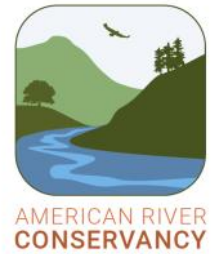




# THE CURRENT

Informational Newsletter for Summer 2025 (June-August)

## American River Conservancy



### Working Landscapes – More Than Meets the Eye

By Elena DeLacy, Executive Director

Imagine, for a moment, that you have travelled back in time to California in the 1600's. You're witness to hills covered in purple flowers and native bunchgrasses, rivers with salmon runs so great you can walk across the backs of the fish, like stepping-stones, and skies with flocks of birds so thick they look like storm clouds. Herds of pronghorn and elk roam the foothills and valley floors where vast inland tule marshes and jungle-like valley riparian forest stretch for hundreds of miles across the horizon. This is how California was often described by early European settlers, Spanish missionaries, and American trappers: a wild Eden, providing abundant nourishment to the first people of California without much physical labor. However, this "New World" was in fact a very old world. Every day of every year for millennia, the indigenous people of California interacted with the native plants and animals that surrounded them. The productive and diverse landscapes of California were in part the outcome of sophisticated harvesting and management practices – a tending of the wild, so to speak.

The practice of agriculture is an experimental way of life for modern humans. For most of our species nearly 200,000 years on the evolutionary scene, humans were hunters and gatherers. Around 13,000 years ago our ancestors began cultivating crops and domesticating animals for food. Agriculture has been the driving force behind the growth of civilizations – for better or worse. In Rome, the degradation of soil resources during the common era caused a reliance on imported food from Egypt, leading to the Roman empire's eventual decline. Periodic famines throughout Europe caused by depleted farmland and a changing climate between circa 1300-1850 are a testament to not only the fragility of life but also the importance of sustainable, regenerative agricultural practices.

Many of ARC's most cherished conservation successes and current projects are part of our region's agricultural legacy (e.g. Cronan Ranch, Salmon Falls Ranch, Wakamatsu Farm, El Dorado Ranch, just to name a few). In conservation circles, these projects are called "working landscapes." The "landscape" part refers to a

cohesive, ecologically and socially connected area of land. The "working" part tells us something about the land use and economic importance of a landscape. According to the 2023 Agricultural Crop and Livestock Report for El Dorado County, the gross value of agricultural production in the county was approximately \$80 million, with apples and livestock production being the highest grossing "crops." Economic importance can also refer to other services provided by these landscapes and ecosystems, such as water filtration, recreational access, native food production, and pollination, just to name a few. While I couldn't find any research on the economic value of these services in El Dorado County, I can say that their inherent value is inestimable.

Ensuring healthy ecosystems is a core value of American River Conservancy's mission. In our local watersheds, American River Conservancy (ARC) is working to protect and maintain connectivity on the landscape through the strategic conservation of land – some of which is actively ranched, farmed, or managed as timberland. Local agricultural producers, many of whom have been farming or ranching in the region for multiple generations, are also an invaluable source of wisdom because of their connection to the land. The ranchers that I have worked with during my tenure at ARC are all concerned

with maintaining an ecologically healthy landscape in part because this is what allows them to be successful economically.

Encroachment of development threatens the ecological health of the landscape as it becomes more fragmented, while also threatening the agricultural economy and the social cohesion of the landscape as ranchers sell their land and move away.

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Local rancher Tim Neilsen at El Dorado Ranch. The Neilsen Family has been stewarding this land for three generations.

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## American River Conservancy

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## MEET THE STAFF



Megan and her husband Josh backpacking last summer

### Megan Matthews Education Coordinator

I often tell people I have a “dream job.” As ARC’s Education Coordinator, I get to do what I love most: help young people develop a sense of belonging in the natural world.

Growing up, I spent much of my time outside. My dad introduced me to native plants and animals, and took my family camping regularly. Nature quickly became a place where

I felt I truly belonged. Inspired by my older brother, who studied Forestry, I followed a similar path and earned my Bachelor’s Degree in Natural Resources with an emphasis on Environmental Education from Oregon State University in 2020. I joined ARC in September 2022, and it’s been a joy to turn my passions into a career ever since.

In my time with ARC, I’ve learned that not every student who comes through our education programs feels an immediate connection to nature. Part of my role at ARC is to help students feel safe and confident outside. If students can walk through a meadow or forest and recognize some plants and animals, and understand the “why” behind a landscape, their uncertainty fades, and a sense of comfort and belonging grows. When teachers bring their students to ARC, they’re also working toward meeting specific educational standards. To support them, we align all our field trip lessons with the Next Generation Science Standards. Whether a class is studying pollination, adaptations, or the water cycle, we design experiences that meet their learning goals while deepening their connection to the land. It’s a win-win.

We also work closely with ARC’s Stewardship team to offer hands-on stewardship projects. Recently, 7th and 8th graders visited Wakamatsu Farm to help remove milk thistle and trim blackberries. A task like this can be daunting to ask of anyone. But we’ve found that when students tackle it together, they really give it their all. Then afterwards, they get to sit and eat

lunch beneath oak trees, in the fresh air. The students are usually tired, but they gain an appreciation of nature, a sense of belonging, and they learn why it’s important to take care of the land that’s taking care of them.

At ARC, fostering a sense of belonging in nature is an important part of our work. My personal motto is, “You don’t love what you don’t know.” I want everyone, not just students, to know nature, begin to understand it and feel safe in it, and ultimately fall in love with it. Because when we love something, we take care of it.

Both my husband and I were raised to see access to open spaces and outdoor opportunities as both a privilege and a responsibility. One day, we hope to raise our own children to become the next generation of outdoor advocates. I am so grateful that I get to teach young people about the natural world I love so much. And that’s why this truly is my dream job.

—Special thanks to JoAnn McAllister for her support in writing this article.



**THE AMERICAN RIVER CONSERVANCY OFFICES ARE LOCATED IN THE MARSHALL GOLD DISCOVERY STATE HISTORIC PARK AT 348 HWY 49, COLOMA, CA**

OUR OFFICES ARE OPEN TO VOLUNTEERS AND SUPPORTERS MONDAY–FRIDAY 8AM–4PM  
WE CAN BE REACHED AT (530) 621-1224, [ARC@ARCONSERVANCY.ORG](mailto:ARC@ARCONSERVANCY.ORG) OR VISIT [ARCONSERVANCY.ORG](http://ARCONSERVANCY.ORG).





Continued from page 1.

The relationships we build with landowners and producers through our conservation and land stewardship work are integral to not only maintaining these landscapes, but also the social and economic benefits they provide.

To successfully navigate an uncertain future for humans and more-than-human beings, we must learn from the past. There is much to learn from resource management practices that emphasize local food webs and humans as active participants in nature. Sustainable and regenerative agriculture, the maintenance of native food systems, rotational grazing, and the use of beneficial fire are land stewardship practices that can help us to strike a balance between human needs and the needs of the natural world. As ARC enters its 37th year as a land trust, we are updating our Conservation Vision and Action Plan, which is a road map for conservation in our region for the next decade. I can't wait to share with our community our vision for conservation in the Upper American River and Upper Cosumnes River watersheds – one that finds the “sweet spot” where human needs and the needs of the natural world converge.

## LAND CONSERVATION UPDATE

For 36 years, ARC has worked with private landowners, public agencies and funding partners to preserve native habitat, agricultural lands, recreational access and riparian corridors. As the human population grows, conservation of large open spaces is critical to allow systems to adapt and maintain resiliency in the face of changing ecological processes produced by climate change. We are currently working towards the advancement of several exciting conservation projects, including several working lands projects in the Upper American River and Upper Cosumnes River watersheds, including the following highlights:

**El Dorado Ranch** Over the last 11 years, ARC has protected 4,182 acres of El Dorado Ranch in 4 different phases. We are now working with the landowner to purchase and permanently protect the remaining 3,000 acres of this beautiful oak woodland landscape along the Cosumnes River in El Dorado County. Once the site of a planned residential development, El Dorado Ranch will become a unit in El Dorado County's first Wildlife Area – a special designation by California Department of Fish and Wildlife that allows for non-motorized wildlife-related recreation. El Dorado Ranch is a working cattle ranch and supports a diverse assemblage of native species. Visit [ARConservancy.org/eldoradoranch](https://ARConservancy.org/eldoradoranch) to learn more and donate to this exciting project. In 2025 we will close escrow on a portion of this project: a 30-acre parcel along Highway 49 where ARC will create a parking area and trailhead for public access. ARC has secured a 1.5 million dollar grant from the California Natural Resources Agency's EEM Grant program and has applied for funding from the Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB) and the CA Department of Conservation (DOC) to advance the acquisition of Phase 5a (2,000 acres) in 2026. (See page 9 for map and more details.)

**Lotus View Ranch Conservation Easement** Over the past few years, ARC staff have been working with the owner of this 1,000-acre ranch to craft a conservation easement document that protects the biodiversity and agricultural resources of the property. Located adjacent to Cronan Ranch Regional Trails Park, Lotus View Ranch is an important keystone for habitat connectivity in the South Fork American River canyon. ARC was recently awarded a 1 million dollar grant from California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA) towards the purchase of a conservation easement on this working ranch. ARC Staff have also submitted grants to WCB and DOC to help advance this project.



View of Cronan Ranch west ridge trail and lollipop tree from Lotus View

### OUR MISSION

The American River Conservancy serves our communities by ensuring healthy ecosystems within the Upper American and Upper Cosumnes River watersheds through land conservation, stewardship and education.



## ACCREDITATION ACHIEVED!

We are proud to announce that ARC was recently awarded first-time land trust accreditation! ARC provided extensive documentation and was subject to a comprehensive third-party evaluation prior to achieving this distinction. The Land Trust Accreditation Commission awarded accreditation, signifying its confidence that ARC's lands will be protected forever.

"Accreditation demonstrates American River Conservancy's commitment to permanent land conservation in the Upper American River and Upper Cosumnes River watersheds," said Elena DeLacy, ARC's executive director. "We are a stronger organization for having gone through the rigorous accreditation program. Our strength means special places – such as El Dorado Ranch and Wakamatsu Farm – will be protected forever, making El Dorado County and the Central Sierra region an even greater place for us and future generations."

With your support, since 1989 we have conserved over 30,900 acres of wildlife habitat, farmland, river corridors, and recreational spaces in the heart of the central Sierra Nevada within El Dorado County and Placer County, just east of Sacramento, CA. "It is exciting to recognize American River Conservancy with this national mark of distinction," said Melissa Kalvestrand, executive director of the Commission. "Donors and partners can trust that the more than 450 accredited land trusts across the country are united behind strong standards and have demonstrated sound finances, ethical conduct, responsible governance, and lasting stewardship."

ARC is one of 1,363 land trusts across the United States, according to the Land Trust Alliance's most recent National Land Trust Census. A complete list of accredited land trusts and more information about the process and benefits can be found at [landtrustaccreditation.org](https://landtrustaccreditation.org).

## ARC SPECIAL EVENTS 2025

### UPCOMING SPECIAL EVENTS

Please join our exciting upcoming events at Wakamatsu Farm!



#### ARC's Concerts for a Cause featuring Wani's Tacos

This concert series benefits our Resilience Reserve, which helps us manage, repair, and restore our protected properties, especially after extreme weather events.

June 21 – Island of Black and White

July 26 – Achilles Wheel

August 16 – Red Dirt Ruckus

Gates open at 5:30, find more info and ticket sales at <https://bit.ly/ARCc4c2025>

### SAVE THESE FALL DATES

#### RIPE AREA: Art of Native Plant Festival - September 21

This collaborative project with our partners from Myrtle Tree Arts brings the community together to celebrate the connections between California native plants, local ecosystems, environmental conservation, land stewardship, and artistic expres-



sion, including the culinary arts.

From 10:00 to 4:00, find more info and reservations at <https://bit.ly/RIPEAREA25>

#### Nichi Bei Pilgrimage – October 4

#### ARC's Fall Fling – October 12

A free community event in celebration of ARC supporters and successes. From 4:00 to 7:00, find more info and reservations at <https://bit.ly/ARCfallfling2025>

#### Viva ARC!

On a beautiful April 13 Sunday afternoon, 22 special guests at The Villa Agave enjoyed an unforgettable afternoon of top-shelf tequila paired with gourmet small plates. Special gratitude goes to Bonnie Doyle, whose extraordinary generosity made this event happen. Bonnie not only donated her stunning villa, but she also contributed so much of her time, expertise, and many thoughtful in-kind gifts that elevated the experience for every guest.

*Our community will dearly miss Bonnie and her passion for local wildlife as she moves on to other opportunities.*

Find ticketing and information on ARC's event page at [ARConservancy.org/events](https://ARConservancy.org/events).



We always need **event volunteers!** To help and join FREE, please contact [melissa@ARConservancy.org](mailto:melissa@ARConservancy.org).



# STEWARDSHIP UPDATE & VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

## STEWARDING CONSERVED LANDS

### Opportunities to Recreate through Stewardship Programs



The Creek to Peak trail winding its way to amazing views.  
Photo credit Evan Dudley

The 2024/2025 trail building season was a success! Thanks to the tireless efforts of volunteers, the work of community-funded professional trail builders, a generous sponsorship from Athletic Brewing Company, and a proud partnership with the Auburn Folsom Trail Riders Action Coalition, several exciting new trails have been completed at Salmon Falls Ranch.

ARC is especially excited to announce the completion of the new Creek to Peak trail. This scenic route has something for everyone—whether you're looking to relax in the shade beside a rushing creek, take in sweeping views stretching from the Sierra Nevada to Folsom Lake and all the way to Mt. Diablo, or enjoy a hike, or ride filled with fun twists and turns - Creek to Peak delivers.

Also completed this season is a reroute of the lower Cattle Chute trail, providing a direct connection from the staging area to Highline. These additions offer users a variety of new experiences and were designed and built to enhance user experience and withstand the erosive forces of water and trail use. Come experience them for yourself—trail season is here, and adventure is calling!

To access the new trails, head west from the Acorn Creek Trailhead parking lot via the Culvert and Boneyard trail. And don't forget to purchase your annual or day-use trailhead pass!

Learn more through the links below, or visit the stewardship page on our website page at [ARConservancy.org/stewardship](https://ARConservancy.org/stewardship)

Wakamatsu Farm Workdays: <https://app.dvforms.net/api/dv/z9vww3>

Trail Workdays: <https://app.dvforms.net/api/dv/j19vy7>

Water Quality Monitoring: <https://app.donorview.com/KNDyl>

River Clean-ups: <https://app.dvforms.net/api/dv/w4z68q>

Land Stewards: <https://app.donorview.com/v6x39>

Leek Springs: [Volunteer Sign Up Here](#). Learn more about this project [Here](#).

Bluebird Monitoring: <https://app.donorview.com/GZvyP>

Phenology: <https://app.donorview.com/Z6ZQj>

Fill out our  
Volunteer  
interest form



[ARConservancy.org/join-us/](https://ARConservancy.org/join-us/)

### Lewis Ranch Open Preserve Day and ARC Volunteer Land Stewards

By Cathy Mueller, Stewardship Manager

The May 3rd Open Preserve Day at American River Conservancy's Lewis Ranch was a great success thanks to the efforts of our stellar volunteer Land Steward hosts. Sixty-five community participants explored trails, waterfalls, creeks, ponds, and vistas on this 972-acre property either on foot, bicycle, or horseback. ARC plans to offer this opportunity to the community at least one time each spring. The celebration of beautiful open spaces and the people who love them continued into the evening with an appreciation dinner for our volunteer Land Stewards. Thank you to our volunteers who help ARC staff to connect more people with protected land!





# PROGRAMS PLUS

See our website calendar for updates, full descriptions, and registration links.

[ARConservancy.org/events](https://ARConservancy.org/events)

No dogs allowed unless otherwise stated



## NATURE WALKS

### A 'HOME TURF' HISTORY HIKE

**Saturday, June 7<sup>th</sup> 10am-1pm**

Keith Atwater, long-time ARC member and retired college professor, will lead a local history and heritage walk (driving between stops) to the Bayley House in Pilot Hill, Greenwood's historic cemetery and former school and town sites, and Georgetown's historic cemetery. We'll finish our tour with a short, level hike through the Georgetown Nature Area, stopping to study a monument to the important local 19<sup>th</sup> Century Miwok chief Coppa Hombo, explore evidence of an old gold mine, and enjoy diverse native and introduced trees, shrubs, and flowers. Responsible 11-year-olds+ welcome. Well-behaved dog on-leash OK. Meeting location Pilot Hill area. **Suggested Donation: \$5/members, \$10/non-members.**



### PAWS & PANORAMAS – EL DORADO HILLS DOG-WALK

**Friday, June 13<sup>th</sup> 9am-10:30am**

Lace up your hiking shoes and grab your pup—Kalia Mitchell, hike leader and owner of Adventure Dog Co., will guide you on a quick but invigorating suburban hike, complete with short, steep climbs that are sure to get your legs working. This intermediate hike of 2.5 miles is on rocky terrain with several hills. Please bring well-behaved dog on non-retractable leash. Meeting location El Dorado Hills area. This is a State Park so bring \$ if parking in their lot. **FREE.**

### HIKE INTO THE BEAUTY OF EMIGRANT LAKE

**Friday, June 27<sup>th</sup> 8am-4PM**

Enjoy a mountain hike to beautiful Emigrant Lake near Caples Lake and Kirkwood ski area along a forested trail. ARC board member Steve Clark will lead this out and back hike of about 8 miles (round trip) with an elevation gain of about 920 feet. This pristine lake is located in the Mokelumne Wilderness and sits in a

bowl beneath mountain peaks at an elevation of 8,600 feet. Wildflowers should be abundant. For fit hikers 12+. Meeting location Placerville area. **Suggested Donation: \$5/members, \$10/non-members.**

### SAYLES CANYON HIKE

**Saturday, July 19<sup>th</sup>**

**9am-4pm**

Board member Scott Vail will lead this scenic, if long, hike from Sayles Canyon Trail Head (near camp Sacramento) on a loop trail through Bryan Meadow to the PCT. From there we head south on the PCT to the trail down to Round Meadow and back to the trail head. The 11.5 miles his is moderately difficult, mostly due to the lengthy uphill and a couple of creek crossings. Trail begins at 6880 feet and the highest point is 8700 on the PCT. Extreme weather conditions postpones. Fit 12-year-olds+ and well-behaved dog on-leash welcome. Meeting location Placerville area. **Free.**



### DOG DAYS IN THE FOOTHILLS

**Saturday, July 26<sup>th</sup> 9:30-11:30am**

Explore the historic Knickerbocker Trail—now known as Olmstead—on this diverse and scenic hike. Kalia Mitchell, owner of Adventure Dog Co., will guide you on these popular trails. A favorite among birders and plant enthusiasts, this hike offers a chance for you and your 4-legged friend to spot regional wildlife and unique flora. Keep your eyes peeled for red-tailed hawks soaring above, bobcats on the prowl, and even the occasional sunbathing rattlesnake. This rocky but easy hike will be 5 miles max. This is a multipurpose trail (runners, bikers, horses). Please bring well-behaved dog on non-retractable leash. Meeting location El Dorado Hills area. **FREE.**

### LEASH-UP AND LET'S HIKE!

**Saturday, August 16<sup>th</sup> 9:30-11:30am**

This beautiful hike led by Kalia Mitchell overlooking Folsom Lake is shaded with minor elevation gain and loss. This trail is multipurpose and has vast amounts of wildlife. There will be rocky areas, and some single-track trails. Great hike for kids! This is a beginner/intermediate hike up to 4 miles. Please bring well-behaved dog on non-retractable leash. Meeting location El Dorado Hills area. **FREE.**

#### Many thanks

to the program leaders who taught a workshop, led a hike, or gave a presentation this spring

**Want to volunteer? Have an idea for a program?**

Contact [julie@ARConservancy.org](mailto:julie@ARConservancy.org)



## LECTURES, WORKSHOPS, & MISCELLANY

### PLEIN AIR PAINT-OUTS AT WAKAMATSU FARM Saturdays, June 7<sup>th</sup>, July 19<sup>th</sup> & August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 8:30am-12pm

Join artist David Yapp for a time of plein air painting at Wakamatsu Farm. "En plein air" is a French term meaning "in the open air" and refers to painting outdoors. Bring your own paints and equipment for a time of self-guided painting. You supply all your own materials and equipment, choose your subject, and enjoy the camaraderie of painting outdoors with other artists. Instruction not provided. We encourage meeting together for picnic lunch after the morning session. All painting levels welcome. Responsible children 12+ welcome. Meeting location Gold Hill/Placerville area. **Cost: \$15/members, \$20/non-members.**



### FISHING ON THE FARM Thursdays, June 12<sup>th</sup> & 26<sup>th</sup>, 4:30pm- sunset (future summer dates TBD)

Join volunteer and fishing enthusiast Fred Campbell-Craven. Try your hand at casting techniques, catch a few bass, and enjoy the serenity of the 8-acre lake. No live bait; catch and release

only. All ages and skill levels welcome, especially kids, families with young children, and first-timers. Basic instruction, equipment, and assistance available for kids and first-timers. Meeting location Gold Hill/Placerville area. **Cost per car: \$10/members, \$15/non-members,**

### TAI CHI-QIGONG & YEAR OF THE SNAKE Saturday, June 21<sup>st</sup>, 10:00-11:15am

Learn an iconic Tai chi movement that celebrates the flexibility and strength of the snake. It will be taught in a short sequence of movements and poses to achieve stability and dynamism and celebrate the 2025 A set of warm-up qigong exercises will be taught first to rejuvenate the body and mind. Dr. Tze-yue Gigi Hu is a semi-retired Asian Studies educator and author. She teaches therapeutic Tai Chi and Qigong to selected communities. See her website, [calmhappytaiji.com](http://calmhappytaiji.com). Ages 8+ welcome. Meeting location Placerville/Gold Hill area. **Suggested Donation: \$5/members, \$10/non-members.**

### CAPTURING WAKAMATSU: A POETRY WORKSHOP Sunday, June 22<sup>nd</sup> 10am-12pm

Taylor Graham, El Dorado County's first Poet Laureate, and award-winning Sacramento-area poet Katy Brown will lead an exploration of farmhouse, barn, and surroundings, then ask participants to write a poem inspired by what they've experienced. Anyone who wishes to may share their poems with the group

and ARC. Children 8+ welcome with adult supervision. Meeting location Gold Hill/Placerville area. **Suggested Donation: \$5/members, \$10/non-members.**

### PLEIN AIR WORKSHOP Saturday, June 28<sup>th</sup> 10:30am-1pm

Professor Vanda Lavar, owner of the fine art school, Art of the West, will lead this plein air event, helping students with brush/knife control, color choices, compositional elements. Watercolor welcome. Ages 14+ welcome. Meeting location Gold Hill/Placerville area. **Cost: \$45/members, \$55/non-members.**



### FUNDAMENTALS OF SOGETSU IKEBANA-CLASSES IN CLASSIC FLOWER ARRANGING

July & August dates TBD, 10am-1pm  
(please check back for dates and registration links)

Instructor Yasmin Spiegel is a Sensei in the Sogetsu School of Ikebana: Japanese flower arranging. She is at home with both traditional Sogetsu forms and more modern sculptural arrangements. Meeting location Gold Hill/Placerville area. **Cost: Individual classes \$35/members, \$45/non-members.**

### WATERCOLOR BOTANICAL ILLUSTRATION Saturday, July 26<sup>th</sup> 10am-2pm

Vanda Lavar, owner of the fine art school, Art of the West, will be leading this botanical illustration event. Students will learn botanical drawing and painting techniques, and aspects of color theory. Ages 13+ welcome. Meeting location Gold Hill/Placerville area. **Cost: \$50/members, \$60/non-members.**

### WILD MOVEMENT AND YOGA Saturdays, August 9 & 23, 9-10am

In wild yoga, we practice poses that reverse the habitual movement patterns of slouching, slumping, and staring resulting from our current dependence on chairs, screen tech, and cars. Combining vinyasa flow, functional strength, and mobility training, this beginner-level class with advanced options will leave you feeling energized, re-aligned, and centered in nature. Jessica teaches yoga at the Wisteria Wellness Retreat in Pollock Pines. All levels welcome. Meeting location Gold Hill/Placerville area. **Cost: \$10/members, \$15/non-members.**

### WATERCOLOR PEN AND INK HISTORICAL BUILDING PLEIN AIR Saturday, August 23<sup>rd</sup> 11am-3pm

Professor Vanda Lavar, owner of the fine art school, Art of the West, will be leading this watercolor event. Ages 14+ welcome. Meeting location Coloma area. **Cost: \$50/members, \$60/non-members.**





## EDUCATION UPDATE



Over 100 3rd-6th grade students gathered at Wakamatsu Farm on March 25th to compete in Nature Bowl with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Spring was in full bloom for the environmental education programs at American River Conservancy, and we are looking forward to an exciting summer. Our K-12 field trip program welcomed over 1,200 students to Wakamatsu farm to engage in hands-on learning, land stewardship, nature journaling, and participatory science. We had 100 students from Shingle Springs California Montessori Project spend two days at Wakamatsu to help remove blackberry and milk thistle, explore the macroinvertebrates that live in the lake, and practice nature journaling. They even got to take a tour of Fog Dog Farm and take home their very own sunflowers that they planted. ARC's education program was also excited to welcome back Nature Bowl for a semi-final event in March with 14 teams, 110 students and 8 different schools from all over El Dorado County represented. It's these connections with schools and teachers that will help us expand our offerings and reach more future land stewards who will carry on the ethic of responsible land management and love of nature.

This summer Nature Camp is going into Survivor mode to teach kids in grades K-8th the skills they need to be successful in the wilderness. Campers will learn to tie knots, identify plants and animals, make rope, and build a shelter. We will also have all the same fun and games that our campers have come to expect from ARC's Nature Camp! River Rangers camp for middle schoolers is a full week of ropes courses, team building and self reliance exercises, camping, and rafting on the South Fork of the American River. We hope your kiddos are going to be joining us at the river this summer!

We will also be kicking off our teacher outreach and professional development project called "Empowering Educators for Climate Action." Local teachers will get a chance to visit Leek Springs Meadow to see the work that ARC is doing on restoring a Sierra meadow while also learning how to integrate nature journaling into their classroom curriculum. That will be followed up by three hands-on workshops to learn how to use some great interactive activities to help teach their students about the causes, impacts, and solutions to climate change. If you are an El Dorado County teacher (or know one) who is interested in this program, you can learn more and register at <https://bit.ly/3Q8Wa72> or email [nic@ARConservancy.org](mailto:nic@ARConservancy.org).

**SAVE THE DATE:** Climate Steward classes this fall are from Sept. 17-Nov. 19. Registration begins on July 1.

For more details and registration please visit [ARConservancy.org/education](https://ARConservancy.org/education), or email [education@ARConservancy.org](mailto:education@ARConservancy.org) for more information.



Middle schoolers from CMP Shingle Springs show off the fruits of their labor - uprooted milk thistle in the pasture at Wakamatsu Farm as part of the overnight field trip focused on environmental stewardship.

### Help Fund Environmental Education Programs

At American River Conservancy (ARC), we believe that environmental education benefits people of all ages and backgrounds.

The **Deb Jensen Environmental Education Opportunity Fund** was created to facilitate access to ARC's experiential nature-based programs, including Nature Camp, School Field Trips, California Naturalist Program, Climate Stewards, and more. Funds may be used to provide need-based scholarships and enhance ARC's ability to serve a diverse and growing community of learners. Deb Jensen is a joyful advocate for environmental education. She was ARC's first environmental educator who began ARC's education programming in 1990. This fund is named in her honor in recognition of her many years of service to the community through nature-based education.

To support the Deb Jensen Environmental Education Opportunity Fund, visit <https://tinyurl.com/DebJensenFund>.





## Securing Access at El Dorado Ranch

By Marshall Gorham, Land Protection Specialist

The El Dorado Ranch Trailhead and Parking Lot project is a pivotal element of ARC's 15+ year effort to establish the 7,000-acre El Dorado Ranch Wildlife Area—the first State Wildlife Area in El Dorado County. Located within a 60-mile stretch of the Cosumnes River, with virtually no public access, this project will provide access to recreate on this “wild” Sierra foothill river. The Cosumnes is the only undammed river on the west slope of the Sierra Nevada, making it a critical natural resource of ecological and recreational value.

The trailhead will grant access to a 3-mile trail for hiking, wildlife viewing, and other passive recreation, aligning with, and serving as a building block for the vision of a regional trail system that extends from the river's headwaters through El Dorado Ranch and on into Sacramento County. This project meets access needs and offers long-term community and environmental benefits from reducing illegal land use and improving safety, to promote health and deepening public connection to nature. By creating legal, well-managed access, ARC can ensure the protection and enhance the appreciation of this rare river corridor for generations to come.

ARC is currently in the planning, design, and permitting stage, with the goal of completing construction in 2026. To learn more and support El Dorado Ranch and public access visit [ARConservancy.org/eldoradoranch](https://arconservancy.org/eldoradoranch).



## Creating Lifelong Connections With Nature

By Nic Russo, Education Manager

Since the fall of 2022, ARC has worked with the CCC and UC Environmental Stewards to certify over 100 young adults as California Naturalists. Through hands-on experiences and place-based learning, the project helped Corpsmembers deepen their understanding of local ecosystems and cultural resources and develop career pathways in environmental and conservation work. Each course integrated field-based science, environmental literacy, community engagement and environmental interpretation skills. Participants often continued their involvement as restoration volunteers, nature guides or early-career educators. In collaboration with 7 other community organizations all up

and down California, over 550 Corpsmembers have been certified as California Naturalists. The project was part of the Youth Community Access Grant Program, funded by the state's Control, Regulate and Tax Adult Use of Marijuana Act (Proposition 64), and ran from July 2022 through March 2025. Read the article with more information at <https://ucanr.edu/blog/blog-verde/article/young-naturalists-celebrate-earth-day-lasting-impact-across-california>

## Meet Yaseen Nasiri: Supporting ARC's Mission Through Financial Stewardship

In December 2024, Yaseen joined the American River Conservancy (ARC) as an Accounting Specialist, bringing extensive experience in financial management and a strong passion for environmental conservation. With a meticulous eye for accuracy and efficiency, Yaseen plays a crucial role in supporting ARC's financial operations, ensuring resources are managed wisely to advance the organization's mission.

Inspired by ARC's commitment to preserving the natural beauty and cultural heritage of the American and Cosumnes River watersheds, Yaseen views his work as more than just numbers and spreadsheets. He sees himself as a steward of financial sustainability, using sound practices to help ARC make a lasting impact. His expertise allows the organization to plan for growth, invest in key initiatives, and continue vital conservation efforts for years to come.

Beyond his professional contributions, Yaseen is deeply motivated by his role as a father of three. He believes in leading by example, instilling environmental responsibility in his children, and working toward a healthier, more sustainable world. His position at ARC provides him with the opportunity to align his values with his career while making a meaningful difference in his community.



## THANK YOU, AMERICAN RIVER CONSERVANCY SUPPORTERS! JANUARY-MARCH 2025

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ARC is sincerely grateful for the dedication of our volunteers, donors, and partners who commit their time, talents, and resources in benefit of local watersheds. Please join us in appreciation of countless individuals and organizations through the decades who have helped us preserve rivers and land for life. May this list serve as public acknowledgement of our supporters from last quarter.

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### In memory of...

- ♦ In fondest memory of my friend, Diana Stauffer

### In honor of...

- ♦ Thank you for everything you provide.
- ♦ Howard Levenson's birthday.
- ♦ For my kids
- ♦ This is a gift for Ted Branscomb, who is a volunteer with ARC working on the Monarch Butterfly Waystation with Kathy Frevert and Steve Haggblade.
- ♦ Scarlet Maurin, Leighton Hansel, Grace Kijita, Virginia Volk-Anderson & Lea Prince
- ♦ In honor of Susan Reed-For using her gifts towards good stewardship and appreciation of creation.

If you supported ARC in the last quarter and your name is missing, please contact  
 julie@ARConservancy.org



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For full list visit  
<https://bit.ly/3eTOVN4>

- 3 handmade donation boxes
  - Side by side UTV
  - Walkie talkies
  - Small, reliable TRUCK
  - Large water jugs
  - Field microscopes
  - Small camp stove and lightweight cooking gear
  - Canvas folding wagon
  - Cellular game camera
  - Canoe paddles
  - Adult medium and large life jackets
  - Kegerator
  - Photos of ARC properties (with rights of use)
  - Animation design expertise
  - High quality button-making machine and supplies
  - Golf cart or multi-passenger all-terrain vehicle
  - Grocery gift cards
  - Home Depot gift cards
  - Cardboard - large plain sheets
- ...And much more



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