

Impact Report

RIVER PARKWAY TRUST

11605 Old Friant Road
Fresno, CA 93730-9701
www.riverparkway.org



Letter from the Board President

Each time I reflect on the Trust's Annual Impact Report, I find myself wondering how we can stretch even further to serve the community. Looking back on 2024, I am amazed by the number of people we reached, the growth of the Trust's programs, and the incredible support we received from generous people like you.

As a former educator, I notice first the number of young people connecting with the river. I am especially proud of the Youth Parkway Ambassadors Program, where high school students gain outdoor experience and leadership skills that inspire them to pursue jobs on the Parkway or even college majors connected to conservation and education. I am also encouraged by the expansion of the Inclusion Program, which makes it possible for children with intellectual, developmental, and physical disabilities to thrive at River Camp alongside their peers.

Open Parkway properties continue to draw record numbers of visitors. In 2024, over 20,000 people visited Sycamore Island, a San Joaquin River Conservancy property that the Trust operates under contract. That same role enabled the Trust to open Ball

Ranch and Ledger Island, offering new opportunities for families, hikers, and explorers to experience the river.

None of this would be possible without the generosity of the Trust's volunteers. In 2024, they contributed more than 13,000 hours to the Trust by removing invasive plants, planting native species, guiding outdoor experiences, opening the River Store, tending the River Center gardens, and assisting with events, among other activities. Their dedication inspires me and shows how much our community values the San Joaquin River.

Of course, all work and no play isn't the goal, so grab your hat and get out to the river!

Julia O'Kane
Board President



Non-Profit
Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
Fresno, CA
Permit No. 1599

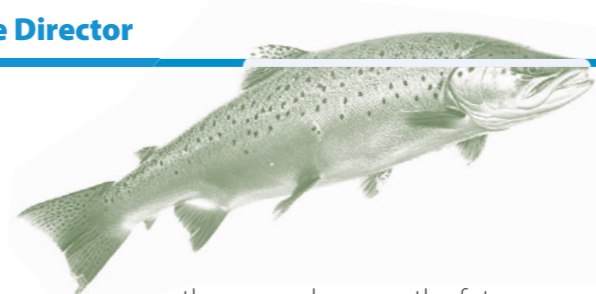
Letter from the Executive Director

Have you ever watched a salmon swim upstream?

These incredible fish journey hundreds of miles from the ocean, navigating shallow waters, leaping over obstacles, and pushing through strong currents, all to return to the place where their life began. Sometimes their determination is so intense, they wear themselves raw against the rocks, leaving traces behind on the journey. It's remarkable, and a little heartbreaking, to witness.

I've been thinking a lot about salmon recently, especially as we've seen a historic return of 448 adults to the San Joaquin River through the San Joaquin River Restoration Program. This year's return is just 52 short of the 500 adults estimated as a minimum population of returning spawners to reach sustainability. People often ask me, "Is anything even happening with that program anymore?" The answer is a resounding **YES!** While most of the progress isn't visible to the public, scientists are out on the river studying fish at every life stage, monitoring flows, and helping adults reach upstream spawning grounds. Their persistence is paying off.

Like the salmon making their way home, and the quiet, determined work behind their return, the Trust's work isn't always easy to see. Sometimes working on the Parkway feels like swimming against the current. There always seem to be hurdles to overcome and challenges to face. But like the salmon, we stay



the course because the future we're working toward is worth every effort.

As I look back on 2024, I can see that we've accomplished a great deal. We celebrated the opening of Ball Ranch and Ledger Island for daily access, facilitated outdoor education and recreation programs along the Parkway, and watched thousands of people explore, volunteer, and connect with the river. We expanded programming for children of all abilities in 2024, ensuring that more kids could experience the natural world up close. At River Camp, I've



PHOTO: US BUREAU OF RECLAMATION

heard campers explain erosion and sediment deposition better than most adults, because they didn't just learn it from a book, they saw it happening in the river channel.



Hands-on learning is what makes these experiences so lasting and meaningful.

We also saw new opportunities on the horizon, including a historic \$11 million in funding for the Parkway through Proposition 4. These accomplishments reflect what's possible when long-term planning, persistence, and community support come together.

Much of that work isn't flashy. It looks like reviewing complex environmental reports, navigating state contracting requirements, working alongside agency partners to keep projects moving, and showing up – again and again – to ensure that public access and community input remain central to the Parkway's future.

That effort is paying off. The Ledger Island bridge is one example. While the bridge remains closed for safety

reasons, we're actively working with engineers and partners to explore creative, cost-effective solutions to restore access. Thanks to your support, we're able to lead these efforts with care and urgency.

From educating the next generation to advocating in decision-making spaces, your support ensures the Parkway reflects both the needs and the hopes of this community.

Throughout it all, I'm reminded that the true strength of the River Parkway Trust lies in the people behind it: our staff, board, partners, and supporters like YOU. Your commitment makes it possible to keep pushing forward, even when it means swimming against the current.

With gratitude,

Sharon Weaver
Executive Director

Creating and Protecting the San Joaquin River Parkway for Everyone



The River Parkway Trust’s mission is to preserve and restore San Joaquin River lands having ecological, scenic, or historic significance; to educate the public on the need for stewardship; to research issues affecting the river; and to promote educational, recreational, and agricultural uses consistent with the protection of the river’s resources.

Board of Directors

Julia O’Kane
President

Anna Wattenbarger
Vice President

John Telles, M.D.
Treasurer

Lyn Peters
Secretary

Coke Hallowell
Chairman of the Board

Chandelle Arambula
Bart Bohn

Andrew Cantu
Debbie Doerksen

George Folsom
Michael Goldring

Thomas Harmon
Elise Moir

Samuel Molina
Angel Moreno

Edward B. Morgan
Carol Ann Moses

Destiny Rodriguez
Irene Romero

Marcia Sablan, M.D.
T’Shaka Touré

Fennemore Dowling Aaron
Christopher A. Brown

General Counsel

Contact Information:
San Joaquin River Parkway
and Conservation Trust, Inc.

11605 Old Friant Road
Fresno, CA 93730-9701
559-248-8480

River Parkway Trust Staff

Sharon Weaver
Executive Director

Sarah Parkes
Assistant Director

Barney Vue
Staff Accountant

Nicole Davis
Executive Assistant

Bryna De Fede
Donor Relations Manager

Community Programs
Tania Mitchum
Community Programs Director

Katie Kincaid
Director of River Camp Programs

Carina Damian
Recreation Program Manager

Anneliese Wagner
Inclusion Coordinator

Teresa Magana
Program Coordinator

Program Facilitators
Emma Dones
Jay Gomez

Elizabeth Melendez
Magali Merino

Logan Ojeda
Karen Pacheco

Elijah Salinas
DJ Stewart

Jaime Zuniga

Parkway Projects

Jake Salimbene
Operations Director

Danielle Gulseth
Project Manager

Restoration Technicians
Billy Deen
Abel Delasancha

Jelani Lewis
Lindsay Norton

Park Operations
Bonnie Hill
Park Manager

Pengsue Normen
Assistant Park Manager

Park Hosts
James Allison
Daniel Cazares

Russell Chappel
Edgar Diaz

Rachel Grahn
Howard Lewis

Adrian Ontiveros
Noah Osburn

Kenneth Simms
Lily Townsend

Bill Tuell
Pengsue Vang

Jesse Verduzco

River Center
Jesus Luviano
Rental Events Manager

Sumner Peck Ranch
Marcelino Cervantes
Ranch Foreman

Directors Emeriti

Paul Chaffee*
Jim Costa

Clary Creager
Lewis S. Eaton*

Duane Furman*
Rebecca Gomes

Edward Grootendorst*
David Grubbs

Lynn Hemink*
Karen Humphrey

Garland Johnson*
Ed Kashian

Rick Lehman
Tom MacMichael Sr*

Leonard Meyers*
Michael Paoli

Joseph Penbera
Ron Rempel

Thomas Richardson*
Gene Rose

Mary Ellen Savala
Margaret Thorburn*

Ralph Waterhouse
John Wissler*

**In Memoriam*

People on the Parkway



John Wissler: Visionary Leader, Devoted Advocate

When the San Joaquin River Parkway was still a bold and uncertain dream, John Wissler brought clarity, confidence, and a deep sense of purpose. As one of the Trust’s original board members and a tireless advocate for conservation, John played a foundational role in setting the organization up for success.

A retired Rear Admiral in the U.S. Navy, John and his wife, Brooke, moved to the family ranch in Madera County after decades of military service. What might have been a quiet retirement instead became an active and impactful chapter of public service. John’s commitment to the Parkway sprang from a lifelong love of the outdoors, rooted in his childhood

in Minnesota, where Boy Scouts and canoe trips shaped his early understanding of the importance of open space. That passion never wavered.

“He saw every place as Camelot,” his daughter Cecelia recalled. “He looked at the San Joaquin River and saw possibility.” That unwavering optimism translated into meaningful action. Whether serving on the Trust’s executive committee, representing the Trust at land use hearings, or recruiting allies one dinner party conversation at a time, John made the Parkway a priority in every corner of his life.

His leadership was especially critical during the Parkway’s early years, when the concept of a 22-mile greenway through urban and agricultural lands was still controversial. John chaired the Madera County Citizens Committee for a general plan update, working

John Wissler *continued*

tirelessly to ensure the full Parkway Plan was included. “That was entirely John’s effort,” said Dave Koehler. “And it stuck.” His skill in navigating politics and winning hearts and minds came not just from his credentials, but from his character. “He was authentic,” Dave noted. “When he spoke, people listened—not because of his title, but because of his conviction.”

John’s legacy also lives in the example he set for collaboration. He believed deeply in partnerships and encouraged nonprofits to work together to achieve shared goals. And in quieter moments, he mentored emerging leaders with

Parkway Update

Ledger Island Bridge: Why It’s Closed and What the River Parkway Trust Is Doing About It

In November 2024, the River Parkway Trust proudly opened Ball Ranch and Ledger Island for public recreation—an exciting milestone in expanding access to the San Joaquin River Parkway. However, visitors quickly discovered that the Ledger Island Bridge, the only non-vehicle connection between Fresno and Madera, was closed and fenced off.

The closure is based on safety concerns following a 2014 bridge assessment conducted by the California Department of Water

warmth and wisdom. For Dave, one of his first and most formative experiences as Executive Director was sitting at John and Brooke’s table while John shared his love for the Parkway.

Today, more than 25 years later, the Parkway continues to reflect his vision. John believed it was our generation’s turn to do something good for the river—and he lived that belief fully. His advice still resonates: “Stay the course. Look at the long-term goals. And never forget to look back and see how far you’ve come.”

Ledger Island Bridge Closure *continued*



In response, the Conservancy determined that the bridge should be closed to the public. As part of our operations agreement to open Ball Ranch and Ledger Island, the River Parkway Trust was required to install fencing and signage to restrict access across the bridge and safeguard visitors.



Preliminary estimates from DWR placed the cost of a full structural evaluation at around \$900,000, with full bridge replacement estimated at \$17 million.

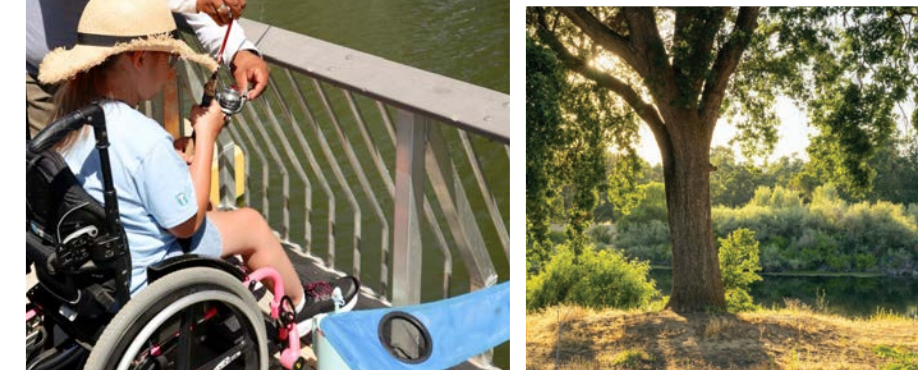
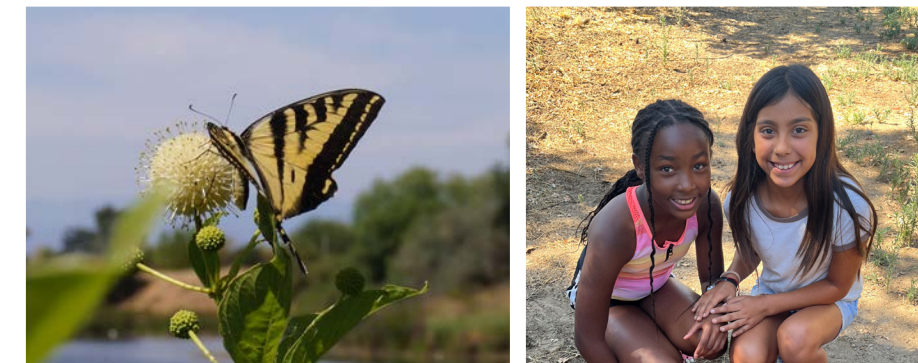
The River Parkway Trust is actively working with the Conservancy and other partners to find a safe and more cost-effective path forward. In early 2025, we contracted with local engineering firm Blair, Church, and Flynn to explore the possibility of repairing rather than replacing the bridge. They have proposed three options that would address safety

issues, require minimal permitting, and keep costs in the \$1 million range.

Ledger Island remains open to the public through the Tesoro Viejo Trail System in Madera County or by personal watercraft on the river.

The River Parkway Trust is committed to reopening this important river crossing and will continue working with public and private partners to move the project forward.

Scenes From the Parkway



River Parkway Trust 2024 by the Numbers



Conservation

2024 marked a year of progress in the Trust's commitment to improving wildlife habitat, increasing biodiversity, and building climate resilience along the Parkway. The Fresno River West E Pond and Sycamore Island Trout Pond Habitat Improvement Projects were among the Trust's conservation priorities, with work to support plant establishment resulting in positive survival rates. Pollinator species benefited from special projects that included planting narrowleaf milkweed (*Asclepias fascicularis*) and wildflower seeding at Sumner Peck Ranch, the River Center, and Fresno River West.



1,500
Narrowleaf Milkweed (*Asclepias fascicularis*) plugs were planted on Parkway properties

56.94
Acres of Invasive Species were treated and removed

4,380
Native Trees and Shrubs were monitored and maintained

20
Tons of hazardous ladder fuel removed from Ball Ranch and Sycamore Island



Volunteers

From helping plant trees to leading nature hikes on the Parkway, volunteers play a critical role in the River Parkway Trust's core mission areas of conservation, education, and recreation.

13,129 Hours of volunteer service contributed by individuals like you

Thank you to every volunteer for the gifts of your time and talent.



Education

Your generosity supported educational field trips, in-class learning experiences, and weeklong exploration at River Camp across all seasons. You helped ensure that children of all ages, including preschoolers taking their first steps in nature and teens developing outdoor leadership skills, could connect with the river in ways that inspire wonder, curiosity, and environmental stewardship. Families also found opportunities to explore and learn together, strengthening their connection to nature and one another through shared experiences along the river.



9,837 Students Participated in School field trips

258 Pre-schoolers learned about the plants and animals found along the river

1,670 Students engaged in classroom-based lessons

695 Participants in Youth Parkway Ambassadors, VISTAS, and weekend outings

2,066 River Campers across 6 locations in Fresno, Madera, and Firebaugh

River Center



In 2024, your support helped the River Parkway Trust care for and maintain the Coke Hallowell Center for River Studies as a welcoming Parkway destination for the community. Visitors of all ages explored the Hidden Homes Trail, wandered native plant gardens, and paused to enjoy spotting birds and other wildlife through the seasons. The River Center picnic shelter remains a special gathering space for school field trips, family outings, and community organizations. Thanks to you, the River Center was open 7 days a week, offering a place for learning, connection, and outdoor enjoyment all year long.

35,660 Visitors enjoyed the River Center in 2024

Social Media Engagement

20,517 Social Media Followers

@SJRPCT
@SycamoreIslandPark

10,900 email subscribers

@riverparkwaytrust



Recreation

The Trust celebrated the grand opening of Ball Ranch and Ledger Island, welcoming the public to enjoy hiking, biking, fishing, wildlife watching, and exploration. The golf course and residential subdivision proposed for Ball Ranch was the catalyst for the concept of the San Joaquin River Parkway, and daily public access to the site is a reminder of how far we've come.



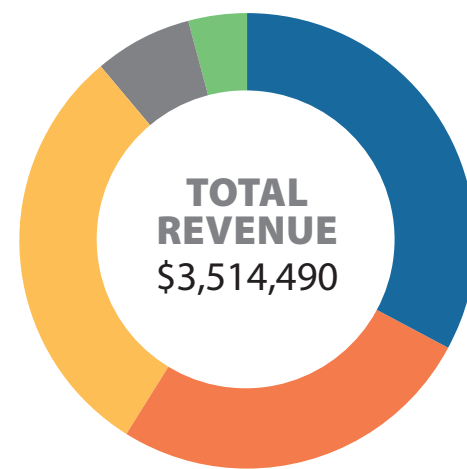
22,712 Sycamore Island Visitors

8,760 Sumner Peck Ranch Visitors

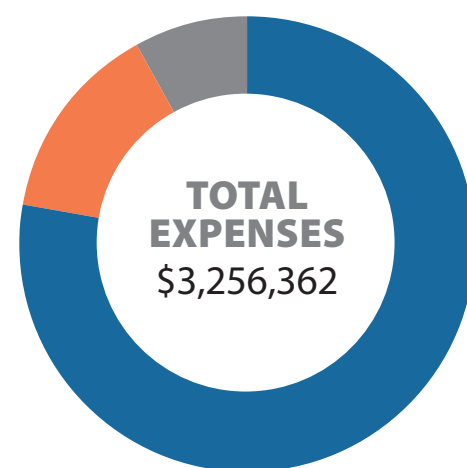
1,779 Ball Ranch & Ledger Island Visitors

304 Public Recreation Program Participants

2024 Financials



| REVENUE | |
|------------------------|-----------------|
| Program Services | 33% \$1,159,912 |
| Donations | 30% \$1,071,637 |
| Grants | 26% \$905,552 |
| Other | 7% \$243,079 |
| Interest and Dividends | 4% \$134,310 |



| EXPENSES | |
|----------------------------|-----------------|
| Program Services | 78% \$2,541,226 |
| General and Administrative | 14% \$464,753 |
| Fundraising | 8% \$250,383 |

The financial information included in this report is from the Audited Financial Consolidated Statement of Activities for the year ended December 31, 2024.

Scan QR code to view the River Parkway Trust's Audited Financials and Form 990 or visit our website:

<https://riverparkway.org/what-we-do/irs-form-990>



Stories That Take Root

Where Stories and Stewardship Meet

When Lindsay joined the River Parkway Trust as an AmeriCorps Climate Action Corps (CCAC) Fellow, she brought a mix of energy, curiosity, and passion for storytelling. With degrees in English and Geography, she came to the fellowship with a deep interest in the stories we tell about the land and nature, especially how those stories shape our sense of place and responsibility.

Over the past year, Lindsay became a key part of the Trust's climate resilience work, coordinating hundreds of volunteers supporting habitat restoration, invasive species removal, food waste recovery, and pollinator species planting along the Parkway. Thanks to her efforts, there is now a volunteer opportunity nearly every weekend. Lindsay's passion for community building shines brightest when she's out on the land talking with volunteers. She says that hearing why people come out to give



their time has been one of the most rewarding parts of the role. "Everyone has a different story about why this work matters to them," she shared. "I love that I get to be part of those moments."

This is Lindsay's second year as a Climate Action Fellow, but her first with the River Parkway Trust. She remembers pulling into the River Center for her interview and thinking, "Oh, I definitely want to work here." After totaling up the impact of her work, we discovered that Lindsay doubled the number of volunteers involved with River Parkway Trust projects during her year of service.

As Lindsay's fellowship came to a close at the end of August, we're incredibly grateful for the care, curiosity, and creativity she's brought in support of the Parkway. Her passion has helped shape not only our volunteer program but the community that surrounds it.



Thank You to Our 2024 Parkway Sponsors



Thank You to Our Donors

The River Parkway Trust relies on the generosity of people like you to help create the Parkway and provide outdoor programs for all. You can donate today by returning the enclosed envelope, calling 559-248-8480, or by visiting our website www.riverparkway.org.



- \$150,000+ LIFETIME DONORS**
- We'd like to thank these individual donors who have generously supported the River Parkway Trust through the years.*
- Frank and Florence Caglia Family
Dr. Virginia S. Eaton
Mary and Gerald Finch
George and Jackie Folsom
Paul Gibson and Joan Eaton
Roger and Terry Gaspey
Coke and James Hallowell
Sharon Hanley
Margaret Hunsberger
Margaret and Roger Jensen
Dr. and Mrs. Arthur Jing
J.P. Lamborn Company, John and Pam Lamborn
Norman and Nancy Liddell
Edward K. Martin Trust
Jim and Carrie Moen
Edward B. Morgan and Alicia Bennett
The Everett Rank Sr. Family
Bud and Evelyn Rank
Thomas and Louise Richardson
Joseph T. Ring
The Slater Family
Rolein Smith
W.E. and Anna Wattenbarger
Raymond and Oweta Wicks
- \$1,000+**
Dave and Sharon Koehler
Kathleen Lopes
Wendell Lum
Joanna McCloskey-Dalldorf
Robert McParland
Brian Miller and Dora Lau
Gail Newel and Kelli Beingsser
Carolyn Nolan
Gary and Leilani Overstreet
Michael and Ellen Patton
William and Karen Podolsky
Joan Poss
Dr. Leah Press and Dr. Scott Ahles
Gene and Doris Rose
Oscar and Marcia Sablan
Laura Sanford
Susan and Newton Seiden
Bill and Judy Seiler
Frances Scuite and Ed Wilson
Courtney Turner
Shirley Valett
Nichole and Timothy Walsh
Rosemary and Jerry Waters
Gene and Barbara Zellmer
Nyla and Michael Zender
Marilyn Ziterkopf
- \$500+**
David Allen
Jacinta Amaral and Thomas Breen
Murat Arslanoglu
Nancy Baker
Robert and Terry Bavin
Anne Betancourt
Gail Beyer
F. Thomas Biglione
William Bissell
Nancy Blankinship
James Cardella
Angelica and Richard Carpenter
Ryan and Rosie Commons
Robert Croeni and Lauri Robinson
Kaye Cummings
Kathryn De Fede
Celeste Demonte and Neal Howard
Beth Dooley and Tom Williams
Michael and Dolores Elkins
Marcia and Ted Falk
- \$25,000+**
Pat Furman
Jan and William Thompson
- \$20,000+**
Ann Reimers Foundation
California Coastal Commission
California State University, Fresno Foundation
Central Valley Regional Center, Inc.
J.P. Lamborn Co.
Lance-Kashian and Company
Leon S. Peters Foundation
Valley Children's Healthcare
Vulcan Materials Company
- \$10,000+**
Earth Funeral Group
Educational Employees Credit Union
Gavin Gladding Foundation
Land Trust Alliance
Morgan Stanley
Schwab Charitable
US Bank
- \$5,000+**
CalViva Health
Charles McClurray Co.
Charles Schwab
Department Of Conservation, Division of Land Protection
Department of Fish & Wildlife
Fidelity Brokerage Services
McCrea Foundation
N.F. Davis Drier & Elevator, Inc.
National Financial Services LLC
Vanguard
YourCause, LLC Trustee for PG&E
- \$2,500+**
Colibri Ecological Consulting
E & J Gallo Winery
Firebaugh Rotary Club
Hedrick's Chevrolet
Provost & Pritchard Engineering
- \$1,000+**
The Bertha and John Garabedian Charitable Foundation
Milano Restaurants Int'l, Inc.
San Joaquin Running
TechBridge Girls
West Hills Community College Foundation
American Century Investments
Coleman Farming
Falcon Financial & Insurance Solutions, Inc.
Hammonds Ranch, Inc.
Johanson Transportation Svc.
L.J. Farming
LPL Financial
Manco Abbott, Inc.
Michael Giffen Ranch, Inc.
Mid Valley Disposal
Natural Resources Group Inc.
S&K Cages Farms
Sierra Pacific Orthopedics, Connor Telles MD, Spine Surgery
Zimmerman Therapy Group
- \$500+**
Arme-Harvey Family Foundation
Facility Designs
Fast Trak Fabrication
Ford Financial Group
Fresno Folklore Society
K. Arakelian Foundation
Merrill Lynch, Pierce, Fenner, & Smith
North Fresno Lions Club
Peri & Sons Farms
- 2024 AGENCIES, BUSINESSES, FOUNDATIONS, AND ORGANIZATIONS SUPPORTING THE RIVER PARKWAY TRUST**
- We're grateful to these agencies, businesses, foundations, and organizations that supported the River Parkway Trust between January and December 2024.*
- \$100,000+**
Fidelity Charitable
State of California, San Joaquin River Conservancy
State Of California, Wildlife Conservation Board
- 2024 DONATIONS RECEIVED IN MEMORY OF THESE INDIVIDUALS**
- Nancy Blankinship
Sheri Bohigian
Patricia Jane Uriarte Beye
Elizabeth and Brent Demonte
Lewis and Virginia Eaton
Siran Erysan
Jackie Folsom
Mary Ellen Graham
James Hallowell
Rose and Ted Howard
Patricia Neppel
Robbie and John Pillo
Clare Lauche Porter
Marshall Saunders
Harold and Barbara Tokmajian
Victor Torrez
Jane Worsley