



San Joaquin River
Parkway and
Conservation Trust, Inc.

Dear Friend,

“I want to show them how beautiful nature is.”

As the first cars pulled into Sumner Peck Ranch on a crisp fall Saturday morning, the Youth Parkway Ambassadors were ready—or so they thought.

Zoe and her fellow Ambassadors, our first cohort from Farber Educational Campus in Fresno, were prepared to welcome 30, maybe 40 people to the Open House event. They were excited about teaching people to paddle canoes, expanding participants’ knowledge of the river on a nature walk, and offering fun arts and crafts activities.

The Ambassadors spent many weeks preparing for this day. Through training, they learned outdoor skills like paddling and guiding a nature walk. They built confidence through teamwork activities, and their time spent on the Parkway deepened their connection to the river and the plants and animals it sustains. The Open House event marked the culmination of their journey in the program, showcasing their growth.

Now, the day was here. A steady stream of cars arrived, and before they knew it, hundreds of people were on the property, ready for family adventures by the river. You could see a mix of excitement and nervousness on the Ambassadors’ faces. I imagine they were thinking, “How are we going to do this?” as they headed to the activity stations.

Soon, lines of people formed at the canoe launch and arts and crafts station. The situation required a little creative on-the-spot thinking. Zoe approached her program mentor, Carina. “What if we try leading a nature walk for as many people as possible?” Though a typical Trust nature walk might have 20 or 30 people, Carina agreed to give it a try. “Join us over here if you’d like to be part of the Trust’s largest nature walk ever,” Zoe called out to the crowd.

As the large group of families walked together along the river, Zoe paused to point out the Valley Oak forest on Ledger Island. She shared the role these trees play in sustaining wildlife and people, telling the story of oak galls and the cultural significance of acorns to Native American communities.

By the end of the day, Zoe and her fellow Ambassadors were exhausted but glowing with pride. “People just kept coming, but I knew we could do it.” Zoe shared as they debriefed about the day. “I think we inspired people to care about this place.”

From a teen who had never experienced the river to a confident outdoor leader, Zoe’s story is a reminder of how important the San Joaquin River Parkway is to our region. Zoe’s story is just one example of what your support makes possible. Because of people like you, young leaders are discovering their voices, building lifelong connections to the Parkway, and inspiring others to care in ways that ripple beyond a single day.

And that’s where you come in.

With your support, more young people like Zoe will have the chance to explore the Parkway, connect with the river in meaningful ways, and grow into the next generation of leaders who will care for its future.

Will you make a year-end donation of \$50, \$100, or more to support this work?

Zoe’s story is just one of many that are beginning to take shape at Sumner Peck Ranch. This special place embodies what the Parkway is all about: protecting open space, restoring wildlife habitat, and connecting people to the river.

Acquired by the Trust in 2020, Sumner Peck Ranch serves as a critical link between K’uik’ui Ranch (formerly Ball Ranch) and Ledger Island, two Parkway properties that are open to the public. It’s also an essential outdoor education and recreation site, where young people like Zoe learn to paddle, explore the oak woodlands and river habitats, and connect with the land in meaningful ways.

We’re also beginning the work of restoring parts of the property that were previously farmed to reestablish native oak savannah and riparian forest habitats. Over time, these areas will provide food and shelter for wildlife, offer shade for visitors, and create additional spaces for families to learn and explore. It’s the kind of work that takes time, care, and community support.

What's happening at Sumner Peck Ranch is a story that's still unfolding, and it reveals how the Parkway moves forward. With support from people like you, the Trust is working to complete the Parkway, property by property, project by project. Every acre conserved, restored, and opened to the public brings us one step closer to the 22-mile Parkway.

After decades of effort to protect land along the river, we're at a critical point: the foundation is in place, but the Parkway we've worked toward is still not complete.

Today, the challenges we face are different than when the Trust was founded in 1988. It's not unchecked development; it's the slow pace of progress. Realizing the Parkway's full potential requires persistent advocacy, strong public support, and the resolve to work through bureaucratic processes.

There is incredible opportunity ahead. Zoe's story and the work happening at Sumner Peck Ranch show what's possible. Properties already in public ownership are waiting to be opened to the public. Disturbed landscapes can be restored to support wildlife and increase biodiversity. Trail connections still to be built will link neighborhoods to the river and the entire 22-mile Parkway. And with ongoing stewardship, the Parkway's land and amenities can thrive, offering lasting benefits for wildlife, local communities, and future generations.

Bringing the Parkway to life takes more than plans on paper; it takes community commitment and support. Your year-end donation will keep the momentum going and ensure the Parkway becomes all that it was meant to be: a protected, connected, thriving river corridor for people and wildlife alike.

Together, we can take the next steps to open more Parkway land, enhance wildlife habitat, and give more people the chance to create their own stories along the river—just like Zoe. Will you make a special year-end gift of \$50, \$100, or more to help complete the Parkway?

When I think about the future of the Parkway, I think about young people like Zoe. I think about the moment she stood before the large group of people and helped them make connections to these natural landscapes.

Zoe's story gives me hope for what's ahead. It's also a reminder that progress on the Parkway has always required persistence. Her leadership in the moment reflects the same spirit our community has shown for decades, adapting, problem-solving, and moving forward when the path isn't easy.

The Parkway we've all worked toward is within reach.

Thanks to people like you, thousands of acres have been protected for the benefit of the public. For nearly four decades, people from across the Valley have come together to support a vision: a river corridor that supports wildlife, connects communities, and provides lasting benefits for future generations.

It's time to finish this work.

The Parkway's future isn't guaranteed. It depends on the continued care and commitment of people who believe in a healthy San Joaquin River. The same community spirit that has carried this work for decades will shape the next chapter.

Imagine a place where families can explore more healthy river landscapes, where young leaders like Zoe guide the way, and where wildlife continues to thrive because of the choices we make today. Together, we can ensure that the Parkway remains a place of refuge, learning, and connection for generations to come.

Your generosity has always been at the heart of what makes this work possible. When you give, you're not just supporting a program or a project; you're helping write the next chapter in a shared story.

Please consider making a year-end gift of \$50, \$100, or more before December 31st. Your support matters. It's how we care for the lands already protected and take the next steps to create the Parkway our region deserves.

Thank you for considering the Trust in your year-end giving plans. In this season of giving, I am grateful for friends like you who remain committed to realizing the 22-mile San Joaquin River Parkway vision – for today and the future.

With gratitude,

Sharon Weaver
Executive Director

P.S. Step by step, together, we're bringing the Parkway closer to what the community has envisioned for decades. Your year-end gift will help sustain the momentum and support future Parkway leaders like Zoe. Please make your gift by December 31st.