



San Joaquin River  
Parkway and  
Conservation Trust, Inc.

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Greetings,

*“You know when you get those butterfly feelings in your stomach? That’s how I felt about coming out here today. But then all of those feelings went away, and I had so much fun!”*

This from a high school student who really didn’t want to spend the last day of spring break on a field trip. After just a few hours of hiking, canoeing, and teambuilding activities, Sycamore Island was exactly where Greg wanted to be that day.

It reinforced how important the River Parkway Trust’s work is for me.

The River Parkway Trust’s program team works with youth every day who are disconnected from the natural world.

And I worry every day – as I am sure you do – that the future of our region’s protected land and waterways will come down to small decisions these kids make as adults. And the values they pass on to their children.

That’s what makes protected areas like Sycamore Island and programs like outdoor field trips so important. Sycamore Island is a place where learning about the world happens – because it is a place where young people like Greg can take risks and overcome a fear of the unknown.

**Sycamore Island is a place you make happen through your gifts to the River Parkway Trust. And that’s why I am writing to you today – to ask you to make a donation of \$50, \$100 or more.**



**CREATING AND PROTECTING THE SAN JOAQUIN RIVER PARKWAY**  
11605 Old Friant Road Fresno, California 93730-9701 559-248-8480 [www.riverparkway.org](http://www.riverparkway.org)



Because you can help other young people turn their butterfly feelings into the courage to try something new along the San Joaquin River. When given a chance, youth like Greg can have life changing experiences in the outdoors.

As the busload of high school students arrived, there was a general air of excitement about what the day might hold. But the kids seemed nervous about being in an unfamiliar place. As they disembarked from the bus, several grumbled about the weather, group assignments, and everything else going on with teenagers.

Four hours later, Greg shared how much fun he had hiking, canoeing, and taking on a leadership role during the teambuilding activities. “Make sure you talk to my school Counselor,” Greg exclaimed. “I want to be part of the other programs you told us about.”

Lives changed.

**Your gift of \$50, \$100, or more will help provide more opportunities for more local kids to experience the outdoors.**

That brings me back to Greg. Actually, I need to stop and tell you that Greg is not his real name. But his story is real! And you helped make it happen.

Down by the Sycamore Island Trout Pond, the group was preparing to launch canoes for an afternoon of paddling activities. The day became warmer, and the “getting to know you games” we played earlier that morning helped break the ice among the teenagers.

As the Trust’s Education Program Facilitator, Carina gave instructions on paddling techniques, Greg’s eyes lit up.

*“Wait, I know how to do this,” Greg said. “We hold our hand like this on the t-grip, right?”*

Carina told Greg he was right and asked him how he knew what to do. “I just realized I’ve been here before,” Greg shared. It turned out that Greg and a few of the other students in the group had been to Sycamore Island for a Madera Unified School District sixth-grade field trip with the River Parkway Trust.

But there were also several participants that day who had never experienced paddling a canoe before, and they were nervous!

When did you last feel that nervous excitement about a new experience?  
How did you overcome the butterfly feelings and embrace the risk of trying something new?

Greg noticed that some of his peers were apprehensive about getting into the boats and offered to sit in the rear of the canoe so a first-timer could be upfront. One participant took Greg up on his offer. She stepped into the boat and turned around, then she froze and couldn't muster up the courage to sit down. Carina offered her hands for the nervous participant to hold on to, and Greg gave encouragement. After more hesitation, she finally sat down.

While handing over the paddle, Carina could tell the girl's heart must have been racing. Carina reminded her of all the skills they had practiced and helped push the canoe out onto the pond. The boat wobbled a little bit, but Greg took control, and together they paddled ahead.

**Looking out across the pond, you could see the pure joy on these kids' faces.** Later, one of the program leaders approached and shared that she didn't believe all of the participants would try paddling. She was thrilled to see her students overcoming their fears and having such a great experience together in the outdoors.

*"I can tell they are happy," she shared. "They're going to remember this day for a long time."*

Later, when we were gathering again to get on the bus, Greg shared that he had butterfly feelings leading up to this trip. But those feelings went away, and he had fun. Greg was excited when he heard about the upcoming Youth Parkway Ambassadors program and how he could help teach younger kids about the San Joaquin River and how to enjoy it.

I think Greg will make an outstanding Parkway Ambassador and future steward of the San Joaquin River Parkway.

**And you can help make sure he has the opportunity to live up to that potential. Your gift of \$50, \$100, or more can make a real difference for teens like Greg and his peers.** You are and have been a fantastic supporter of the River Parkway Trust. As a supporter, you understand the mental and physical benefits of being in nature and taking positive risks outside. And you also understand that not everyone gets it.

The River Parkway Trust is an organization dedicated to protecting the river and the nature it supports. And to making that land available for outdoor education and recreation. Scientists, naturalists, volunteers, and students come here to protect and restore land, learn about nature, and discover the true joy of paddling a canoe.

The youth we serve at Sycamore Island are the future of the San Joaquin River Parkway. With you, we can reach them now to provide the experiences and tools for becoming conservationists and land stewards in the future.

Will Greg and his friends be ready when it's their turn to help a young person discover the wonders of the San Joaquin River? Will they become the next generation of Parkway conservation leaders?

**If they have the chance for a few more adventures on the San Joaquin River, I think the answer is a resounding YES!**

*You can help by making a gift* to the River Parkway Trust right away. Please consider a gift of \$50 or \$100. If you can do more, please be as generous as possible. Every donation will make a difference in the lives of young people and the future of the Parkway.

As I reflect on Greg's story, I feel the responsibility for expanding access and creating more pathways for young people to experience beauty, mental renewal, and the butterfly feelings of trying something new. And I feel gratitude for you, because you make these opportunities possible.

Together, we can give more young people the chance to explore the San Joaquin River Parkway. Your support today will make a difference.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sharon Weaver', with a stylized, flowing script.

Sharon Weaver  
Executive Director

**P.S. Your donation today will translate to more adventures and learning for young people in our region. Please write a check or donate online today!**