



San Joaquin River
Parkway and
Conservation Trust, Inc.

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“Are you interested in learning about rocks? “River Camp Counselor Spence asked the shy six-year-old in his group.

This was Elias’s first summer at River Camp. He was nervous. Due to the COVID pandemic, he hadn’t attended school in person, so participating in a program with other children his age was a new experience. Elias was nervous about introducing himself and was quiet throughout Monday morning.

An invitation to learn about the rocks found in the San Joaquin River bottom was all it took to help Elias come out of his shell.

It was during the afternoon swim time. Counselor Spence noticed Elias picking up and inspecting rocks; he saw the spark of interest and took the chance to connect. “I’m studying geology in college, and I can teach you about the rocks found here along the river.” Spence shared.

Elias spent every spare minute looking for and learning how to identify rocks with Spence’s help from that moment forward. And he became more comfortable participating in activities and games with the rest of his group. By noticing that Elias seemed curious, Spence helped create a nurturing and positive experience at camp.

You are an important part of this story, and it’s why I’m writing to you today. When you support the River Parkway Trust, you help protect and steward the places where young people can learn and connect to the outdoors and each other.



CREATING AND PROTECTING THE SAN JOAQUIN RIVER PARKWAY
11605 Old Friant Road Fresno, California 93730-9701 559-248-8480 www.riverparkway.org



Without you and others like you, Elias would not have had the chance to wade into the San Joaquin River and discover the field of geology while making new friends at River Camp.

Will you consider making a special donation of \$100 or more to support the places and programs that help kids like Elias build the foundation of connection to the San Joaquin River?

Because the children growing up in our community today are the ones who will inherit the Parkway. I am grateful for the foresight of the Trust's founders and for people like you who understand that outdoor education programs for young people are an investment in the future of the San Joaquin River Parkway.

That brings me back to Elias. I need to stop and tell you that's not his real name, but his story is real, and you played a role.

Elias and his Camp Counselor stood in a shallow area of the swim zone. *"Do you see the colors on this rock? It's made up of various minerals that are different colors."* Spence explained. He went on to encourage Elias to feel the rock's surface.

"It's smooth, and it's very round," Elias responded. Spence described the formation of the Sierra Nevada Mountains and how rocks, like the one Elias held in his hands, were deposited in the San Joaquin River floodplain.

If you were to visit swim time at River Camp, you'd witness scenes like that between Elias and Spence. You'd also see kids with nets and buckets searching for tadpoles and small fish. Others would be digging in the sand along the river's edge, investigating how deep the hole must be for it to fill with water. Of course, you'd also see campers floating in the cool river water.

River Camp is a program that provides children a safe space to explore and learn about the San Joaquin River and the species it supports. Catching a tadpole. Identifying animal tracks. Learning the names of the birds that fly overhead. Playing beneath hundred-year-old oak trees. These experiences matter, because they contribute to a child's understanding of and connection to the natural environment.

You make these experiences possible. You help provide programs that get children out of the house and into the wild. And you help protect the land, water, and wildlife habitat where connection happens - today and forever.

The effort to create and protect the 22-mile San Joaquin River Parkway relies on people like you who recognize our collective responsibility to future generations. Together, we can continue conserving properties like Sumner Peck Ranch, Owl Hollow, and the River Center. And we can create spaces and opportunities for people throughout the community to come together on the Parkway.

Will you make an investment in future generations of river stewards with a gift of \$100 or more today? Young people like Elias are counting on you and me to continue the work of creating and protecting the San Joaquin River Parkway.

When I heard the story about our Camp Counselor Spence creating a meaningful experience for his camper, I wasn't surprised. Spence is a perfect example of how programs like River Camp support the development of future generations of stewards. Let's take a closer look at his story.

Spence began attending River Camp during elementary school. Eventually, he became a Junior Leader and then a Counselor. His experience at River Camp is part of what motivated Spence to study geology in college. Spending time exploring the cobbles during the Rock World unit at Scout Island was one of his favorite River Camp activities.

Today, Spence carries a hand lens or magnifying glass everywhere. When Elias discovered this tool of the geologist's trade, he asked to use it every day during lunch. Spence helped Elias break open smaller rocks and investigate the different patterns and colors contained inside.

Elias left the River Camp experience with a new sense of wonder and curiosity about the San Joaquin River. He'll build on this experience in the years ahead as he learns more about the river's ecosystems and rich natural and cultural history.

Someday, Elias may be the one to notice a young camper who seems curious to discover the rich natural world of the San Joaquin River. And he will be ready to carry on the legacy of nurturing future generations of river stewards.

As I think about Elias's enthusiasm for learning about geology at River Camp, I feel hopeful for our future. Supporting young people in discovering an interest in the river and the outdoors matters.

Because kids like Elias will inherit the Parkway you are helping to create and protect.

Will you help make sure they are ready by making a special donation today? Please consider making a gift of \$100 or more right away. Every donation, no matter the size, will make a difference.

As you consider writing a check or making a donation online, I encourage you to think about the people and places your generosity will impact. Imagine families discovering the River Center and enjoying a picnic near the critter pond. Picture participants in the Teen Environmental Leadership program paddling kayaks at Sumner Peck Ranch at sunset. Think of protecting landscapes like Owl Hollow, where discovery happens. And of course, keep kids like Elias who benefit significantly from outdoor education programs in mind.

Thank you for all of your past support.

If you have any questions about the River Parkway Trust's current programs or projects, please contact me personally at 559-248-8480 ext. 105 or by email at sweaver@riverparkway.org.

Sincerely,



Sharon Weaver
Executive Director

P.S. You can make a real difference for young people like Elias with a donation today. Your gift will help protect the places and provide the programs that introduce children to the wonders of the San Joaquin River.