

THE AMERICAN RIVER PARKWAY: A VISION & POLICY PRIMER

**A Public Policy Summary from the
American River Parkway Preservation Society:
April 17, 2012**

Our Vision

**We want our Parkway, seven generations from now, to
be a vibrant, accessible, and serene sanctuary,
nourishing and refreshing the spirit of all who enter it.**

Our Mission

**Preserve, Protect, and Strengthen the American River
Parkway, Our Community's Natural Heart**

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The best things are nearest: breath in your nostrils, light in your eyes, flowers at your feet, duties at your hand, the path of God just before you. Robert Louis Stevenson

American River Parkway Preservation Society Organizational Leadership

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Introduction

Soon after our organization was founded as a 501 c (3) nonprofit corporation in 2003, we began a series of research papers to amplify and more deeply inform our mission and guiding principles.

We eventually completed four research reports, from 2005 through 2008, adding a fifth in 2012, and it is from those reports that our strategy and advocacy work has evolved.

The policy conclusions of those five reports are included in this policy summary.

Summarizing the six critical issues we see as impacting the Parkway and our proposed solutions:

- 1)** Continuing depletion of public funding to take care of the Parkway. **Solution:** *Create a Joint Powers Authority and nonprofit organization for daily management and fundraising.*
 - 2)** Continuing pressure on the river, whether through flooding, illegal sewage discharge, or taking water for new development, hurts the salmon and other aquatic life. **Solution:** *Build the Auburn Dam.*
 - 3)** Continuing habitat devastation, fires, and pollution from widespread illegal camping by the homeless in the Lower Reach. **Solution:** *Strengthen and enforce laws against illegal camping.*
 - 4)** Continuing development pressure to build large homes along the Parkway edges, intruding on the view space, and encroaching into the commons. **Solution:** *Prohibit such new building.*
 - 5)** Continuing exclusion of responsible usage by new Parkway user groups is contrary to the spirit upon which public ownership of a natural resource is predicated. **Solution:** *Give such groups an opportunity to make their case.*
 - 6)** Continuing encasement of open space, restricting suburban community development upon which a sustainable tax base funding necessary public works is built, is contrary to sound future planning. **Solution:** *Support the growth of suburban communities.*
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Policy Summary ARPPS 2005 Research Report Public Safety Strategy for the Lower Reach

The public safety issues along the Parkway can be examined from the perspective of two successful approaches to modern policing; **Problem-Oriented Policing** and the **Broken Windows Theory**.

Problem-Oriented Policing is described by Cordner & Biebel (2005):

Simply put, problem-oriented policing posits that police should focus more attention on *problems*, as opposed to *incidents*. Problems are defined either as collections of incidents related in some way (if they occur at the same location) [along the Parkway for instance] or as underlying conditions that give rise to incidents, crimes, disorder, and other substantive community issues that people expect the police to handle. By focusing more on problems than on incidents, police can address causes rather than mere symptoms and consequently have a greater impact. [...] It emphasizes that police pursue large and critically important societal goals—controlling crime, protecting people, reducing fear, and maintaining order.”

(Cordner, G. & Biebel, E. P. (2005). Problem-oriented policing in practice. *Criminology & Public Policy*, 4.2, 155-180. (p. 156)

Broken Windows Theory was first described by James Q. Wilson and co-author George Kelling in a 1982 article in the Atlantic Monthly magazine. In a 1997 interview by Colloff, Wilson describes how it evolved:

George Kelling, the co-author, was asked to evaluate an experiment in New Jersey involving the assignment of foot patrol officers to inner city neighborhoods. The police did not think that foot patrols were having an effect on crime, although the citizens were quite enthusiastic about it. What Kelling found in his research was that the foot patrol officers did not in fact reduce crime, but they did make neighbors feel more comfortable as a community. This led me to wonder whether the national concern about crime rates was not ignoring an equally important concern about how neighbors felt about issues of neighborhood safety.

When I looked into it, I discovered that the neighborhoods that people were most fearful of were not necessarily the most crime-prone neighborhoods. They were neighborhoods where crime was displayed—where teenage boys hung out on street corners or where prostitutes walked. Citizens were concerned about keeping order as much as having safety.

Colloff, P. (1997). *James Q. Wilson Interview*. Retrieved July 8, 2005 from: <http://www.umsl.edu/~nestor/Wilson%20Interview.htm>

If the rangers who are responsible for patrolling the Parkway, all with law enforcement training, followed basic police procedure, they would be concentrating their resources in

the Lower Reach rather than upriver, but virtually all anecdotal evidence indicates upriver is where they are.

Lower Reach Public Safety Policy Concepts

Our third guiding principle is: “*Regarding illegal camping by the homeless in the North Sacramento area of the Parkway: Social and environmental justice calls upon us to help the poor and distressed person but not at the expense of the adjacent community to visit the Parkway safely.*”

In accordance with that principle we would suggest the following policies:

1) Enlarge and expand ranger patrols, with a major focus on the highest crime area, adopt a model being used in Houston for horse ranger patrols, and create a citizen hot-line and website.

a) Parkway Horse Rangers: Modeled after a program used at the Houston International Airport written about by Perlman (2005) where “[E]questrians who are granted permission to ride the 25 miles of trails in the area in exchange for helping airport security by keeping an eye out for suspicious activity.”

Perlman, E. (2005). American patrol: Public agencies are training citizens to provide an additional Layer of homeland security. *Governing*, 18 (7), 76.

b) Public Safety Hotline and Website with Follow Up Responses: A place where the public can call and/or email the location of illegal camping sites and other illegal activities and there is a follow-up response to the report.

The ongoing statistics from the ranger crime reports should be placed here as well as recent report of crime and descriptions of suspected criminals.

Right now there are several members of the public from the Lower Reach who call in locations of campgrounds and crimes, but the follow up is sporadic and not publicly accessible. Something as simple and cheap as a Parkway Public Safety Website would be a start.

The point is to allow the community to help, as they have shown a willingness to do so.

2) Safety with Compassion Program.

a) One of the few programs that has actually seemed to work at stopping the chronic homeless from camping illegally in public parks and getting them into community treatment programs, has been the Matrix program in San Francisco, described by Gaskin (1994):

San Francisco’s septuagenarian columnist Herb Caen has likened it to a sixteenth-century English law that required public flogging of vagrants; the ACLU has condemned it as a violation of the basic constitutional rights to freedom of travel and association; members of the clergy have

denounced it as a cold and uncaring attempt to sweep a desperate problem away. Yet ordinary citizens seem to like it. Last August Mayor Frank Jordan instituted the Matrix Program, a sort of tough-love approach to the growing problems caused by the homeless in San Francisco. The professionally indignant have been nipping at his heels ever since.

Walking down Market Street or up Powell Street, tourists and local citizens used to run a gauntlet of panhandlers, drunkards, drug addicts, and the mentally ill, who would line the sidewalks requesting (or demanding) money. Petty and serious street crimes were becoming commonplace in areas that were supposed to attract tourists. Union Square, surrounded by upscale stores in the heart of downtown, was increasingly avoided by anyone who didn't want to run the risk of being panhandled into penury. Every downtown park was becoming the property of the indigent as they set up tents and makeshift shelters.

Amid growing complaints by city businesses, tourist groups, and members of the general public, Mayor Jordan started the Matrix Program, which offers the homeless a chance to obtain shelter and services but also treats them as adults, asking them to take responsibility for their own lives. The program's many opponents are upset because it reasserts the public's right to safe streets and a decent quality of life by actively enforcing public-nuisance laws.

Gaskin, R. L. (1994, September 12). Taking back the streets-San Francisco, California's ordinance to control the homeless. *National Review*.

Even with all of the controversy it generated, most observers agree that the program cleaned up the streets and helped many of the chronic homeless who would not seek help on their own.

The program model calls for entering illegal camping areas, led by local homeless service providers backed up by police, and move campers, even those resisting, into public services.

As many programs have found, being resistant to help does not always equate to not taking help when it is offered vigorously.

Vigorous help is exactly what is needed in the Lower Reach to allow the homeless illegally camping there begin to reclaim their lives, and the citizens of the community begin to reclaim their Parkway.

ARPPS Research Report #1 (September 25, 2005) *The American River Parkway Lower Reach Area: A Corroded Crown Jewel; Restoring the Luster, A Conceptual and Policy Primer* (pp. 38-42)

Policy Summary ARPPS 2006 Research Report Agenda for Policy Discussion

1) For Government Leadership: Consider the optimal solution for flood protection, at the 500 year level, the Auburn Dam; while remembering economic, equity, and efficiency concerns.

- When weighed against the minimum \$14 - \$30 billion potential damage costs of a major flood, the \$3 - \$5 billion estimated maximum costs to build the Auburn Dam seems an economically sound decision.
- The biggest losers in a major flood, as we have witnessed so tragically in New Orleans, are the poor and the equity argument to protect them at the optimal level from flooding they are ill-equipped to respond to, seems obvious.
- It is certainly efficient, when considering flood protection strategies, to consider the revenue produced by the reduction in flood insurance costs, hydropower, and recreational assets (weighed against those lost from the flooding) Auburn Dam will produce as opposed to solely relying on non-revenue producing levees.

2) For Environmental Parkway Organizations: Consider this statement from an interview with Michael North, president of Greenstar, from *Grist Magazine* (2004):

Grist: What's one issue about which you disagree with other environmentalists?
Michael North: That protecting endangered species and ecosystems is more important than protecting people, communities, and culture. Implicitly, by their actions, environmentalists sometimes overlook the historic human element, the fact that people are part of the global ecosystem too. Environmentalists would never actually say this, of course, but sometimes their actions express it...

Grist Magazine, (2004) *Online Interview with Michael North, president of Greenstar*. Retrieved February 23, 2004 from <http://gristmagazine.com/interactivist/north022304.asp?source=daily>

a) The environmental movement has been good for our country as it has dramatically increased the awareness of all of us to the importance of taking care of our precious natural resources; but we have reached the point where the convergence of environmental awareness by the public, government, and business, needs little further adversarial driven reminders to do more.

b) It is truly time to work together to build and preserve our community and the Parkway which is its heart.

3) For Business Organizations: Consider the importance of protecting, at a 500 year level, the economic engine value of the Parkway, which is as Dangermond (2006) noted:

In 2006, the estimated annual direct and indirect spending for all Parkway related goods and services in the greater Sacramento area rose to \$364,207,034.

This represents a 41% increase from the \$259,034,030 estimated in the year 2000.

Dangermond Group, (2006). *American River parkway: 2006 financial needs study update*. Sacramento: County of Sacramento Department of Regional Parks. Available online at: <http://www.sacparks.net/our-parks/american-river-parkway/docs/ARP-Financial-Needs-Study-Update-2006.pdf> (p. 15)

a) Business leadership is crucial in seeking optimal protection and it appears the support for Auburn Dam is growing.

4) For Individual Users: Consider the value of optimal solutions for flood protection at the 500 year level, and encourage public leadership (governmental and environmental) to do so also.

a) Individuals suffer the most from major flooding and have the ability, through either the organizations or government leaders they interact with, to play a major role in the decisions made to protect from it.

5) For Religious Traditions: Reflect on the theology and beliefs of your tradition and consider the value of pursuing optimal solutions to flood protection in light of that reflection.

a) The spiritual values of our Parkway are evident to all, and religious traditions are able to speak to the importance of protecting that spiritual sanctuary like no other sector of our community.

ARPPS Research Report #2 *The American River Parkway: Protecting its integrity and Providing Water for the River Running Through It, A Report on the Auburn Dam Policy Environment* (pp. 43-45)

Policy Summary ARPPS 2007 Research Report Agenda for Policy Discussion

1) For Parkway Organizations: Consider the value of continuing the government/public discussion about establishing nonprofit governance for the American River Parkway?

- Reference a local example, Sacramento Zoo <http://www.saczoo.com/index.htm> and the national, Central Park, <http://www.centralparknyc.org/site/PageServer> both working well and providing for the users of their respective public places a well maintained and safe space to find sanctuary and recreation.

2) For Government Leadership: Consider the value of developing an ecoregional approach for the American River Watershed through the National Heritage Areas program?

- Reference the example of Central Florida, My Region <http://www.myregion.org/> which is pulling together the entire community in ways promising the type of collaboration and visioning rarely seen and rewards richly deserved.

3) For Community Organizations: Consider working for Sacramento County ecoregional collaboration in the creation of a connected county-wide system of trails along the three rivers?

- The Sacramento Valley Conservancy's 21st Century Open Space Vision <http://www.sacramentovalleyconservancy.org/visionmap.htm> is a great place to start.

ARPPS Research Report #3, *The American River Parkway: Governance, Ecoregionalism, and Heritage, A Vision & Policy Primer: Nonprofit Daily Management, Regional Thinking, and the Preservation of Our Heritage* (p. 36)

Policy Summary ARPPS 2008 Research Report

Agenda for Policy Discussion

1) For Public Safety

Consider conducting regular sweeps by the police through the Parkway to eliminate illegal camping, accompanied by homeless advocate and treatment organization representatives, ensuring that warnings are given before the sweeps and any confiscated personal property of the homeless is properly stored for reclaiming. Enlarge and expand ranger patrols, with a major focus on the highest crime area, adopt a model being used in Houston for horse ranger patrols, and create a citizen hot-line and public safety website where photos of illegal camps, trash dumps, or other illegal activity can be posted anonymously.

2) For Financial Stability

Consider creating a public/private partnership with a nonprofit organization to manage the Parkway—which could also raise funds philanthropically—via a contract with a Joint Powers Authority of Parkway adjacent cities and the county. This management and fund raising model is being used successfully by Central Park Conservancy, under contract with the city of New York, and the Conservancy provides 85% of the funding for Central Park. www.centralparknyc.org

3) For a Regional Vision

Consider the value of developing an ecoregional approach for the American River Watershed through the National Heritage Areas program.

- Reference the example of Central Florida, My Region <http://www.myregion.org/> which is pulling together the entire community in ways promising the type of collaboration and visioning rarely seen and rewards richly deserved.

Consider working for Sacramento County ecoregional collaboration in the creation of a connected county-wide system of trails along the three rivers, including safe and enjoyable trail space for bicyclists, walkers, and equestrians.

- The Sacramento Valley Conservancy's 21st Century Open Space Vision <http://www.sacramentovalleyconservancy.org/visionmap.htm> is a great place to start.

ARPPS Research Report #4 *The American River Parkway: Recreation, Education & Sanctuary, A Vision & Policy Primer: Enhancing the Recreational & Educational Resources and Deepening the Sanctuary Experience of Our Parkway.* (pp. 37-38)

Policy Summary ARPPS 2012 Research Report Agenda for Policy Discussion

If you are living in suburban California, you are part of the Dream, the *California Dream*. A central part of the birthing vision of the *American Dream* was the *California Dream* and all that America promised, as Kevin Starr notes: “In a very real sense, the California dream was the American dream undergoing one of its most significant variations.” *Americans and the California Dream 1850-1915*. (1973). New York: Oxford University Press. (p.443)

The American River Parkway is surrounded by suburbs, which is appropriate being that a central axis of the California Dream is suburban single home ownership, and the American River running through it was where gold was first discovered, leading to one of the greatest migrations in history.

The suburban single home ownership aspect of the *California Dream* is under attack, as Joel Kotkin notes in a recent article, *California Wages War on Single Home Ownership*: “In California, the assault on the house has gained official sanction. Once the heartland of the American dream, the Golden State has begun implementing new planning laws designed to combat global warming. These draconian measures could lead to a ban on the construction of private residences, particularly on the suburban fringe.” Retrieved July 26, 2011 from <http://www.newgeography.com/content/002357-california-wages-war-on-single-family-homes>

To help protect that vision, which we all hope to sustain, we have defined a sixth critical issue, shaped our approach, and formulated our sixth guiding principle.

Critical Issue #6) Continuing encasement of open space, restricting suburban community development upon which a sustainable tax base funding necessary public works is built, is contrary to sound future planning.

Our Approach: Suburban communities are where the overwhelming majority of American families wish to live, and the opportunity in our region for those communities to be built for the families who hope to live in them, is a shared supportive responsibility for those of us who presently enjoy our life in the suburbs and for those who hope to enjoy the suburban family lifestyle in the future.

Our Guiding Principle: The suburban lifestyle—as surrounds the American River Parkway—which is imbued within the aspirational center of the *California Dream* **and whose vision is woven into the heart of the American Dream, is a deeply loved way of life whose sustainability we all desire.**

ARPPS Research Report #5 *The American River Parkway's Suburban Setting: The Sacramento Dream, A Vision & Policy Primer*. (pp. 42-43)
