



San Joaquin River
Parkway and
Conservation Trust, Inc.

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Greetings,

“Have any of you ever gone canoeing before?” Molly asked the high schoolers gathered in the picnic shelter at Sycamore Island.

Molly’s eyes widened as she watched most students raise their hands in response to her question. *“Wow, quite a few of you. When did you go canoeing?”* she asked.

“With you guys,” one student shared. *“It was on a field trip,”* another added. After quickly conducting the calculations in her mind, Molly realized this group of high-schoolers had participated in the River Parkway Trust’s Madera Unified 6th-grade program several years before.

With life-jackets secured and paddles in hand, the group prepared to launch their boats on Old Muddy. Molly positioned herself on the shore to help each canoe beyond the shallow water. *“I haven’t done this in five years,”* Camila said, dipping her paddle into the water. Molly asked Camila if her previous canoeing experience was with the Trust. A smile grew on her face as Camila nodded yes in response.

“There’s a good chance I was the one launching you then, too, so this may sound familiar. Stay seated, stay centered, and away we go!”

Camila’s laughter hung in the air as she and her partner paddled away from the shore.



The River Parkway Trust's program team works with youth every day who face barriers to accessing quality outdoor programs and green spaces. I worry every day – as I'm sure you do – that children growing up in the region today won't have the chance to build connections to local land and waterways because of their barriers to access. If they can't develop these connections, what will it mean for the future health of the San Joaquin River?

Camila's story illustrates success in the Trust's work to support youth in building a lifelong connection to the outdoors. Programs like River Field Trips provide an introduction to the San Joaquin River Parkway, its ecosystems, and the joy of spending time outside. River Camp takes it further by engaging children in a whole week of learning and exploration. And now, with the new Youth Parkway Ambassadors Program, teens like Camila can spend a semester learning about and experiencing all the Parkway has to offer.

A sixth-grade River Field Trip was Camila's introduction to the Parkway, and the experience stayed with her. Over the last few months, she has engaged in multiple Parkway trips and has developed new outdoor skills and knowledge about the San Joaquin River. You make this important work possible as a River Parkway Trust supporter, and that's why I'm writing to you today.

Will you make a year-end donation of \$50, \$100, or more to connect youth to local the San Joaquin River Parkway?

Because during the next few years, young people like Camila will graduate from high school and embark on a pathway to their future. With your support, they can have multiple meaningful outdoor experiences that provide exposure to conservation and scientific fields.

In September, Camila and ten of her peers followed their curiosity and joined Molly for an orientation about the Parkway Ambassadors Program on their high school campus. After engaging in an introduction to the San Joaquin River Parkway, the group dove in and worked through what they most hoped to get out of participating in the program. Camila shared that she wanted to learn more about biology, local wildlife, composting, and how to lead a nature walk.

Before wrapping up the orientation, Molly led a values identification activity. Participants reviewed a list of values and, after time for reflection, agreed as a group that the core values for their Ambassadors experience were:

Trust, Loyalty, Friendship

I think these core values perfectly describe River Parkway Trust supporters just like you. You and others like you demonstrate your trust in our organization through your loyal support. And through the years, friendship around the common cause has bolstered the River Parkway Trust's progress in protecting land and creating opportunities to come together in the outdoors.

It makes my heart sing to think about Camila and her fellow Ambassadors following in your footsteps to carry the Parkway forward with these core values in mind.

Your gift of \$50, \$100, or more will contribute to making sure she's ready. When you donate to the River Parkway Trust, you not only help steward the landscapes where young people like Camila can come to learn and grow. You are also helping future generations of river stewards develop trust in themselves and each other, building loyalty and friendship on the San Joaquin River Parkway.

The Trust developed the Youth Parkway Ambassadors Program to support youth interested in outdoor education and recreation to reach their full potential. Specific activities, training topics, and planning for the open house days have been driven by the interests and skills each participant brings to the program.

Since the program orientation, Camila's cohort has developed skills and experience in paddling, orienteering, plant and animal identification, and planning programs for children. Through nature journaling, each participant has deepened their personal connection to protected land along the Parkway. They have developed trust in themselves and one another and feel new responsibility for the San Joaquin River Parkway.

The first Youth Parkway Ambassadors program session culminates with Camila's cohort facilitating two public open-house days for children and families from their neighborhood. At the open-house events, Ambassadors will welcome the public and lead activities, including canoeing, a nature photography hike, a scavenger hunt, and creating natural art.

Camila is ready to support more local children in discovering the joy of spending time outside on the Parkway.

The River Parkway Trust's work begins with land conservation, recognizing our shared responsibility for future generations like the Youth Parkway Ambassadors and children in their communities. Will those young people be ready to take over the stewardship of the San Joaquin River Parkway when their time comes?

After watching Camila and her fellow Ambassadors grow so much during the last few months, I can tell you the answer is an emphatic YES!

As a River Parkway Trust donor, you make outdoor programs for young people possible. Your generosity supports places and programs for children to learn about the importance of the San Joaquin River and the wildlife it sustains.

Will you help the River Parkway Trust continue expanding programs and creating spaces that connect local children and youth to the San Joaquin River? Please make a year-end donation of \$50, \$100, or more right away!

Each story of a young person who has participated in a River Parkway Trust program deepens my resolve to expand access to the Parkway. I feel responsible for providing more students multiple opportunities to experience the beauty, mental renewal, and excitement of a trip to the San Joaquin River.

Will you join us in reaching more children next year by making a year-end donation today? Your generous gift of \$50, \$100, or more will contribute to a new year of conservation projects and outdoor programs. Please write a check or donate online before December 31st!

Thank you for considering the River Parkway Trust in your year-end giving plans. In this season of gratitude, I am incredibly grateful for your trust, loyalty, and friendship as we work to create and protect the Parkway.

Sincerely,



Sharon J. Weaver
Executive Director

P.S. Your year-end donation translates to more experiences for youth like Camila on the San Joaquin River Parkway. Please write a check or donate online by December 31st!