

Fact Sheet

AB 1716 (McCarty & Cooley): Lower American River Conservancy

SUMMARY:

This bill would create a state conservancy for the Lower American River.

BACKGROUND:

The American River is vitally important to the people, economy and culture of Sacramento and West Sacramento. Since its founding in 1848, the American River has been a defining element of the Sacramento region.

The American River Parkway is a shining example of how an urban river can be utilized for public good, while still maintaining its environmental integrity. The Parkway encompasses 5,000 acres of riverfront accessible only by cyclists and pedestrians. Approximately 8 million people visit the American River Parkway each year and it generates an estimated \$364 million annually for the local economy. In a poll conducted in 2006, 80% of respondents listed the development of large habitats for walking, hiking and cycling as their top priority for how public dollars are spent.

Urban rivers are essential tools to promote the health and welfare of a modern city. This includes the benefits of physical exercise such as running, walking, hiking, swimming and cycling along the river. It also has been shown that spending time in nature is highly beneficial to mental health by reducing stress and promoting well-being.

In addition to bike and pedestrian use, the parkway provides an opportunity for citizens to appreciate the beauty of the natural habitat of the Rivers and the need to invest restoration for riparian and floodplain habitat. Investments in riparian and floodplain habitats have the added benefit of protecting surrounding areas against flood and improve water quality for downstream users.

State conservancies provide a framework for enhancing and protecting natural lands and waterways, in a way that provides a benefit to all Californians.

SOLUTION:

This bill would create a new state conservancy with a 15 member board, with the goal of enhancing and protecting the natural habitat and water conveyance of the American river.

Examples of conservancy projects:

- Water quality improvements
- Habitat restoration
- Improving Access
- Educational Installations
- Storm water capture
- Riparian restoration

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