

# WATERSHED

E-NEWS Summer 2013

## FRIENDS OF THE SANTA CLARA RIVER

Friends of the Santa Clara River is a non-profit, public interest organization dedicated to the protection, enhancement and management of the resources of the Santa Clara River, which flows approximately 100 miles from Acton, California to the Pacific Ocean. The Santa Clara watershed is the largest natural river system remaining in Southern California, and the river was selected by American Rivers in 2005 as one of the nation's most endangered.

### ❖ In this issue

### ❖ FRIENDS MAKES IT THROUGH 20 YEARS!



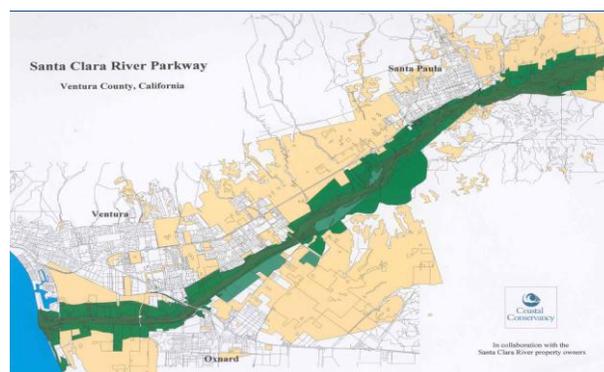
## FRIENDS OF THE SANTA CLARA RIVER OBSERVES ITS 20<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY THIS SUMMER

Friends of the Santa Clara River was formed during a meeting of various enviros from all along the river in June 1993. These included representatives of the Sierra Club, the Ventura County Environmental Coalition, Keep the Sespe Wild Committee, California native Plant Society, Ventura Audubon Society, Surfrider Foundation, and the Santa Clarita Organization for Planning and the Environment, among others. Interest in forming such an organization arose after it was realized that a major river planning effort was underway and that the steering committee did not contain a single member from any environmental group.

The Santa Clara River Enhancement and Management Plan began as a joint effort of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Ventura County Watershed Protection District (then known as the Flood Protection District). The steering committee originally was made up of members of federal, state and county agencies, cities along the river, and representatives from private property groups. After two tries, FSCR was finally approved for membership on the steering committee by then Ventura County Supervisor Maggie Kildee.



What followed was a 12-year effort involving uncounted meetings of the steering committee and six subcommittees, including Flood Protection, Biological Resources, Water Resources, Aggregate Mining, Agriculture and Recreation. Although the plan was never approved by all of the agencies involved, and has been only partially implemented, it served to familiarize our organization with the many issues on the river and gave us a chance to know and understand the concerns of the various agencies and groups involved. It also spawned the Santa Clara River Parkway ([www.santaclarariverparkway.org](http://www.santaclarariverparkway.org)) by the State Coastal Conservancy. We hope to give our readers a full update of the Parkway project in an upcoming issue of the newsletter.



## Some highlights along the way:

- Restored 80 acres of the Hedrick Ranch Nature Area to native habitats. This was a volunteer-based effort and was heavily supported by members of the Ventura County Audubon Society. During the 2010 nesting season, we counted 74 active nests of the endangered least Bell's vireo at HRNA.
- Conducted a volunteer-based water quality monitoring effort from 2004 to 2007 along the entire length of the river in support of the Nitrogen TMDL (Total Maximum Daily Load).
- Performed outreach to the public, including innumerable slide presentations and tabling at various venues along the river, including 17 years participation in the Patagonia-sponsored 5K Salmon Run. We were fortunate enough to receive the proceeds of this event one year, which draws 400 runners.
- Successfully opposed (so far) two ranchette development projects in tributaries of the river that threatened major wildlife corridors. This type of development remains a threat to biological resources and wildlife corridors throughout the watershed. We intend to watch closely for further project proposals.
- Successfully (so far) opposed several large development projects in the floodplain of the river, including Los Angeles County's massive Newhall Ranch Project, which was originally slated to break ground in 1998. There are currently three active lawsuits against this potentially most damaging of projects, with one more anticipated.
- Worked continuously to promote restoration of fish passage in the river. This has primarily involved support of plans to modify the Freeman Diversion Dam near Santa Paula (the only dam on the main stem) that blocks upstream migration of the endangered southern steelhead trout. We have also supported efforts and expended funds for analysis of ways to improve fish passage in Santa Paula, Sespe, and Piru Creeks. The recent formation of the Santa Clara River Steelhead Coalition will provide coordination and a needed boost in support of fish passage work.
- Achieved recognition by American Rivers, which in 2005 named the Santa Clara as one of the ten most endangered rivers in the United States.



All of this work could never have been accomplished without the steady financial support of our members and donors. On this 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary, we extend our sincere appreciation to all of you who have supported our work over the years. You keep us going. **Thank you!!!**