

*El Dorado County
River Management Plan
5-year Summary 2025
DRAFT*



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El Dorado County River Management Plan

5-Year Summary

INTRODUCTION

The River Management Plan (RMP) was developed to manage use of the South Fork of the American River that flows within the boundaries of the County of El Dorado and adjacent land. The plan was designed to monitor and evaluate use within and along the river in order to minimize impacts to the environment and private landowners.

The RMP specifies that the annual reports be compiled every 5th year, along with County staff recommendations, for submission to the Parks and Recreation Commission (PRC) for input and comments. All input and comments from the PRC then go to the Planning Commission. All staff recommendations, including comments generated by the PRC and Planning Commission are submitted to the Board of Supervisors for review and consideration. The Board of Supervisors has the authority to determine whether to continue implementation of the existing RMP as prescribed, continue implementation of the RMP with minor modifications or to update the RMP. (Section IV of the RMP provides the guidance for annual and 5-year reports.)

In 2018 a comprehensive update to the RMP was adopted and began implementation in 2019.

This summary will focus on use trends and the results of public involvement opportunities for the period from 2019 through 2023. Recommendations include modifying guide education and etiquette requirements, clarifying Flex Permits, clarify language related to Group or Pod sizes, streamline the permit process regarding transfers and 3-year reviews, and adjusting violation penalties.

RECOMMENDATIONS

As stated in Chapter IV, the RMP is designed to serve as an active, evolving tool that implements the county's river management goals. The five-year periodic review is intended to provide opportunities for ongoing refinement of the RMP in response to the results of annual operations review to ensure public safety, environmental protection, and the most efficient use of County resources. It also provides an opportunity to review the adopted and implemented management actions and impact mitigation measures to ensure that they remain meaningful and responsive to current guidance provided by the Board, the public, advisory committees, and other county departments. The following subjects are presented for the consideration of the Parks and Recreation Commission and for further study:

1. Chapter I, South Fork American River Flow Regime, Operation of SMUD's UARP and PG&E Operation of Chili Bar:

This section needed to be updated to reflect the change in ownership and operation of Chili Bar Dam which is now solely operated by SMUD and no longer has any PG&E involvement.

2. Chapter III, River Management Plan Elements, Element 1, Educational Programs, 1.8 Guide Education Programs, 1.8.2

The county will no longer host a day long pre-season guide orientation workshop each year. Instead, Outfitters will certify their guides have received orientation training including river safety, etiquette, and sensitivity to residents and local merchants.

3. Chapter III, River Management Plan Elements, Element 6, Permits and Requirements, 6.2 Outfitter Requirements: 6.2.1: Annual River Use Permits 6.2.1.1 The term of River Use permit

1.

~~Annual River Use Permits—The Stream and Rivers Commercial Boating Ordinance Chapter 5.48 governs River Use Permit application procedures and standards. The ordinance requires any entity conducting commercial trips on the South Fork to obtain a River Use Permit and requires that such entity meet and follow applicable insurance requirements; provides authority to the Planning Commission to approve River Use Permits for a three-year term; establishes standards for a River Use Permit application, termed the “river use plan”; and establishes a procedure to appeal the decision of the Planning Commission to the County Board of Supervisors.~~

Staff recommends eliminating the three-year term. Permits are reviewed annually and keeping track of separate three-year terms for every outfitter can be unnecessarily time consuming with no direct purpose.

~~This element discusses requirements for outfitter permitting. Specifically, section 6.2.1.3.5 addresses “flex” permits. As stated, the intent of the flex is to allow the smaller outfitters to run somewhat larger and more profitable trips during the peak summer season. However, staff has recently encountered questions of who may hold and use flex permits as well as the size of such trips on a given day throughout the season. It is important that the rules stated in the RMP and implemented through the program are fair and meet the intent of restricting the number of users on the river on each day. Staff intends to consult the river community, including the commercial outfitters to clarify practices and introduce the possibility of text edits to the RMP in order to eliminate interpretations of the regulations that do not meet the intent.~~

4. Chapter III, River Management Plan Elements, Element 6, Permits and Requirements, 6.2 Outfitter Requirements: 6.2.1: Annual River Use Permits, 6.2.1.3 River Use Permit Allocation 6.2.1.3.4 “flex” allocation

Staff recommends updating this section to include language stating that Current flex permits will remain, but no new flex permits can be created by lowering permit user days.

5. Chapter III, River Management Plan Elements, Element 6, Permits and Requirements, 6.2 Outfitter Requirements: 6.2.1: Annual River Use Permits, 6.2.1.3 River Use Permit Allocation 6.2.1.3.5 User Days Cannot be loaned or borrowed

Staff recommends that this section is revised to clarify that user days can be transferred (per section 6.2.1.4.2) but cannot be loaned or borrowed.

6. Chapter III, River Management Plan Elements, Element 6, Permits and Requirements, 6.2 Outfitter Requirements: 6.2.1: Annual River Use Permits, 6.2.1.4 River Use Permit Transfers 6.2.1.4.1 For any proposed transfer of a River Use Permit

Staff recommends revising this section to remove the need to go to the Planning Commission and just process the transfer of river use permits ministerially through the Parks Division.

7. Chapter III, River Management Plan Elements, Element 6, Permits and Requirements, 6.2 Outfitter Requirements: 6.2.1: Annual River Use Permits, 6.2.1.4 River Use Permit Transfers 6.2.1.4.2 Consolidation of River Use Permits

Staff recommends that outfitters that hold multiple permits be required to consolidate their permits into a single permit. This would both cut down on staff time to administer permits as well as save outfitters money as there is a \$200 renewal fee they pay on a per permit basis annually to cover staff time spent on renewing said permits.

2.8. Chapter III, River Management Plan Elements, Element 6, Permits and Requirements, 6.2 Outfitter Requirements: 6.2.2: Maximum Group Size

This section regulates boat density on the river. Subsection 6.2.2.1 says, “With the exception of Element 6.2.2.6, the number of boats in each group on the South Fork will be limited to 7 and will not exceed 56 people (passengers, guests, guides) per group. If more than one group is traveling together, each group must have a five-minute period between launches from Chili Bar to below Hospital Bar rapid and when launching trips from other put in’s and lunch stops in between. On the river each group will then stay out of sight of each other (lead boat cannot see last boat from other group).” The commercial outfitters have recently voiced concerns on this rule, especially with regard to large or multiple permits being used simultaneously by a single company. For this issue as well, staff intends to consult the commercial outfitters to clarify practices and possible edit this section of the RMP in order to clarify intent.

~~Staff will incorporate comments on these recommendations from the PRC, as well as include any other issue areas that the PRC may discuss. Staff intends to consult both the Coloma Lotus Advisory Committee (CLAC) and outfitter groups for a discussion of these issues and to refine any recommendations for changes to the RMP. Following these efforts, staff will return to the PRC, and then proceed to the Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors with any recommended changes.~~

9. Chapter III, River Management Plan Elements, Element 6, Permits and Requirements, 6.2 Outfitter Requirements: 6.2.6 County Operating Reports and Fees 6.2.6.1 Enforce the Permit Allocation System 6.2.6.1.4 Fail to deliver an operating report

Staff recommends revising this section to make it clear that payment of user day fees is part of the required monthly operating report and failure to submit payment with the monthly EMOR will result in a class I violation.

10. Chapter III, River Management Plan Elements, Element 6, Permits and Requirements, 6.2 Outfitter Requirements: 6.2.7 Guide Requirements 6.2.7.2 County River Safety and Etiquette Standards

Staff recommends this section be revised to state that Outfitters will be required to sign a statement verifying that their guides will comply with County River Safety and Etiquette Standards and will submit the statement with their annual permit application.

11. Chapter III, River Management Plan Elements, Element 6, Permits and Requirements, 6.2 Outfitter Requirements: 6.2.10 Violations, Penalties, and Appeals 6.2.10.3 Penalty Schedule 6.2.10.3.2 outfitter violations

Staff recommends that we revise four violations to three violations as the number of violations required in any one category to result in a recommendation of suspension of the River Use Permit for up to 10 consecutive days.

12. Chapter III, River Management Plan Elements, Element 6, Permits and Requirements, 6.2 Outfitter Requirements: 6.2.10 Violations, Penalties, and Appeals 6.2.10.4 Class I Violation Appeal Procedures

Staff recommends changing Parks and Trails Hearing Officer in this section to Parks Manager. This has been the County's practice in the past for who an outfitter would submit an appeal of a violation to, this proposed change would just be updating the RMP to reflect that practice.

13. Chapter III, River Management Plan Elements, Element 6, Permits and Requirements, 6.2 Outfitter Requirements: 6.2.10 Violations, Penalties, and Appeals 6.2.10.5 Class II Violation Appeal Procedures

Staff recommends changing Parks and Trails Hearing Officer in this section to Parks Manager. This has been the Counties practice in the past for who an outfitter would submit an appeal of a violation to, this proposed change would just be updating the RMP to reflect that practice.

14. Appendix C, RMP Data and Standards.

Pursuant to discussions with the Outfitters, Staff recommends that updated costs for River Use Application Fees, and the penalty and violation schedules be proposed in the RMP update.

15. Ordinance Chapter 5.48 Streams and Rivers Commercial Boating

Staff recommends changing the river use permits issuance procedure to be conducted by the Parks and Trails Division instead of the Planning Commission, updating the river use permit term from a three-year term to a one-year term, and updating the staff position from County Hearing Officer to the Parks Manager as the staff position that can revoke a river use permit.

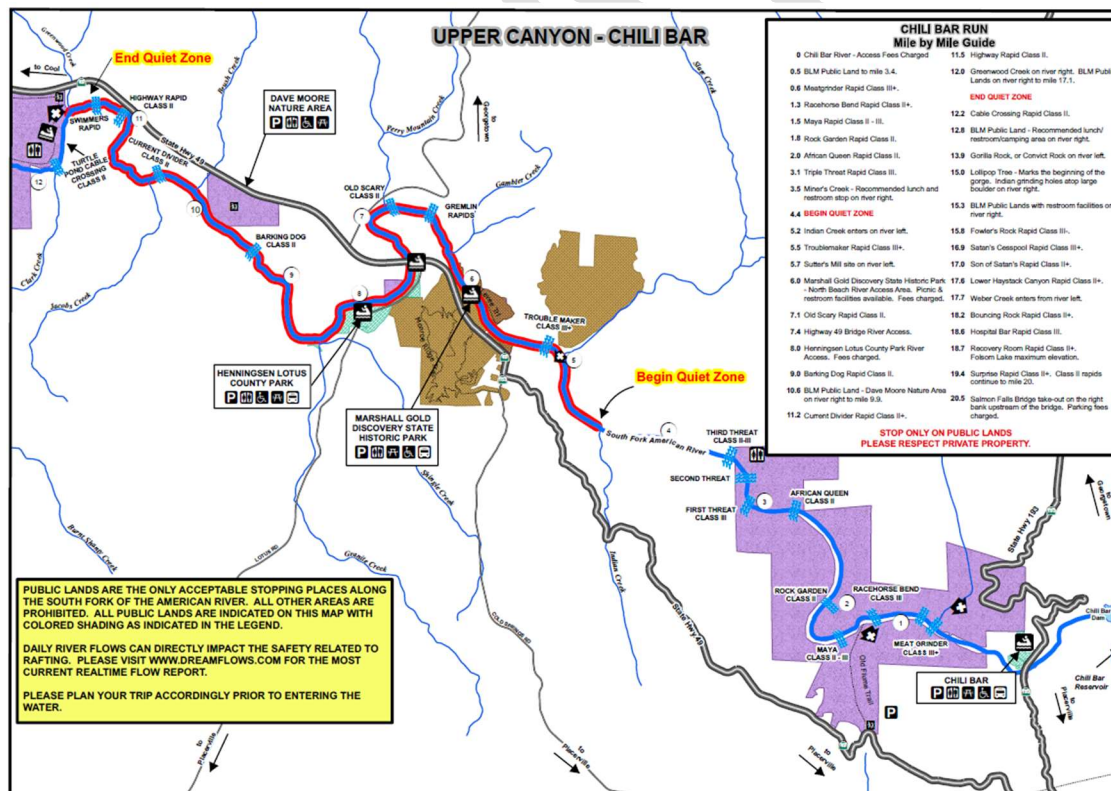
16. Ordinance Chapter 5.50 Specific Use Regulations for the South Fork of the American River

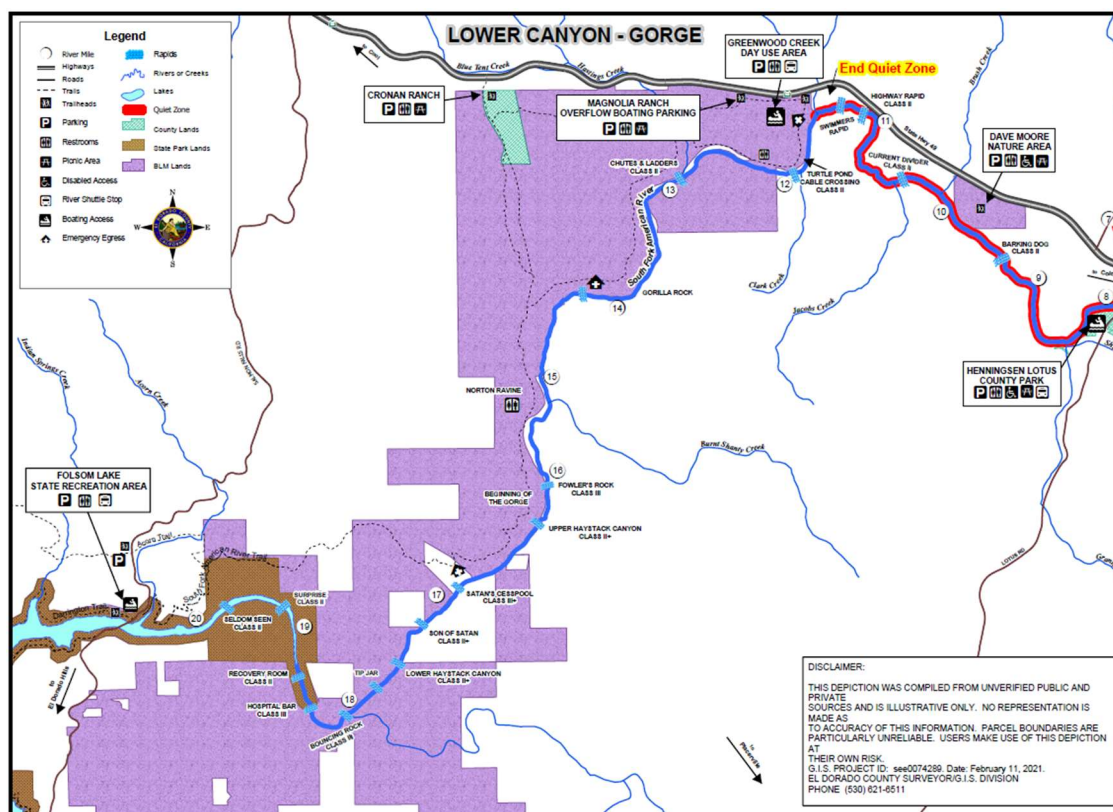
Staff recommends updating the Institutional Group definition to reflect the definition as described in the River Management Plan, which clarifies the meaning of institutional as accredited academic programs and removes the inclusion of nonprofit organizations.

Staff will incorporate comments on these recommendations from the PRC, as well as include any other issue areas that the PRC may discuss. Staff intends to consult both the Coloma Lotus Advisory Committee (CLAC) and outfitter groups for a discussion of these issues and to refine any recommendations for changes to the RMP. Following these efforts, staff will return to the PRC, and then proceed to the Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors with any recommended changes.

PHYSICAL SETTING OF THE RMP PROJECT AREA

The River Management Plan covers the South Fork of the American River from Chili Bar Dam to Folsom Reservoir. This reach continues to be one of the most rafted and kayaked rivers in the State of California. It is approximately 21 miles of exciting whitewater, with annual use averaging well over 100,000 people. The upper section, referred to as “Chili Bar,” starts at Hwy 193. It is about 5-6 miles of class III to III+ rapids. Most private boaters take out at either Marshall Gold State Park, or Henningsen Lotus Park. The middle section of this river, from about river mile 5 thru 11, flows through the Coloma Lotus Valley. Commonly referred to as Coloma to Greenwood or, “C2G”. The Lower section, or “The Gorge” is 8-10 miles depending on access location. This is a very popular section due to its length and fun class III rapids, ending at Folsom Lake. Private boaters take out on river right, above Salmon falls bridge. Commercial raft companies utilize the boat ramp about ½ mile past Salmon Falls bridge on river left.





Adaptive Management

The River Management Plan is designed with an Adaptive Management format and can be amended periodically as conditions or needs change.

In 2018, the County completed a comprehensive update to the 2001 County River Management Plan (RMP). The plan was adopted by the Board of Supervisors (BOS) on February 13, 2018. One ~~notable change~~ notable change with the adoption of the updated RMP, is that Institutional groups are defined as accredited educational organizations. Institutional group must register with the county and provide a post season annual report. The non-profit groups that were working as an Institutional group were required to get a commercial permit. Four of the six non-profits have obtained those permits.

In 2019, The Board of Supervisors rescinded Resolution 065-2002, establishing the RMAC and Resolution 078-2019 established the Coloma Lotus Advisory Committee (CLAC).

Achievements

County staff maintained a presence on the river for the purpose of water safety education and to conduct boat counts in compliance with Element 1 and 4 of the RMP. Staff on the river were identified as “River Patrol” in the past, which portrayed staff as having an enforcement role. In

2019 the county job title “River Patrol” was changed to “River Instructors”. Gear and equipment markings were updated with “EDC PARKS” instead of “River Patrol”.

The change defined in the RMP Element ~~6.1.4~~ and 6.1.4 and 6.3.6 for Institutional groups to register and report annually as accredited educational organizations was implemented. Non-Commercial outfitters (non-profits) began to register for permits under the commercial outfitter guidelines. The County had two permits that were vacant from previous years. -Those two permits user days were distributed between the six non-profits, and they are to comply with all commercial requirements. Three of those six non-profits have obtained their permits.

In 2020, due to Covid 19 restrictions, it was estimated that river use would be 20% of normal. Budgeted expenses were reduced, along with anticipated revenues, to ensure river trust funds would not be fully expended and would be available for use in future years. Fewer extra help River Instructors were ~~hired~~ hired, and an emphasis was placed on boater education at river access points, focusing on quiet zone, life jackets and river use monitoring. River use was approved in June of 2020 to resume with safety precautions and river use was above the estimated 20%. New safety signage was planned for 2021 roll-out. (Appendix A)

2021 saw the implementation of goals from 2020. Safety education signs were created and installed at various locations including Chili Bar, Marshall Gold Park and Henningsen Lotus Park. The boat ramp area was expanded, and signage was installed to delineate the ramp area.

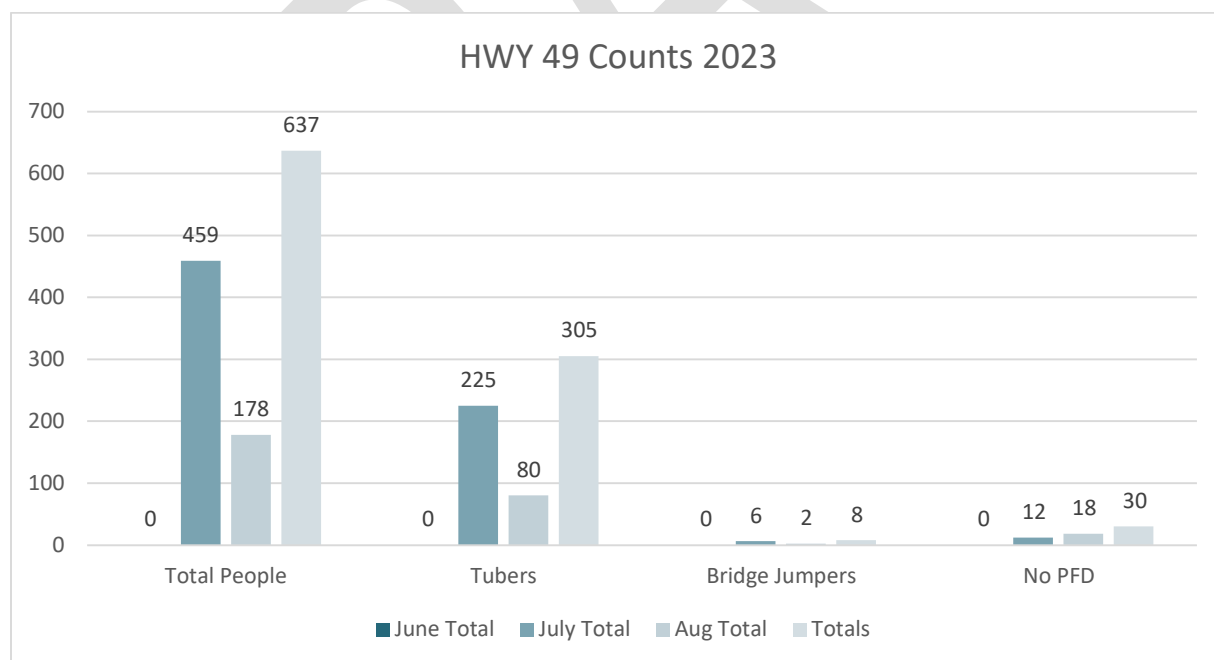
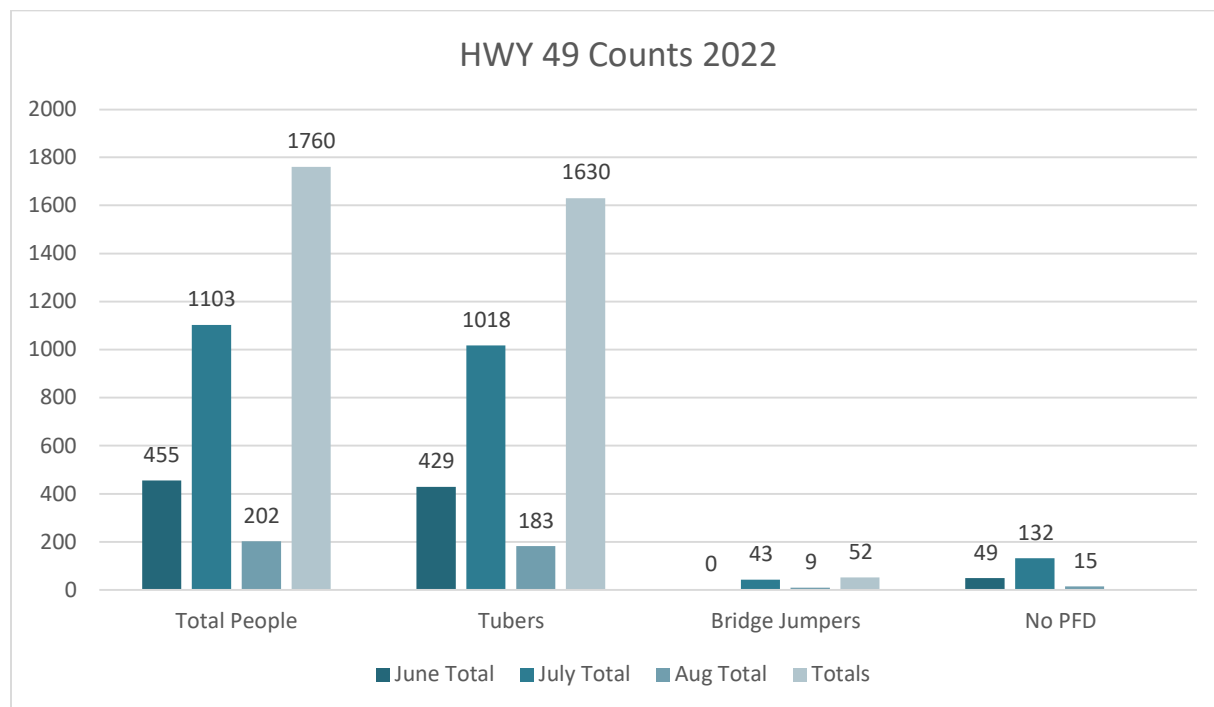
In 2022 staff conducted extensive tuber counts and continue public interaction promoting safety. County staff also refurbished the North Beach kiosk at Marshall Gold State Park with a new roof, paint and river map. (Appendix A) ~~Staff built~~ Staff built high top serving tables to be installed for outfitters lunch stops. State Parks installed the tables in Spring of ~~2023~~ 2023, and they received positive feedback from outfitters lunching at ~~Marshall State park~~ Marshall State Park. (Appendix A)

The Boat Ramp signs made a difference in managing rafts putting in and taking out at Henningsen Lotus Park. Unfortunately, many signs were destroyed or missing after the flood at the end of the year.

The county acquired a new ~~c~~ Eataraft to replace the prior one which was acquired in 1998. The county refurbished the dilapidated raft trailer making it much easier for staff. (Appendix A)

2023 began with record rain due to several atmospheric river events. Henningsen Lotus Park was flooded into most of the parking lot. The well pump house located south of the park was severely damaged. The original safety sign kiosk was also destroyed. Park staff designed and built a new sign kiosk and changed the location and orientation to mitigate the possibility of future flood damage. (Appendix A). New boat room racks were also built for better storage in the boat room. These were painted with the help of a high school student volunteer earning school credit.

River staff participated in a river clean-up along with several of the Outfitters as well as BLM and State Parks. Several truckloads of debris from the flood ~~was~~ were removed from the river.



WATER FLOWS

The flow regime of the South Fork American River between Chili Bar Dam and Folsom Reservoir is highly regulated. During summer and fall (the primary recreation season), flows are the product of river system regulation by SMUD's Upper American River Project (UARP). The sustained high monthly and mean daily flows during August, September, and October result primarily from reservoir regulation and import to the South Fork basin by the UARP.

The precipitation for 2019 ended up being above average for the water year. As of May 1st, the yearly precipitation was 125% of normal.

The precipitation for 2020 ended up being below average for the water year. As of May 1st, the yearly precipitation was 70 percent of normal, a decrease from 125 percent at the same time last year.

The precipitation for 2021 ended up being dramatically below average for the water year. As of May 1st, the yearly precipitation was 50 percent of normal, a decrease from 70 percent at the same time last year.

In 2022 precipitation was a below normal water year resulting in about 75 percent of average.

October saw a significant increase in weather which contributed to a better water year.

At the beginning of 2023 several atmospheric rivers led to record flows over 150 percent of average. That resulted in ~~made~~ 2023 being designated as a w~~W~~et year.

Below is a graph showing minimum recreation flows based on water year type.

Release Schedule based on Water Year type

South Fork American River Below Chili Bar Reservoir Dam Minimum Recreational Flow by Water Year (cfs)								
WATER YEAR TYPE	PERIOD	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
Super Dry	April - Memorial Day	3 Hrs @ 1300					3 Hrs @ 1300	3 Hrs @ 1300
	Memorial Day - Labor Day	3 Hrs @ 1300			3 Hrs @ 1300	3 Hrs @ 1300	5 Hrs @ 1300	5 Hrs @ 1300
	Labor Day - September						3 Hrs @ 1300	3 Hrs @ 1300
	October - March						3 Hrs @ 1300	
Critically Dry	March - Memorial Day	3 Hrs @ 1300					3 Hrs @ 1300	3 Hrs @ 1300
	Memorial Day - Labor Day	3 Hrs @ 1300			3 Hrs @ 1300	3 Hrs @ 1300	5 Hrs @ 1500	5 Hrs @ 1500
	Labor Day - September					3 Hrs @ 1300	3 Hrs @ 1300	3 Hrs @ 1300
	October - February						3 Hrs @ 1300	
Dry	March - Memorial Day	3 Hrs @ 1300	3 Hrs @ 1300			3 Hrs @ 1300	3 Hrs @ 1500	3 Hrs @ 1500
	Memorial Day - Labor Day	3 Hrs @ 1300	3 Hrs @ 1300		3 Hrs @ 1300	3 Hrs @ 1300	5 Hrs @ 1500	5 Hrs @ 1500
	Labor Day - September					3 Hrs @ 1300	3 Hrs @ 1300	3 Hrs @ 1300
	October - February						3 Hrs @ 1300	3 Hrs @ 1300
Below Normal	March - Memorial Day	3 Hrs @ 1300	3 Hrs @ 1300		3 Hrs @ 1300	3 Hrs @ 1300	3 Hrs @ 1500	3 Hrs @ 1500
	Memorial Day - Labor Day	3 Hrs @ 1300	3 Hrs @ 1300		3 Hrs @ 1300	3 Hrs @ 1300	6 Hrs @ 1500	6 Hrs @ 1500
	Labor Day - September				3 Hrs @ 1300	3 Hrs @ 1300	3 Hrs @ 1500	3 Hrs @ 1500
	October	3 Hrs @ 1300				3 Hrs @ 1300	3 Hrs @ 1500	3 Hrs @ 1500
Above Normal	November - February						3 Hrs @ 1300	3 Hrs @ 1300
	March - Memorial Day	3 Hrs @ 1300	3 Hrs @ 1300	3 Hrs @ 1300	3 Hrs @ 1300	3 Hrs @ 1300	4 Hrs @ 1750	4 Hrs @ 1750
	Memorial Day - Labor Day	3 Hrs @ 1500	3 Hrs @ 1500	3 Hrs @ 1500	3 Hrs @ 1500	3 Hrs @ 1500	6 Hrs @ 1750	6 Hrs @ 1750
	Labor Day - September				3 Hrs @ 1500	3 Hrs @ 1500	3 Hrs @ 1500	3 Hrs @ 1500
Wet	October	3 Hrs @ 1300				3 Hrs @ 1300	3 Hrs @ 1500	3 Hrs @ 1500
	November - February						3 Hrs @ 1500	3 Hrs @ 1500
	March - Memorial Day	3 Hrs @ 1500	3 Hrs @ 1500	3 Hrs @ 1500	3 Hrs @ 1500	3 Hrs @ 1500	6 Hrs @ 1750	6 Hrs @ 1750
	Memorial Day - Labor Day	4 Hrs @ 1500	4 Hrs @ 1500	4 Hrs @ 1500	4 Hrs @ 1500	4 Hrs @ 1500	6 Hrs @ 1750	6 Hrs @ 1750
	Labor Day - September				3 Hrs @ 1500	3 Hrs @ 1500	3 Hrs @ 1500	3 Hrs @ 1500
	October					3 Hrs @ 1300	3 Hrs @ 1500	3 Hrs @ 1500
	November - February						3 Hrs @ 1500	3 Hrs @ 1500

RIVER USE

Spring runoff (snowmelt) behind dams that control the river level on the South Fork usually begins in May. Whitewater flows on the river have only been available consistently from year to year because of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) licenses' minimum recreational water flow requirements.

The South Fork between Chili Bar Dam and Folsom Lake is generally broken down to three sections. The Upper, or Chili Bar run, is Chili Bar put-in at Hwy 193 to Coloma. Boaters usually take out at either Marshall State Park or Henningsen Lotus Park. This stretch is about 6-8 miles, depending on where you take out. The Upper section is rated at class III+. This section is a popular run for kayakers and rafters. It is not recommended for Tubers.

The Coloma to Greenwood Creek section (C2G) is about 5 miles of class II. The C2G reach in the Coloma Lotus Valley continues to be a popular section of the river. Many types of boaters utilize this section of river, including rafters, kayakers, Stand up Paddle boards (SUP's). Along with downriver floats, many skills classes and trainings are given by permitted outfitters. Usage includes multiple runs, use during minimal flow and non-scheduled release days. Many people also access alternative put-ins and take-outs such as private landowners or at Hwy 49 bridge.

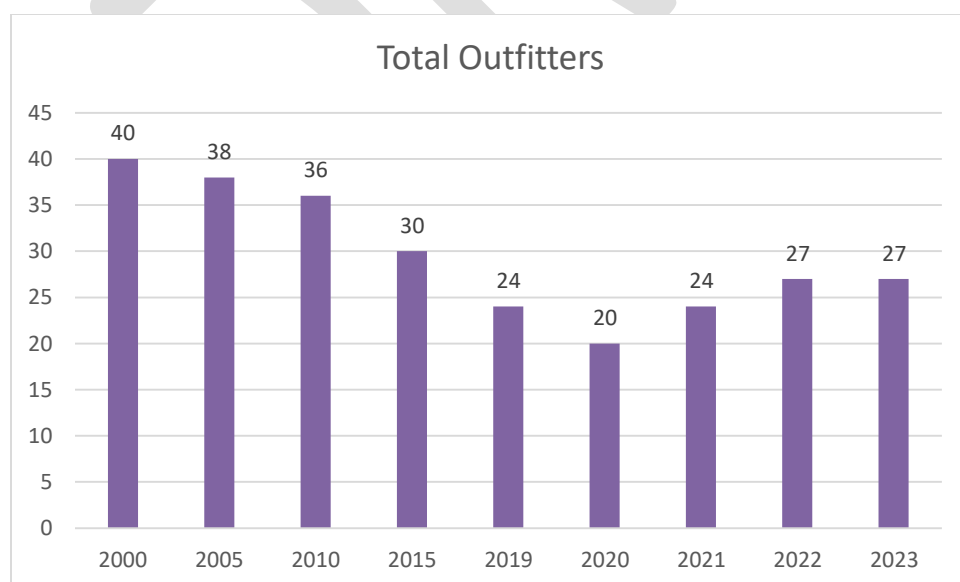
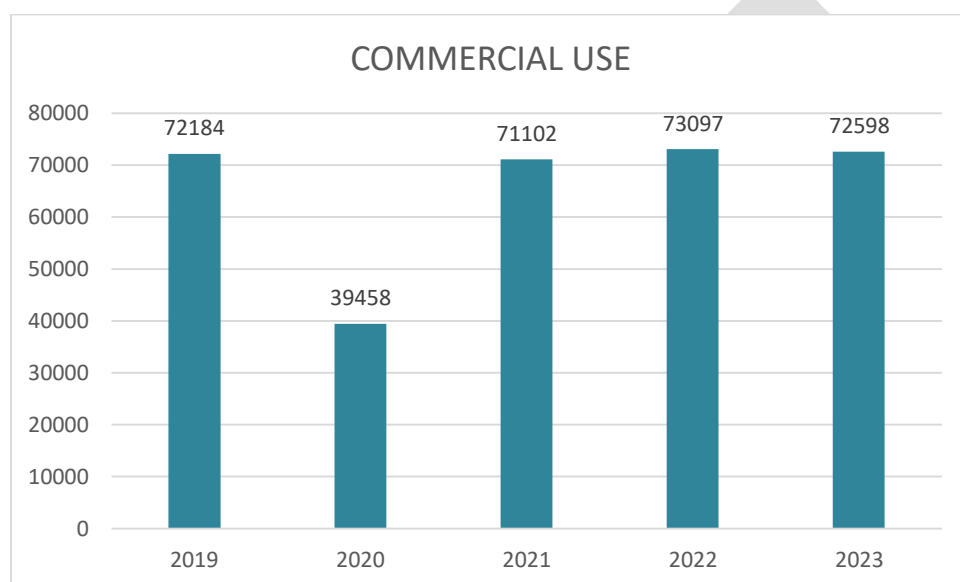
The Lower section, or Gorge run, is generally from Greenwood Creek to Salmon Falls at Folsom Lake. Many rafters will put in at Henningsen Lotus Park or another easier river access due to Greenwood Creek being a difficult trek from the parking area. This section is about 9 miles if starting at Greenwood Creek.

RIVER USE PREFERENCES

Preferences vary depending on type of use. Many rafters prefer the lower section because it is longer and has a fair number of exciting rapids. Kayakers tend to favor the upper run for its more technical type features including surf waves and eddies. Tubers utilize the section between Marshall Gold State Park and Henningsen Lotus Park which is about 2 miles with only two significant rapids (Gremlin and Old Scary). In recent years Stand up Paddle boards (SUPS) have become more popular. This type of craft tends to stay in the Class II sections (C2G) although some of the more experienced brave the harder Class III upper and lower section. Another craft gaining popularity is the inflatable Pack Raft. With its light weight and smaller learning curve, many boaters are enjoying its versatility.

OUTFITTER USE

Commercial Outfitter use has been fairly consistent with the exception of 2020, which saw a significant drop in clients due to Covid 19 restrictions. Averaging about 72,000 users over the past 5 years. However, the total number of Outfitters has decreased with the trend of larger outfitters holding multiple permits. Of the original 79 permits created, only 46 are currently active. That is including the 6 permits allocated to Non-Profit organizations. The total number of passengers since 2000 is shown below. The lowest numbers in 2019 and 2020 are also due to Covid 19. The Total Outfitters graph indicates the downward trend of outfitters holding permits since 2000. The year 2020 several outfitters didn't renew permits also due to Covid.



INSTITUTIONAL GROUP USE

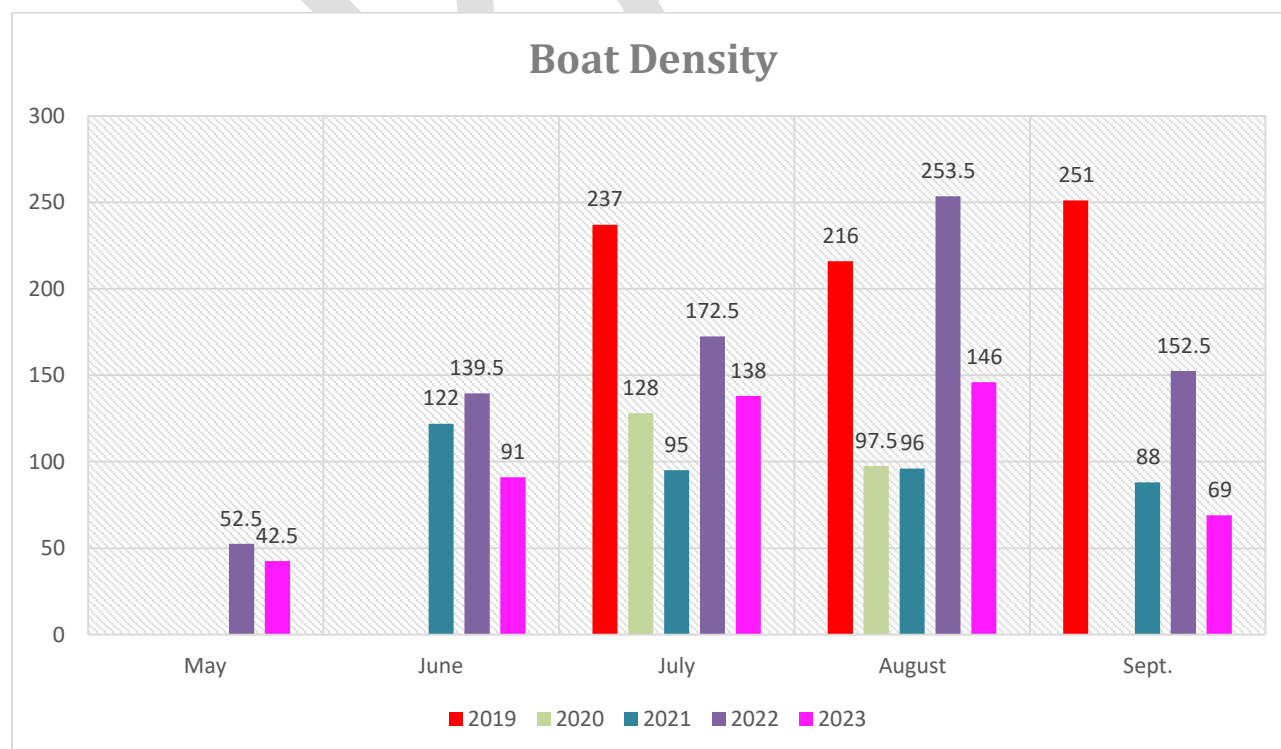
Only organizations teaching accredited educational courses are able to continue to register as Institutional Groups per the updated RMP. Staff worked with the nonprofit groups (previously identified as institutional groups) to meet the requirement for commercial use. Four of the six non-profit groups obtained their commercial permit in 2023.

BOAT DENSITY

The boat density safety measures aim to prevent boating safety hazards from occurring due to boat congestion on weekends. In the event boat counts exceed a “density threshold”, the County will implement management actions to address density and associated safety issues on the South Fork as specified in Element 7 of the RMP.

Boat density measurements come from taking an aggregate total of all rafts, kayaks, inflatable kayaks, and inner tubes, paddleboards, or similar flotation devices. The sources of data utilized for estimating river use were boat counts completed as identified in Appendix C of the RMP, page 94. Density Threshold: 300 boats in 2 hours (based on ¼ hour increments and a rolling 2-hour period) at Meatgrinder, Troublemaker, Barking Dog, Fowlers Rock or Satan’s Cesspool rapids on two days during any one season. Two kayaks are equal to one boat for the purposes of determining boat density.

During this 5-year reporting period Boat Density was not ~~exceeded~~exceeded, and no additional measures were needed. The graph below indicates highest counts each month per year.



COUNTY STAFF ACTIVITIES

In 2019 the staff designations changed from “River Patrol” to “River Instructor”. This was done to reflect the position as an educational rather than enforcement role. Also, the River Recreation Supervisor position was vacated, and the remaining staff reported to the Parks Manager. The River Recreation Supervisor was changed to an Administrative Technician and a ~~position~~ position of the “Parks Program Coordinator” was created to oversee the River and Rubicon programs.

Covid 19 greatly affected the Parks River Program staffing in 2020. Due to projected reduction in revenue, hiring was reduced to just two personnel, and further reduced to one River Instructor by midseason.

By 2021 Covid restrictions were relaxed, and outfitters were able to resume operations with some Covid protocols in place. The newer position of Parks Program Coordinator was filled, and two River Instructors were hired. Staff addressed Boat Ramp issues by widening the launch area and created signage to designate the area.

Regular duties and activities throughout the 5-year period for staff include:

- Emphasized controlling quiet zone noise, use of public lands, litter education, and use of life jackets by all boaters and inner tubers; dealt with ongoing concerns of the public.
- Provided boating safety, boater responsibilities, private property education, river etiquette, leave no trace education, and river flow information at river accesses and on the river.
- Stocked kiosks with waterproof river maps that provide boaters with the locations of restrooms, put-ins and take-outs, quiet zone locations, names of rapids with public and private land designations, agency and campground phone numbers, and a boating safety checklist.
- Assisted law enforcement, upon request.
- Educated tubers on river safety and life jackets in the C2G section.
- Regulate commercial use in the quiet zone for compliance.
- Provided safety information to people floating/boating on the class II section.
- Boat counts as identified in the RMP for carrying capacity. ([Appendix B](#))
- Water samples as identified in the RMP. ([Appendix B](#))
- Reported permitted outfitter violations to administration for processing as identified in the RMP.

EL DORADO COUNTY LAW ENFORCEMENT

The County Sheriff has the authority to issue citations for both State and County life jacket violations along with other related County Ordinances, such as private boater violations of the quiet zone, jumping off the bridges and the use of glass beverage containers within 100 feet of the water. California State Parks and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) rangers also occasionally patrol this section of the river.

In 2019 the Sheriff deputies performed several search and rescue operations along the shore of the river for boaters that left their rafts voluntarily and were assisted to safety via a land route. There was one probable drowning death reported on the patrolled section of the South Fork. The incident involved a swimmer who was not wearing a PFD. The Sheriff's Office Dive Team and Unmanned Aerial Drone team performed an extensive search. The victim's partial remains were found in 2021 several miles down river from the point last seen.

In 2020 deputies responded to several calls for service which ranged from a several missing rafters/ swimmers, arguments, and a drown subject, who was later found at Folsom Lake. Deputies issued 29 safety advisements/ warnings.

As mentioned before, partial remains were found in 2021. Park staff assisted the deputy with the recovery. The sheriff department also gave 6 citations for jumping from Hwy 49 bridge and multiple responses at Henningsen Lotus Park for drinking, fighting, abandoned vehicles, lost children, dogs off leash and reckless vehicle operations.

During the 2022 rafting season, EDSO Deputy Sheriff patrolled the South Fork of the American River from Chili Bar to Folsom Lake on a river raft. He spent in excess of 395 hours on the river. He didn't issue any citations, but had about 400+ contacts with the public, which were educational or enforcement in nature. These included advisements on PFDs, navigation, safety, ordinance (glass containers, bridge jumping, trespassing), reckless behavior, intoxication, and inappropriate behavior. There was also one body recovery. A hiker fell into the water at Satan's Cesspool Class 3+ rapid and subsequently drown. The recovery was made by river patrol in a cataract with assistance from the El Dorado County Parks & Recreation River Aides.

During the 2023 rafting season, an El Dorado County Sheriff ~~Deputy patrolled~~ Deputy patrolled the South Fork of the American River from Chili Bar to Folsom Lake on a river raft. He spent more than 330 hours on the river. This total does not include the time spent on equipment maintenance, reporting, training, etc. He had about 430 contacts with the public, advising on PFD use, bridge jumping, glass containers and inappropriate behavior. The deputy had 59 citizen assists, 110 Public Relations Events, 15 vessel assists and issued 2 citations for no PFD. He also had 2 rescues: the first at Satan's cesspool due to a rafter with an injured arm and the second was a kayaker stranded at the island at Old Scary Rapid. County river staff assisted with both cases.

OUTFITTER VIOLATIONS

There are two violation classes. Class I violations include: Not respecting the Quiet Zone, exceeding maximum group size, operating after sunset, improper boat markings, late Operating report submission, unauthorized land use and exceeding permit capacities.

Class II violations include: Improper sale, loaning, borrowing or transfer of user days, improper consolidation, transfer, and adjustment requirements for River use Permits, Insurance requirements and fraudulent reporting of user days.

There were no violations issued in 2019 or 2020 although there were a few complaints regarding commercial trips stopping on private property and being loud in the quiet zones.

County Parks issued 7 violations in 2021.

1. 4 issued for Pod size violation with 1 violation overturned after appeal
2. 3 issued for unmarked boats
3. 1 issued for late reporting

In 2022 only 2 violations were issued. A pod size violation and unmarked boat violation.

In 2023 4 violations were issued for pod size. County staff also cautioned outfitters to be careful about following too close.

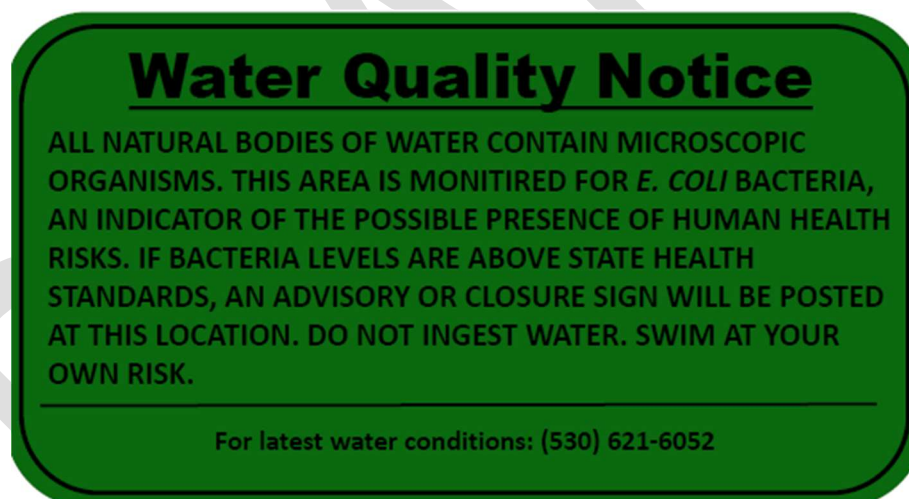
WATER QUALITY

Water test results are reported to the County Environmental Management Department in accordance with RMP section 4.4. Environmental Management monitors the water sample results and informs the Parks Division if action is needed. Water samples are taken the first week between the months of May through September. Sample locations are the Nugget Campground above Chili Bar, North Beach at Marshall Gold State Park, Henningsen Lotus Park, Greenwood Creek and Salmon Falls. Total Coliform and E. coli is measured by an approved laboratory. Coliform above 2400 MPN (Most Probable Number) and E. coli above 200 MPN will trigger additional testing and public notice or possible beach closure.

Additional sampling has occurred as requested by County Environmental Management. During this 5-year period (2019 – 2023) there has been several instances where high levels of total Coliform and E. Coli was detected. It was determined the timing of when the samples are taken greatly affect the test results. Samples taken after low water days tend to have a higher test result. Low water days are defined as days without a scheduled release based on the water year type. Also, the geese population tends to concentrate at specific areas near sampling locations. Staff determined that taking samples on the second water release day brought the test results into acceptable levels.

When water samples come back with high counts of total Coliform and/or E. Coli, staff working with Environmental Management posts signs and takes direction from Environmental Management. They become the lead department when it comes to public safety with water samples.

Water Quality warning signs



BUDGET

The budget for the Parks River Program is a non-general fund program. The primary source of funding since 1997 is a \$2.00 per guest user fee paid by permitted outfitters. If a fee change ~~is was~~ deemed necessary in the future ~~due, any fee change is subject to it~~ would require additional action and approval by the Board of Supervisors.

Changes to the program made through updating the RMP has the potential to increase or decrease the amount of funding needed to implement the updated RMP.

~~Any funding needs will take into consideration any changes which could increase or decrease the level of funding needed to implement the updated RMP.~~



CLOSING

The River Management Plan is meeting the objectives of managing and monitoring commercial and private boating use on the South Fork American River. With on-going education for the public and working with commercial outfitters, County Staff will continue to follow the RMP. This 5-year summary addresses several issues mentioned earlier in the RMP that need modification or clarification. An outfitters meeting was held March 15, 2024 to get their input on those aforementioned issues. Their comments will be presented to the Parks and Recreation and Planning Commissions, as well as the Board of Supervisors for comments and possible implementation.

Outfitters Comments:

1. Guide Education & Requirements - It is the Outfitters responsibility to train their staff. The County should not have to hold a workshop yearly to orient guides on the requirements. There are a few things the County could do to assist the Outfitters with this responsibility:

- Hold Outfitters accountable for Guide Education, via signed affidavit upon permit renewal, etc.
- Provide ancillary workshops such as Helicopter protocols, etc.

2. Flex Days - Unless there is an issue that we don't understand we recommend that Flex Days be kept as is, with no additional Flex Permits created. We do not see the use of flex days creating a problem with the carrying capacity or overuse of the resource. Most if not all of the multi-RUP holders who have flex permits do not flex them. Attempting to eliminate them could create an issue that is not worth the cost.

3. Group or "POD" Size: The language here should be changed to eliminate any potential loopholes and this requirement should be enforced along the entire river corridor.

- 1 Group (POD) is 7 boats from a company (DBA's are the same company. E.G. 4 AWE boats and 3 ARR boats = One 7-boat group)
- All groups from a company must meet 1 of the following conditions when moving downstream at all times.
 1. 5-minute separation between the last boat in the downstream group and the 1st boat in the upstream group.
 2. The 1st boat in the upstream group cannot see the last boat in the downstream group.
 3. A separate group (from another company or private boaters) is in between the upstream and downstream groups of a company
- Group sizes should be monitored and enforced outside of the lower (Gorge) Class 3 sections (from the Highway 49 bridge to Fowler's Rock), as well as the upper (Chile Bar) section. Many problems arise in the Class 1-2 sections of the rivers. If the group sizes are kept within the requirements in these sections it will carry into the Class 3 sections, whereas correcting and managing group sizes is more difficult once it reaches the Gorge.

4. Permit Process - We agree that the permit process should be simplified administratively. We do not see a need for the current 3-year Planning Commission approval. We do think the County should maintain a process that would allow them to revoke or suspend an RUP if necessary.

5. Violations - We recommend that the vViolation pPenalties be increased significantly. So that the Countyiesy cost to issue violations is not a barrier to their issuance and so that the penalties are

significant enough to stop an outfitter from continuing to violate the RMP requirements. Here are our recommendations.

- Violations should be categorized into Minor and Major Violations.
 - Minor Violation - e.g. Boat missing Logo
 - Major Violation - e.g. Group Size
- Penalty Schedule
 - Minor Violations - Not Discussed
 - Major Violations (in any 1 category);

1st Violations = Written Warning

2nd Violation = ~~\$~~ \$1,000 fine

3rd Violation = \$2,500 fine

4th Violation = \$5,000 fine

- The County should retain and include the right of possibly revoking and/or suspending a permit for a company that chronically violates the RMP requirements'
- Multiple Major Violations should not be issued so close together that the company has not had the time to be made aware of the violations and correct them. (i.e on the same weekend)

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

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Appendix A

Safety Signs



New Cataract and Refurbished Trailer:



Raft trailer before and after

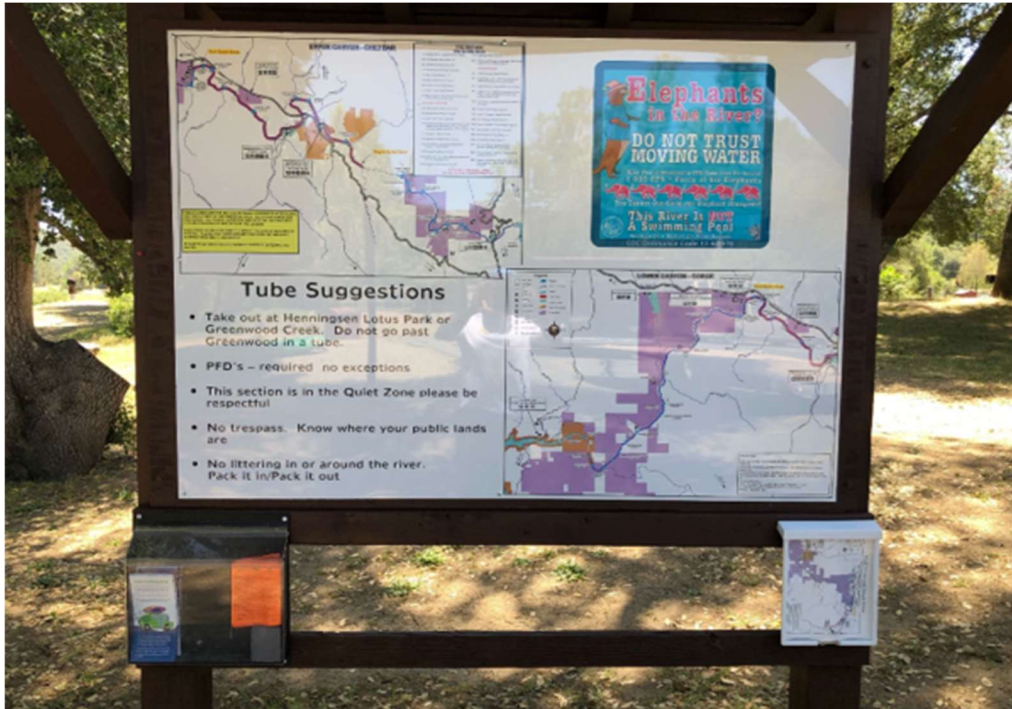


New Sign Kiosk





Marshall Gold Information Kiosk



Marshall Gold High Top Serving Tables



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Appendix B

Boat Density Threshold and Low Flow Releases – Element 7.2:

Density Threshold: 300 boats in 2 hours (based on ¼ -hour increments and a rolling 2-hour period) at Meatgrinder, Troublemaker, Barking Dog, Fowlers Rock or Satan’s Cesspool rapids on two days during any one season. Two kayaks are equal to one boat” for the purposes of determining boat density.

Daily Boater Total Threshold - Element 7.3:

Daily Boater Total Thresholds:

Upper Reach - 2,100 boaters on two days during any one season.

Lower Reach - 3,200 boaters on two days during any one season.

Note: Boater counts shall include all persons in each boat, including outfitter guides.

Water Quality Sampling and Analysis – Element 4.4

The County shall sample for coliform bacteria (as a key indicator of water quality impacts and management action needs) during the months of peak river recreational use, May-September. The County will report results to the County Environmental Management Department to identify if there is an exceedance of any water quality standard defined by the Basin Plan.