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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

American River Conservancy Celebrates Ten Years of Volunteer-Led Water Monitoring in the Cosumnes Watershed

COLOMA, CA. August 5, 2025 – American River Conservancy (ARC) is proud to celebrate ten years of the *Cosumnes River Water Quality Monitoring Program*, a participatory-science initiative to study and safeguard the health of one of California’s last free-flowing rivers.

The program has its origins in the efforts of El Dorado County residents Melinda and Rick Frost-Hurzel, who were alarmed by changes on the river near their home. Their concern for the health of the Cosumnes River quickly led to a collaborative initiative involving land trusts, conservation organizations like the El Dorado Chapter of Trout Unlimited, local tribes, agencies, and other concerned community members. “The goal,” says Melinda, “was to take care of, and learn about, the Cosumnes River... providing a glimpse of how rivers historically functioned and supporting innovative projects to address both human and creature needs.”

Over the past decade, more than 50 trained volunteer water quality monitors have been essential to the program’s success. Every month, they visit 16 sites throughout the Cosumnes River watershed to collect data on pH, conductivity, water and air temperature, dissolved oxygen, and record habitat conditions. This data, uploaded to the California Environmental Data Exchange Network (CEDEN), has provided an invaluable resource to scientists, land managers, and private landowners working to protect and understand the health of the river.

In 2021, the program deepened its scientific impact by partnering with Dr. Jasquelin Peña of UC Davis. Volunteers began collecting water samples to help research the effects of the Caldor Fire on watershed health and resilience. “Logistically, the science work that we are doing would not be possible without this type of partnership,” says Dr. Peña. “The science questions we can ask are only possible because of the volunteer group making it possible.”

But the program offers more than just data. It builds community and fosters a connection between people and place. Executive Director of Cosumnes Culture and Waterways (CCaWW), Kimberly ShiningStar Petree, has been involved with the program since its earliest days and regularly monitors at the site known as Ladies Valley, a place of deep significance for her and many others. “The Cosumnes is our home river. Our people, the El Dorado Band of Miwok, have lived within the Cosumnes River watershed for over 10,000 years.” That connection became even more meaningful in June of this year, when American River Conservancy successfully



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transferred the Ladies Valley property to CCaWW – an act of recognition and commitment to the continuing health of the river.

“I love its unpretentiousness, its mysterious pools, its generosity, its welcoming beauty, its freedom,” says longtime monitor John Robert Cornell of his time spent on the Cosumnes. “The river monitoring program has been a natural fit for me – to give back a little protection and care to the living river and the community of life that it makes possible.”

Whether you’re a scientist, a student, or someone who simply wants to give back to our local rivers, we invite you to get involved! Learn more at ARConservancy.org or email stewardship@ARConservancy.org.

About American River Conservancy (ARC) ARC is a non-profit environmental organization that preserves healthy ecosystems in the upper American River and upper Cosumnes River watersheds through land conservation, stewardship, and education. Based in Coloma, California, since 1989, ARC has completed more than 90 conservation projects and contributed over 35 miles of trails, while safeguarding over 30,000 acres of native fisheries, endangered species habitat, agricultural lands, cultural resources, and recreational landscapes. ARC offers public hikes, hands-on workshops, community events, and environmental education programs for people of all ages. Support ARC by volunteering, donating, and discovering more at ARConservancy.org.