Center for Outdoor Ethics seven core principles of *Leave No Trace* when hiking, recreationing, and camping: "1. Plan ahead and prepare; 2. Travel and camp on durable surfaces; 3. Dispose of waste properly; 4. Leave what you find; 5. Minimize campfire impacts (be careful with fire); 6. Respect wildlife; and 7. Be considerate of other visitors."

I hope that by increasing awareness and spreading the *Leave No Trace* education to the new generations-visitors, communities, clubs, Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, and schools that our majestic American River and its canyons can stay glorious, beautiful, and protected for the future!

**PARC High School Essay Contest Winner, 2024**