

ENFIA Interpreter

May 6, 2022 Vol. 8

A Message from the President

By Larry Moore

As ENFIA prepares to enter another season in the mountains, we are fortunate to have the spring rains and the opening of the forest and the ranger stations.

The retail folks have been very busy gearing up to supply Carson Pass and District offices with maps, books and clothing that celebrate nature and our Eldorado National Forest.

Things will certainly look different in the Caldor Fire areas, and trails will need extra vigilance due to the effects of the fire. Some are out harvesting mushrooms already and pushing the spring skiing season.

Thanks to the El Dorado County Board of Supervisors, ENFIA was selected as one of 24 local nonprofits to receive a ARPA grant based on losses incurred by the COVID- 19 pandemic.

We are extremely grateful to be awarded this grant and to be able to use these funds to continue to serve the residents and visitors in our forest.

Be safe and enjoy the wild landscape of the El Dorado.

“When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the universe” John Muir

Retail Roundup

by Keli Gwyn

Exciting things are happening as the 2022 season approaches! The changes—and a few challenges—are giving me, your Retail Coordinator, a good workout. I’ve been jogging my memory as I recall pre-pandemic routines, flexing my mental muscles as I learn new skills, and stretching myself as I overcome supply-shortfall hurdles. The result is that things will be in good shape as we prepare for what I hope will be one of our best seasons ever.

Locations are Reopening

As summer approaches each year, we look forward to Carson Pass and

Crystal Basin opening around Memorial Day, but this season we have even more to anticipate. Over the next few weeks, four Forest Service locations—the Supervisor’s Office, Placerville Visitors Center, Georgetown, and Amador—will open their doors for the first time in over two years!



With Desolation Wilderness continuing to serve forest visitors as they have the past year, this means all seven of our retail outlets will be back in business. I’m looking forward to seeing Forest Service staff members in person again as I deliver the new merchandise.

Technology is Improving

Our Square point-of-sale system, which we implemented for the 2021 season, offers many benefits. In addition to making the checkout process quick and easy, it also features inventory management, which enables me to monitor the stock at each of our locations remotely and restock more quickly.

The Square system requires an internet connection to operate. My

husband, Carl, helps me in this area. With Board approval, he established an account with Verizon last year and got a cellular connection set up for the LTE iPad at Crystal Basin, which worked well on all but the smokiest day when the cell signal was interrupted. For Carson Pass, Carl arranged for a hotspot connection through Volcano Telephone, the company that provides the landline at the Station. Desolation Wilderness uses a Verizon jetpack hotspot device, which I’ve been told by a staff member works “epically”.

With the 2022 season coming up and the remaining four locations preparing to open, Carl worked with our Verizon rep. We will have a second LTE iPad at the Supervisor’s Office in Placerville, which will use a cell connection. The remaining locations will have Verizon jetpack hotspot devices like that used at Deso, which Carl and I will soon deliver, along with some of our great new merchandise.



Purchasing is Underway

The weeks prior to the new season are a busy time for me as I prepare to deliver merchandise to Carson Pass and Crystal Basin. This year, with six locations opening over the next four to six weeks, I'm operating in high gear. The vendors are eager to provide the merchandise, but supply chain and delivery issues are having their effects. Not to worry. I'm learning to juggle as I work with our wonderful reps to get the items as soon as they're back in stock.

You'll see some familiar items at all locations, along with some fun new additions. There's a new board book for children that features the rarely seen but adorable pika. Carson Pass and Crystal will offer emergency rain ponchos for those unexpected thunderstorms, an idea that came from our Carson Pass lead, Lisa Irving-Peterson. Lisa also suggested carrying some new stickers, which were a big hit last season. I've expanded the selection to include even more custom stickers for several favorite destinations in the forest.



Custom Items are Coming

The item most requested last season was a custom shirt at Carson Pass. Due to workforce and supply issues, getting them proved difficult. However, things are getting back to normal now, making the task easier. I worked with Lisa—who has a real knack for choosing appealing merchandise—to come up with designs we think will resonate with forest visitors.

I'm happy to report that we'll have not one, but *two* brand new custom Carson Pass t-shirts! I can't wait for you to see them. Our hardworking Station Manager, Karen Heine, shared a teaser in the docent newsletter that went out a few days ago, saying that one of the shirts "mentions Carson Pass and all of our landmarks in a unique fingerprint." You'll understand what she means when you see that shirt. I'll let you in on another secret: The other Carson Pass shirt features a stunning photo taken by our multi-talented president, Larry Moore. There will also be at least one new Carson Pass hat.

A third custom shirt will shine the spotlight on the entire Eldorado National Forest. Yes, every ranger district will be featured. How can all that fit on one shirt, you ask? Think Bucket List, which is the name of the new Eldorado NF shirt. You'll have to wait to see which of the many great destinations are in the list, but since I don't want to keep you in too much suspense, I'll give you a sneak peek at the front of the shirt. I have a hunch

I'm going to have a hard time keeping these new custom shirts on the shelves.



A New Season Awaits...

I'm sure you're as eager for the new season as I am. Although our beloved forest was ravaged by the Caldor Fire, much of it survived. Visitors are sure to flock to the forest, eager to explore the beauty it has to offer. We'll be there to greet them at all our locations, with knowledgeable USFS staff and ENFIA volunteers ready to answer their questions. While inside, visitors will be able to purchase maps, books, shirts, and more to enhance their experience. Here's to a great 2022 season—and beyond!

That Remarkable Cosumnes River

By Lester Lubetkin

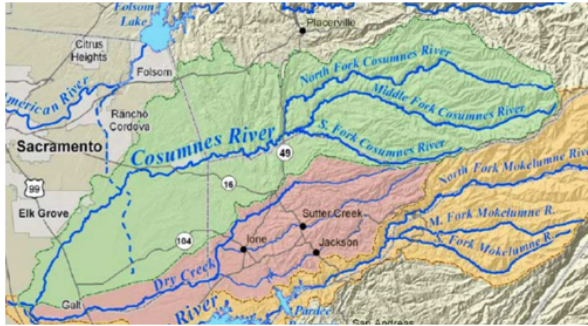
The Cosumnes River has the honorable distinction of being the only major river within the Sierra

Nevada that is not dammed. But that wasn't for any lack of trying!! There are a few minor water diversions, such as at the community of Outingdale and along Camp Creek (a tributary to the North Fork of the Cosumnes River). The Camp Creek water diversion brings water into Jenkinson Reservoir and forms the amazing winter ice-falls at the head of the reservoir. The fact that the Cosumnes is a free-flowing river makes it ecologically significant but some view the river as a threat from flooding in the lower reaches. That the river's flow is natural lets it support one of the most pristine valley oak riparian forests left in California and one of the best examples of historic Central Valley conditions. It is well worth exploring the Cosumnes River across the various seasons or go and visit the Cosumnes Preserve at the lower end of the river, south of Elk Grove.

The story about the multiple attempts to dam the Cosumnes River was wonderfully described by Karen Quidachay (nee Bennett) in her Master's thesis. Many of the players may be familiar, as they were key politicians and developers across the State of California. And unfortunately (spoiler alert!), the flooding of Hetch Hetchy Valley was one of the principal actions that saved the Cosumnes River.

First a bit about the Cosumnes River - within the Eldorado Forest, the Cosumnes has two forks (North and

Middle) as well as a number of named tributaries (including Sopiago Creek,



Dogtown Creek, Camp Creek and

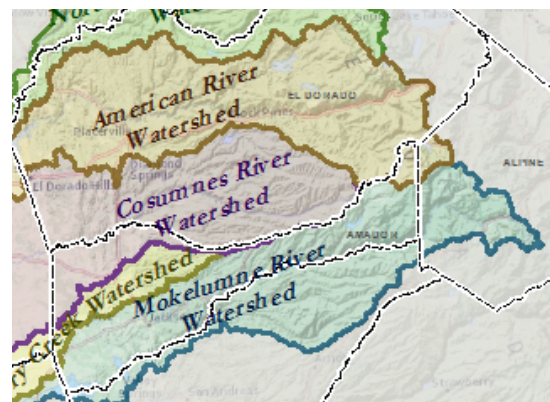
Map of the Cosumnes River watershed, showing the location of the North and Middle Forks.

others). Interestingly, the headwaters of the Cosumnes River is at a relatively low elevation, compared to other major rivers in the Sierra Nevada, reaching a maximum of only about 8,000 ft in elevation. Leeks Springs and Foster Meadows are at the head of the North Fork and Middle Fork, respectively. The Cosumnes watershed from its head down to where it joins the Mokelumne River is about 809,600 acres in size.



Foster Meadow at the head of the Middle Fork Cosumnes River. Photo from the Cosumnes River Water Quality Monitoring Project before the Caldor Fire.

The fact that the upper reaches of the South Fork American River watershed and the Mokelumne River watershed cut off the eastward extension of the Cosumnes watershed was a significant factor in saving the Cosumnes from extensive development, since it meant that the watershed does not hold as much snow (and later snowmelt) as other watersheds along the western slope of the Sierra Nevada.



Notice how the South Fork American River and Mokelumne watersheds cut off the eastern extension of the Cosumnes River.

Believe it or not, there have been five attempts to dam the Cosumnes River, starting back in the 1870's and extending up into the 1960's. Karen Quidachay found that the main reasons the Cosumnes was never dammed were more commonly "political" rather than "physical". She found that political corruption, conflicts among government agencies, disputes between landowners and government agencies, the changing climate of public opinion, changing methods of economic evaluation of water development projects, and pressure from the environmental movement all played a part at different times.

The first proposals for damming the Cosumnes River were to serve the needs of the growing city of San Francisco. After the 1906 Earthquake, San Francisco realized it needed more water, and two proposals were submitted to the City. At the same time, a proposal for creating a dam at Hetch Hetchy Valley in Yosemite National Park was being promoted by ex-Mayor James Phelan.

One proposal, known as the American-Cosumnes Project, had 6 reservoirs along the North Fork Cosumnes River, including one at Capps Crossing and another at the Plummer Ranch, and 15 reservoirs along the South Fork American River. Later, in 1913, another proposal was the Blue Lakes Project which proposed one dam along the Middle Fork Cosumnes River at about the 4,000 foot elevation, and several

reservoirs along the Mokelumne River. Both of these projects were bypassed for the much more complex and controversial Tuolumne River (Hetch Hetchy) Project. The political astuteness and close connections of James Phalen, as well as news of a corrupt political alliance and other scandals involving the president of the American-Cosumnes Project led to President Wilson approving the Tuolumne Project in 1913. And so the Cosumnes River was spared.



North Fork Cosumnes River just below Capps Crossing, an area that may have been flooded by a proposed reservoir to provide water to San Francisco. Photo from the Cosumnes River Water Quality Monitoring Project before the Caldor Fire.

But interest in water and power development of the Cosumnes River continued into the 20th century. By 1927, the El Dorado Irrigation District was looking at reservoirs at Bucks Bar and Pleasant Valley, west of the Eldorado Forest. Water rights were certainly at least part of why these reservoirs were not further pursued. And water rights became a major

reason that Amador County's interest in the early 1940's to develop water supplies from the Cosumnes River failed.

In fact, it was the State of California that acquired water rights for the Central Valley Project that set the stage for the largest development planned for the Cosumnes River. In the early 1960's, the Bureau of Reclamation began planning for six reservoirs, including ones at PiPi Valley and Capps Crossing (both campgrounds now). These reservoirs were to provide water for domestic and irrigation purposes as well as flood control, power generation, recreation and fish habitat improvement. As a part of the planning for this extensive project, the Bureau of Reclamation prepared a Wildlife and Recreation Mitigation plan, which called for, in part, purchasing land for these purposes. Locals in Amador and El Dorado Counties voiced opposition to this plan, which led to significant delays in the plans. And by the time the Bureau of Reclamation had submitted the project for Congressional approval and funding, public and political attitudes about the environment had changed significantly! The focus had shifted from strictly looking at utilization to considering the resources and values that ecosystems provide. By 1979, the Bureau of Reclamation had given up on the proposed development of the Cosumnes River, citing economics and environmental concerns.

Today we enjoy the free-flowing nature of the Cosumnes River and don't realize how close we came at different times to losing that resource. Next time you see the Cosumnes in peak storm flow, or at low flow in the late summer, hopefully you will appreciate that this is what a natural river system looks like.

Thoughts from Carson Pass

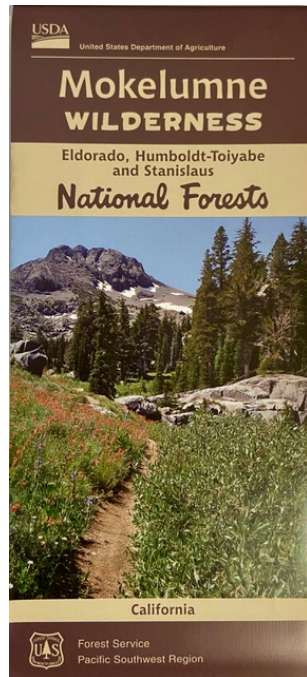
By Karen Heine

We are so excited to announce that the Carson Pass Information Station will be opening on May 28th which is Memorial Day weekend! We are ready for a fantastic 2022 season.

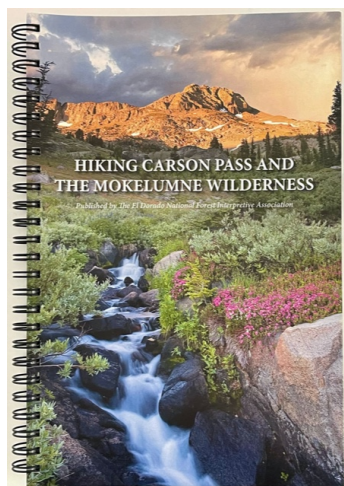


We have some new merchandise that has been in the works for over a year which specifically mentions the Carson Pass and all of our landmarks in a unique fingerprint. We expect this shirt to sell out quickly. We will also have new hat designs and some other surprises in our merchandise section

of the station. We will have the Mokelumne Wilderness map heavily stocked since it is our biggest seller and shows in detail all of the trails around the Eldorado National Forest, most of which will be open this season.



We are giving a small discount if this map is purchased along with our local hiking book which offers great detail about the local hikes.



We have already set up many interpretative hikes, including a focus on the history of the area, the local flowers, and much more. Stop by the Carson pass Information Station, located on HWY 88 at the Carson Pass, to find the dates and hikes that speak to you! You can sign up in person to reserve a spot, or call and reserve a place, or you can just show up on that day and hope there are openings. We still limit our interpretive hikes to 10 people. We will also offer those young hikers the chance to earn their Junior Ranger patch by joining in our Junior Ranger interpretive hikes. Parents can also ask in the station any day for assistance with helping their child under 14 earn a Junior Ranger patch, and if the station is not terribly busy at that time, we can help young people achieve this patch which takes about an hour.

The local rivers, the East and West forks of the Carson River, have already been stocked with 2-6 pound trout, so we look forward to seeing many anglers pass through asking for information about "where are they biting". The rivers in Alpine County have changed from catch and release to allow anglers to keep the set limit for each location. That information, specific to the various locations in our area, will be available in the fishing magazine, published by Fishing the

California Alps. We will have a stack of these fishing magazines to distribute this year as soon as they are published. These are free to the public and offer great advice about fishing, camping and more in the Eldorado Forest and Alpine County areas.

We also issue fire permits (required for gas stoves and other open flames) for the state of California and Mokelumne Wilderness overnight permits to Winnemucca Lake, Round Top Lake, or Fourth of July Lake. These are all located in the Carson Pass Management Unit (CPMU) and are limited to allow a wilderness experience for those backpacking and camping in the area. Any of these permits can be issued during our regular business hours (M-T 9-3 and weekends 8-4).

We are an all-volunteer organization, and we invite people who love the area as much as we do to inquire about becoming a volunteer. Knowledge of the area, love of nature, and a friendly disposition makes you the Perfect volunteer docent. You can ask a volunteer at the station or you can email the Station Coordinator Karen Heine at Kheine006@gmail.com for more information.

Of course, we expect the flowers at Carson Pass to be beautiful this season! They may even surprise us by

arriving a bit early this summer since the snowpack is rapidly diminishing. I plan to go on my flower walk around June 15th. We invite everyone to stop by and check out our new merchandise, pick up a map or just visit with our staff and ask questions about the area. We can't wait to see you!

