



Friends of the River in transition as conservation movement faces time of challenge.

FUNDRAISING APPEAL 1981

OUR NEW NATIONAL WILD RIVERS: Watt inquires about Repeal

Stanislaus: Anguish and hope

American: Auburn on the ropes, South Fork dams keep coming

Tuolumne: 18 months until the dam builders begin

Peripheral Canal and CVP Reauthorization: Water reforms must come first

Dear F.O.R. Members and Friends,

This letter is a thank you, an update, and an urgent appeal for donations, or your active assistance in getting new members. Or both! Friends of the River is turning a big corner, and we need your help to do it.

All of you have already contributed energy or dollars to the battle to protect America's rivers. As these places become rarer, they become increasingly important to human spirits. They are crucial to entire systems of life - in fact they ARE these systems.

The help FOR has received, particularly from our members, has sustained us - politically, financially, and personally by assuring us that we are far from alone in our concerns. We are deeply grateful for your past confidence and support.



Solitude and digger pines, Merced River. (Brian Fessenden)

F.O.R. Lean Times and Transition

Nonetheless, we find ourselves financially strapped during an important transition period. We held back very little in our push to get the Stanislaus Wild River bill through Congress, and the few dollar reserves that

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remained after the bill's 20-19 committee defeat on September 17 are gone. The current flooding of Parrott's Ferry and beyond, and the clear-cutting of trees around the reservoir near the dam, take their toll on morale as well.

Yet the battle over rivers and water projects, and the opportunities for change, continue unabated. FOR in 1980 functioned at the highest levels of energy and effectiveness that we've ever achieved in all areas, including public outreach, lobbying, research and publicity. And the support which came together - our partnership with you and thousands of others who lobbied, organized and volunteered - was so strong that nearly every water and power lobbyist in Washington was hustling through the halls of Congress last September to counter it. Congressman Phil Burton said he had never seen a grassroots conservation campaign like it. State Resources Secretary Huey Johnson has more than once called FOR "the cutting edge of the environmental movement."

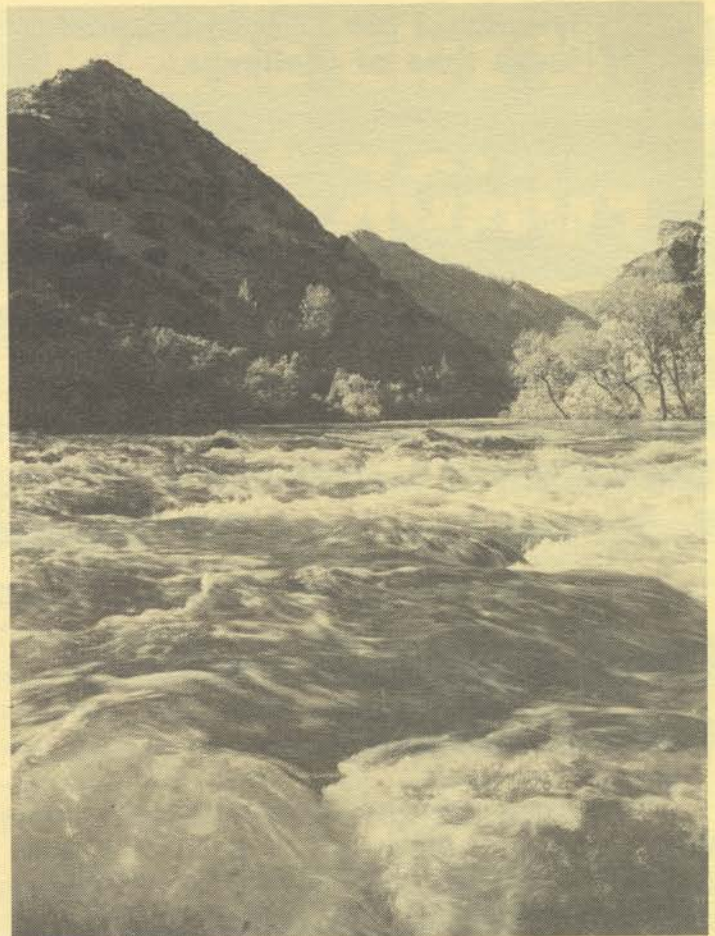
FOR is determined to keep this energy for river protection mobilized and moving. We're making a strong and deliberate shift in our focus, picking up new issues, revising our strategies for ongoing battles. Some major examples are described below.

Please remember that on any of these issues we can put your volunteer activism to work, for an afternoon or for a project extending over many months.

North Coast Rivers Victorious . . .

A good example of the need for continuing awareness and activity is the situation of California's new National Wild and Scenic rivers. Last year, Governor Brown and former Interior Secretary Andrus worked together against a tight deadline to designate the rivers currently in the State Wild and Scenic system as components of the National system as well. This took political courage, and was only possible because of the existence of the large and active constituency for rivers which has developed over the last decade - especially around the Stanislaus issue. The Friends of the River Northcoast Chapter particularly can be singled out for helping organize critical support in the sharply divided local areas.

The designation gives federal protection against dams, diversions and unsound logging and roadbuilding practices for the Smith, Klamath, Scott, Salmon, Trinity, New, Eel, Van Duzen and lower American Rivers and their corridors. The Eel has been the number one river targeted for damming by federal agencies and Central Valley water interests. (And the lower American is where the Sacramento FOR house goes swimming on hot summer evenings!)



The Stanislaus, up river above Razorback Rapid, STILL ALIVE.
(Tim Palmer)

. . . But Watt Inquires About Removing Protection

But already James Watt, the controversial new Interior Secretary, is looking into how the new protective status - the greatest victory for California rivers in ten years - can be undone! Mr. Watt has explored administrative actions leading to repeal, and has found that these avenues probably will not do the job. But he is keeping open the option of his department simply refusing to contest the current court suits challenging the legality of Andrus's designations.

This is just one of a whole line-up of anti-environmental measures coming from Mr. Watt, including: reconsidering the opening of our coastal waters from Santa Cruz to the Oregon border to off-shore oil and gas drilling; the cut-off of funds for new parklands acquisitions; the abolition of the agency charged with planning new protected land and river units; and more government support for new hydroelectric dams - small and not-so-small. One of the latter might be the 400 foot high dam proposed by East Bay MUD, which would inundate the Mokelumne River in the beautiful area at the crossing of Highway 49. Others might be on the Kern and Cosumnes Rivers.

Tuolumne River: Time to Build a Campaign

The rugged, pristine Tuolumne River Canyon also is confronted by 1981's new political atmosphere as it enters its last year and a half of interim protection from three more hydropower dams. San Francisco and the Modesto and Turlock Irrigation Districts must wait until October 1982 to apply for preliminary permits for construction. In the meantime, FOR is gearing up to get Congress to act favorably on the 1980 executive branch recommendation, based on a four year study, that the entire stretch of river from its headwaters in Yosemite to Wards Ferry be given National Wild and Scenic status.

The Tuolumne is rich in fish and wildlife, and is one of the great whitewater boating rivers in the West. We have the jump on our opposition. Yet gaining Congressional support for any wilderness or wild river designations this session will be a challenge. We will be working closely with Tuolumne County residents who in 1978 voted two to one against allowing more dams on this already hard-working river. The Tuolumne will need a strong campaign of public support, and we invite your help.

Outreach and Public Education

Our campaign to organize business people to speak up for conservation - the most sensible alternative for the economy - is growing. We held two successful one-day conferences recently in San Francisco: one in October to review election issues and candidates, and the 'Conservation Forum' in February with representatives from government, industry, legislators and conservation groups detailing their programs and exchanging perspectives for 1981. We are developing a marketing plan to bring conservation ideas, and the ways in which they would affect the larger economy, to new constituencies. We're developing a coalition of video producers to help get these ideas on the air, and get rivers into more people's imaginations. Our Los Angeles and Sacramento staffs recently held gala open houses to bring area members back together. As for our publication, "Headwaters", the comments we receive continue to be very positive (and we very much appreciate receiving your thoughts and comments, whatever they are.)

The FOR Foundation will host the 1981 Confluence - the fifth year for this learning, strategizing and all-around good time weekend. The Foundation will publish our first book, and guidebook and history of Motherlode rivers. And the Foundation's Legal Fund is still receiving and distributing donations for several cases concerning rivers.

Stanislaus Hopes

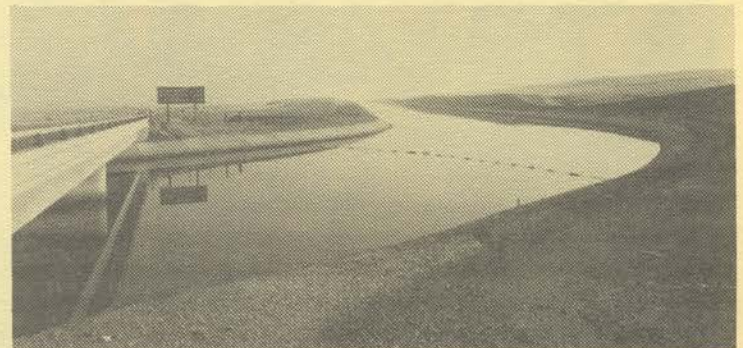
Despite some of the toughest odds the Stanislaus has faced, there are still very real opportunities for its protection for two or three years, or even longer. Most of the upper canyon is still there, including places of perfect beauty such as Rose Creek.

The Stanislaus remains a top-priority FOR project. Years of grassroots activism has caused the government of California to continue to stand up for the river, and we are working closely with the state on its lawsuit for state control of New Melones Reservoir. We will also remain active in the State Water Board proceedings which determine the maximum water elevation they permit for the reservoir (we were influential in getting the limit down to 844 feet above sea level).

As for Washington, an FOR lobbying team has again arrived and is working to make the new administration aware of the subsidies and wasteful economics of the proposed massive reservoir. We will also make sure it is known that the state's position was originally arrived at during Mr. Reagan's term as governor, and had his personal support. Funds for the reestablishment of our Washington office on a year-round basis is one of our most pressing needs, since a great many California issues are decided there.

Water Policy Research and the Big Ditches

We realize that long term reform of water policies must go hand in hand with the ongoing battles against specific destructive projects. Staff members are preparing positions on the complex issues of groundwater management, conjunctive use of surface and ground water sources, irrigation efficiency, and particularly water pricing. FOR recently testified at hearings on the federal Central Valley Project's pricing policies and will be involved when Congress considers the conditions under which the CVP will be reauthorized. This research will also help us to determine what "package deal", if any, could make Peripheral Canal legislation tolerable.



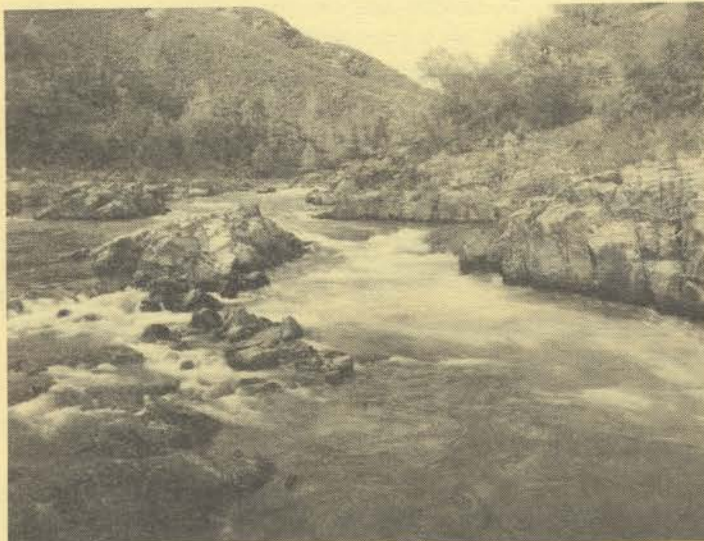
Aqueduct heading south. Some want to dam the Eel and send it this way. (Brian Fessenden)

American River:

Auburn Dam on the ropes,
South Fork dams modified
but still objectionable

The philosophical shift in Washington should prove helpful in finishing off the chances that Auburn Dam, on the North and Middle Forks of the American, will ever be built. The beauty and life of these two threatened canyons have not been sufficiently brought to public attention, but the price tag for the dam, estimated at up to three billion dollars, has embarrassed away some of the project's supporters. Hopefully, we can get a start on the effort to deauthorize it completely.

On the South Fork American, El Dorado Irrigation District has dropped its plans - for now - to build hydroelectric dams at Coloma and Salmon Falls. But the upper dams still proposed would inundate some beautiful areas along Highway 50, diminish and make more erratic the flows through the popular recreation stretches downstream, and further fuel the booming growth rate in this still rural county.



Lost Hat Rapid, South Fork American River. (Brian Fessenden)

Please Give Us A Boost!

So here's Friends of the River in 1981 - ready to return to full speed working for river preservation and wise water and energy use. But we can't get moving again without an additional immediate inflow of funds.

We're asking you - our strongest supporters - for an additional donation, or a gift membership for a friend.

Whether or not you can spare any dollars, we'd like you to consider making a serious pitch to a friend, colleague or neighbor who you believe supports rivers and might become a new FOR member. (If you like, we can send you for this purpose the new FOR brochure which lays out the costs - to all of us - of new dams versus the costs of conservation and efficiency.)

Finally, we'd like to hear which river and water issues you'd like to see FOR pursue, and find out how you'd like to become more involved in our work. We also want to coordinate with you concerning conservation projects you are working on.

We think FOR has a strong record of activating people and making our government respond. We are certain of the values we're trying to protect: a viable resource system, and the life of the planet. It still feels like a worthy endeavor. THANKS for being part of it.

Mark Dubois, President, Friends of the River
Catherine Fox, Director, FOR Foundation



One of 1980's biggest lobbying groups, Congressman Clausen's office, Santa Rosa. (Diane Poslosky)