

Habitats of the American River Parkway

Habitat along the American River Parkway represents both natural and altered landscape. After the discovery of gold, portions of the river were dredged by the large gold mining companies, leaving behind large piles of cobbles and excavated areas. The slow process of natural reclamation has returned some areas to a semi-natural state while the most severely altered areas can still be seen today.

Riverine
The American River is a large riverine system which carries water from the Sierra Nevada and eventually flows into the Sacramento River and ultimately San Francisco Bay. Due to the upstream Folsom Dam, flows through the American River Parkway area are relatively controlled. Most of the riverine habitat is fast moving, open water without any vegetation. A variety of fish including several native species (salmon, steelhead, Sacramento squawfish, Sacramento sucker) and several introduced species (American shad, striped bass) can be found within the American River. Predators such as great blue heron and river otter can sometimes be seen on the river. Other common species seen on the river are beaver, muskrat and western pond turtle.

Oak Woodland

Grassland

Riparian Scrub

Emergent Marsh

River

Riparian Island

Open Water

Riparian Forest

Dredger Tailing Vegetation

Oak Savanna

The American River Parkway

\$5.00 - Proceeds to benefit the American River Parkway

Parkway History

From as early as 3,000 years ago, the American River region has been inhabited, first by the Southern Maidu, also known as Nisenans. Their villages dotted the fertile floodplain where they fished, hunted and gathered food and materials for building their huts. This richness was impressive to Jedediah Strong Smith when he first camped along his "Wild River" in 1827. By 1833, a malaria epidemic had reduced native populations. When John Sutter sailed up the river to a landing near the modern 16th Street, colonization was a relatively simple affair.

Sutter soon recognized the need for lumber to build his water-powered grist mill and contracted with John Marshall's sawmill near Coloma. When gold was discovered in the sawmill, word spread quickly and the future growth of Sacramento and the Mother Lode of California was assured. Sutter knew of the hazards of living in a river floodplain and he set out to establish his New Helvetia on high ground along the Sacramento River near Suttersville Road. Unfortunately, he ended up snowbound at the sawmill and was unable to prevent his son, John Jr., from getting into cahoots with a wily Sam Brannan and laying out lots along the embarcadero of what is now Old Sacramento. Many floods later, we recognize Sutter's wisdom. As the population of Sacramento grew and experienced the river's periodic floods, levees were built which began to narrow the floodplain. With the completion of Folsom Dam in 1955, residential and commercial development of the historic floodplain was completed.

Fortunately for Sacramento, and because of the foresight of people like William Pond, then director of the County Department of Parks, the American River Parkway Plan was incorporated in the County's 1962 General Plan and land acquisition began for the Parkway. Now urbanized along its entire length in Sacramento County, the river lies within the Parkway preserved by those visionary

individuals. More the 5,000 acres, representing six ecosystems, have been set aside, their use governed by the American River Parkway Plan of 1985. Between the American River's confluence with the Sacramento River and Hazel Avenue, the Parkway is owned and managed by the County of Sacramento, Department of Parks, Recreation and Open Space. From Hazel Boulevard to Folsom Dam, it is owned by the federal government and managed by the State Department of Parks and Recreation. While generally consistent between the two managing agencies, operational and use regulations may vary.

The American River Parkway was designed to provide natural open space and habitat protection for the remaining flora and fauna native to the Sacramento region and to provide recreational opportunities for an urban population. It provides critical habitat to several endangered species and is the longest linear, uninterrupted park in the country. Recreational opportunities are abundant in a relatively pristine setting which has preserved examples of what the land was like when grizzly bears roamed the valley and waterfowl in flight darkened the sky. Native American archeological sites are hidden among the more obvious artifacts from Sutter's time and the especially visible recent evidence of the Gold Rush era commerce along the river. Windrows of dredger tailings testify to massive efforts to retrieve gold from the ancient beds of the American River. Several outcrops, principally the Natomas Company, dredged about 1900 acres between 1900 and 1962, moving more than a billion cubic yards of gravel before the last of the huge dredger-bucket machines



Safety

Bicycles

- Stay to the right / pass on the left. Be sure to always pass others going in your direction on their left side and move back to the right once safely past. (Faster traffic is responsible for yielding to slower and oncoming traffic.)

- If you need to stop, be sure to pull completely off the trail. By doing this, it is less likely that you may be hit by someone who either is not paying attention or who may have nowhere else to go.

- Wear a helmet. Statewide, approximately 70-85% of all bicycle injuries are head injuries.

- Yield when entering and crossing trails. Obey traffic signs, trail closures and detour signs. Be aware of signs warning of hazards.

- Be predictable. Travel in a consistent manner. Always look behind you before changing position on the trail and give an audible signal when passing.

- Ride in single file. The bicycle trail is a single lane in each direction capable of handling one bicycle in each lane. Riding in a single file with other cyclists reduces your chances of collisions with each other and with oncoming cyclists.

- Watch your speed. The trails are not designed for fast riding. Ride "within your abilities"; not so fast that you can't react to what is happening around you.

Pedestrians

- Pedestrians use the left shoulder. Joggers and walkers should use the left dist shoulder of the bicycle trail facing bicycle traffic.

- Joggers and walkers should travel in single file rather than side by side.

Equestrians

- Travel at a safe speed. Approach each bend in the trail as if someone were around the corner.

- Let others know if your horse is safe to pass.

- Avoid areas along the trail that are soft and muddy; deep hoof ruts make it difficult for others to use the trail.
- Plan ahead. Avoid being on the trail after dark. The trails can become hard to see and treacherous. Allow time for loading the horse into its trailer.

- Wear a helmet at all times.

- Be cautious of low branches and obstructions on the trail.

Boating

- Boating Safety Hints and Guide Map are available from California Department of Boating and Waterways; A Boating Guide to the American River Parkway. Phone (916) 263-1331. Also available from County Dept. of Regional Parks, Recreation & Open Space and boat rental companies.

Life Preserver

- All children ages 13 and under are to wear life preservers when in the portions of public waterways within the unincorporated area of Sacramento County.

was silenced by cost considerations. The Natomas Company has since sold and donated land to the County of Sacramento for public use as part of the American River Parkway.

Jedediah Smith's explorations along the river are commemorated by the bicycle trail bearing his name that extends from Old Sacramento to Beal's Point at Folsom Reservoir, a distance of almost 32 miles. Recognized for its unique qualities by designation as a California Wild and Scenic River (1972) and a National Wild and Scenic River (1980) the American River features natural migration and spawning of chinook salmon, as well as steelhead and other fish species. This annual salmon-spawning spectacle attracts thousand of people and produces millions of natural and artificially spawned fish.

Readers interested in the wealth of information about the history and natural history of this area should start with the following:

A History of the Lower American River, edited and updated by Bill Dillinger. Published by American River Natural History Association, 1991.

Biking and Hiking the American River Parkway, Robin Donnelly. Published by American River Natural History Association, 1996.

The Outdoor World of the Sacramento Region, A Local Field Guide, edited by Jo Smith. Published by American River Natural History Association, 1993.

Discovering the American River Parkway. Published by American River Natural History Association, 2000.

American River Parkway Foundation

Mission:

- To foster environmental stewardship and facilitate volunteer opportunities on the American River Parkway that supports the preservation, protection, enhancement and appreciation of the Parkway's natural resources.

For more information or to volunteer please contact
The American River Parkway Foundation
www.arpf.org
5700 Arden Way
Carmichael, CA 95608
(916) 486-2772



Volunteer Center

Programs of the Foundation:

- Mutt Mitts: The Foundation raises the money to purchase dog waste removal mitts. Dispensers are located throughout the parkway.
- Financial and Mile Stewards: There are 23 miles of parkway and the Foundation has businesses and individuals adopt a mile of the parkway. The financial stewards assist with covering the cost of the volunteer stewards' work in cleaning up that particular mile.
- River Clean-Ups: The Foundation coordinates two large clean-up along the 23 mile parkway. The Spring Clean up occurs the 3rd Saturday in April and the Fall Clean Up occurs the 3rd Saturday in September.
- Invasive Plant Removal: The Foundation is responsible from removing 10 different species of invasive plants along the entire parkway.
- Restoration: A number of new oak grooves have been planted along the parkway with the help of hundreds of volunteers from the Foundation. Schools, businesses and individuals adopt and care for the grooves.

Partners on the American River Parkway

American River Natural History Association
www.arnha.org

American River Flood Control District
www.arfcd.org

California Native Plant Society
www.cnps.org

Sacramento Area Flood Control Agency
www.safca.org

Save the American River Association
www.sarariverwatch.org

Soil Born Farms
www.soilborn.org

Water Forum
www.waterforum.org



American River Parkway Foundation
5700 Arden Way
Carmichael, CA 95608
(916) 486-2773



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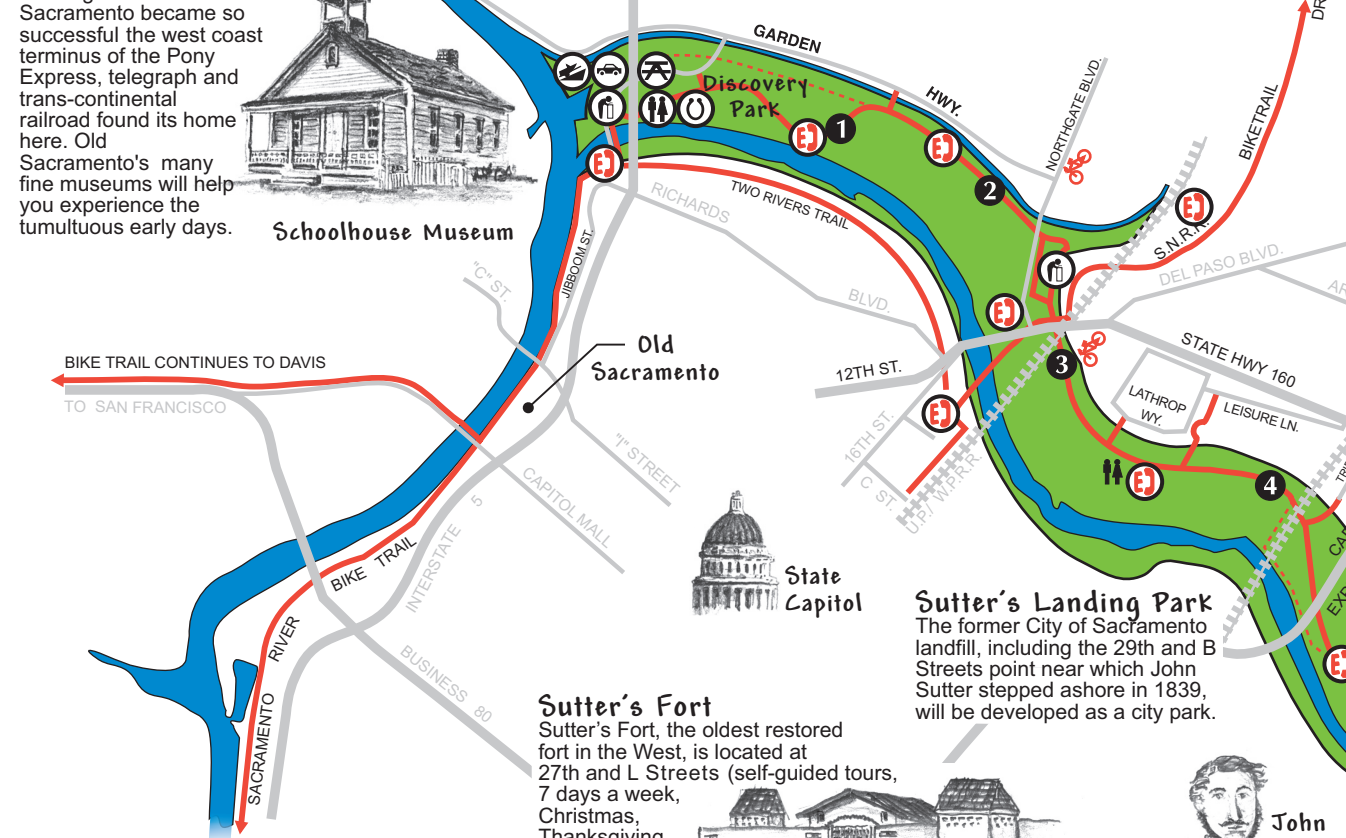


County Department of
Regional Parks,
Recreation
& Open Space

Old Sacramento

Walk, pedal or ride a horse: the trails all begin (or end) here, where the early American settlers made their most visible marks. After the discovery of gold in 1848, merchants and hoteliers were needed to support miners and the rapidly growing population. Seasonal flooding and devastating fires failed to deter these early pioneers. They built their businesses of brick and then physically raised the ground level of their waterfront city by a dozen feet to protect against flooding.

Sacramento became so successful the west coast terminus of the Pony Express, telegraph and trans-continental railroad found its home here. Old Sacramento's many fine museums will help you experience the tumultuous early days.



Golfing
Two golf courses are located within the Parkway. Ancil Hoffman Park (named for a Sacramento County Supervisor) contains an 18-hole golf course and Campus Commons is a 9-hole course located just downstream of the "H" Street Bridge.



Discovery Park

Bannon Slough, the American River and the Sacramento River merge at the western end of the Parkway -- Discovery Park. Reservable picnic sites, an archery range, large beach, boat ramp and many acres of habitat make it a desirable destination. Bannon Island and the slough provide year-round riparian and open water habitat for wildlife.

TRAIL SYSTEM

The Jedediah Smith Bicycle Trail extends nearly 32 miles from Old Sacramento to Beal's Point. Bicycles share the trail with pedestrians, who walk and jog on the left shoulder, facing traffic. No motor vehicles, skateboards, or rollerskis are allowed on the trail. An unpaved equestrian trail roughly parallels the bicycle trail through the Parkway, generally providing spatial separation between wheeled and hoofed transportation.

Bushy Lake - Cal Expo

Once filled from recurrent high water in the river, Bushy Lake now receives most of its water from wells at Cal Expo, site of the California State Fair. The lake and surrounding grasslands provide important habitat for wood ducks and other waterfowl and for elderberry bushes which are home to the valley elderberry long horned beetle, a federally and state protected endangered species. Bushy Lake is popular with bird-watchers and hikers seeking uncrowded and natural conditions.

Effie Yeaw Nature Center

The Nature Center and 73-acre nature area is located in Ancil Hoffman Park and named for schoolteacher Effie Yeaw. Yeaw led nature walks primarily for school children to share her love and knowledge of the natural history of the American River. The Nature Center is funded by fees for nature tours and underwritten by the American River Parkway Foundation, American River Natural History Association, the County of Sacramento and contributions by individuals. Featured are exhibits, trails and interpretive programs in 77 acres of riparian woodland, grassland and oak woodland.

Arden Bar / William Pond Recreation Area

Extensively mined for gravel, Arden Bar was reclaimed and named for William B. Pond, former director of Sacramento County Parks Department. The Recreation Area now features a warm water fishing pond regularly stocked with trout, largemouth bass, sunfish, crappie and catfish and is equipped with a handicapped accessible fishing pier. The American River Parkway Foundation's Visitor Center will be located at the site of the old gravel company office.

California State University, Sacramento

CSUS occupies the site which was once Brighton, an important agricultural settlement. Vast fields of hops became Campus Commons after Folsom Dam was completed in 1955. A Pony Express remount station - the 5-Mile House - was located near the southern edge of the campus.

American River Parkway

Jedediah Smith Memorial Trail

Bicycling

Sacramento's always had bicycle enthusiasts, beginning with the Capital City Wheelmen who lobbied successfully for a cinder path from Sacramento to Folsom. At its completion in 1896, 500 cyclists pedaled off on the inaugural journey over what would become the Jedediah Smith Memorial Bicycle Trail. The existing trail runs almost 32 miles from Old Sacramento to Beal's Point on Folsom Reservoir.

Boating

Most boating within the Parkway is by way of muscle-powered canoes, kayaks and rafts which launch upstream and take out downstream, using the many access points for boats. Raft rentals and shuttle services are available during the summer season. Daily river flow rates are available by calling the Bureau of Reclamation, (916) 978-5117. Motorized boats and fishing dories can be launched at boat ramps and some auto access points. There is a 5 mph speed limit on the Lower American River.

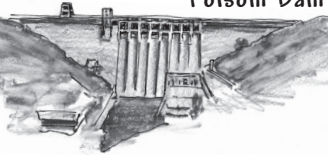
Equestrian

Shown by a dashed red line where it winds away from its parallel course with the bicycle trail, the equestrian trail winds through some of the more scenic and serene segments of the Parkway, with staging facilities located at the points designated by the horseshoe symbol.

Fishing

The American River boasts the only fall migration of king (also known as chinook) salmon to occur in an urban setting. Natural spawning occurs where appropriately sized spawning gravels exist, from about Watt Avenue upstream to the fish hatchery. Viewing this magnificent spectacle is best in the Sunrise Boulevard area, where hundreds of salmon can be observed completing their mating ritual. The Nimbus Fish Hatchery also provides self-guided tours and educational displays. During the fall and early winter months, the river is closed to fishing between Ancil Hoffman Park and Hazel Avenue to protect natural spawning. Steelhead also naturally spawn in the river and the introduced species, shad and striped bass, make their presence known during the late spring and summer months. A current fishing license is required at all times. Poaching can seriously endanger our resources and should be reported to CalTIP 1-800-952-5400.

Folsom Dam



Folsom Reservoir

Completed in 1955, Folsom Dam brought the era of piecemeal reclamation of the flood plain to an end and opened it to residential and commercial development. A part of the federal Central Valley Project, Folsom Reservoir provides water, electricity, flood control and recreation for the region. More information is available from California State Parks.

Old Folsom

What is now the City of Folsom was surrounded by gold strikes: Mormon Island supported a population of over 2,500 during its heyday. Its remnants can be seen today only when Folsom Reservoir is drained to very low levels. Settled first as a trading center, Mississippi Bar turned out to be a rich strike. Even today, its gravels are mined by Teichert Aggregates, who will ultimately restore the natural habitat. The historic Negro Bar was located on the south side of the river now covered by Lake Natoma, but was once the site of a prosperous hotel and gold deposits which were worked by several companies before being absorbed into Folsom. The Folsom Powerhouse switch was thrown first in 1895, electrifying Sacramento, 22 miles downstream. When Folsom Dam was completed the old powerhouse became obsolete. Folsom Prison was built in 1880. The historic prison lies northeast of Old Town Folsom and is still in use today.

Legend

- Jedediah Smith Trail (red line)
- Equestrian Trail (dashed red line)
- Vehicle access with parking* (P symbol)
- Equestrian trail staging (E symbol)
- Handicap fishing pier (H symbol)
- Restroom (R symbol)
- Public telephone (T symbol)
- Emergency call box (CB symbol)
- Picnic area (PA symbol)
- Camp site (C symbol)
- Boat ramp** (BR symbol)
- Mile marker (M symbol)
- County bike route (B symbol)
- Drinking fountains throughout parkway (F symbol)

* Facility locations as of January 2009
* Parking fees are enforced and citations are treated as parking violations.
** Parking and boat-launch permits are available at the Sacramento County Parks office.