

Wyatt Hamilton, Placer High School

Since I was able to start walking I was going on hikes on the canal with my father. We have been going on walks, runs, and bike rides through the canyon ever since. The American River canyons have raised me as assuredly as my parents have. I am daily out enjoying the oak trees, manzanita, and the clear rivers either with Placer Mountain Bike Club, Varsity Cross Country, or just going solo for hours to relax and get some activity. Having many close experiences with the-deer, birds,-and-unfortunately-bears,-I appreciate their beauty-and habitat and want it to remain. It has been immensely unsettling, to witness so much of the surrounding forests burn down in the wildfires that have plagued California for as long as I remember.

In an effort to preserve our beautiful river wildlands, I am actively advertising around Placer High School, to gather this summer to do our part to prevent the devastation from going further. I am no stranger to trail work and brush clearing. In elementary school, I worked with my dad to clear one of the school's trails that I loved which went around the lower half of the school. More recently, I and a few other friends and another family single-handedly designed and cleared the trails for the first annual Placer High Cross Country course over the past two years. Placer's home Cross Country course goes through a heavily wooded area near Railhead park and the campus is located a couple of blocks away from Robie Point. We will be gathering to do fire clearing at the immediate forest by our campus as well as serving Firewise USA, having more young members of our community take stand. The more students, parents, and other community members that come out, the more clearing will get done. I am confident that we will be able to assemble a sizeable group to help to clear the combustible undergrowth to discourage fires. In addition to clearing underbrush, we are going to be offering free gutter cleaning and further paid work going directly to the efforts of continued fire prevention. Such funds would go to increasing fire awareness around the local towns including Auburn, Cool, and Foresthill, and to our local Firewise district. I am enthusiastic to-have my friends out with me to help save our homes, canyons, and wildlife.

It has been horrifying watching the plumes of smoke billowing up from the midst of the greenery, my beloved adventure ground and I want to do my part to prevent that from happening as much as I can. Going away to college later this year, I do not want to return to devastation, I want to return to the green trees and wildlife I have grown up loving, which I will fight for by clearing undergrowth to assist in preventing massive forest fires.