***FRIENDS OF THE CALAVERAS UPDATES***

***08.16.21***

***Jim Marsh***

1. ***Weekly monitoring of the UOP Native Grass Restoration site continues.***
2. ***Summer 2021 Photo Survey and Vegetation Monitoring***

Summer 2021 Photo Survey was completed 06.19.21. Vegetation counting was begun on 06.29.21 and finished on 07.04.21

1. ***30 x 30***

Randy Beckwith, DWR Restoration Engineer, suggested I put this discussion on the agenda for the August Calaveras Fish Group meeting. I was hoping to get some clarification from that crew but unfortunately that meeting was cancelled. There won’t be another group gathering until November. It was my hope to have them all on a single call to kick around ideas.

I did happen to spend some time on Friday, August 6 with JD Wikert of USF&W who is also a CFG participant. I asked him how familiar he was with the 30 X 30 declaration and if there might be potential along the Calaveras, particularly above Bellota Weir. JD is always upbeat and was encouraging though he did not have a lot of specific or detailed information to offer.

JD seemed to believe as did Randy that involving Sierra Club was simply bringing another stakeholder to the table and should be welcomed.

If we are to go any further I will need to follow up with some personal communications with key Calaveras Fish Group participants.

This remains a work in (very slow!) progress.

1. ***Next Calaveras Fish Group Meeting will be in November--Date TBD***
2. ***Meetings with UOP Sustainability Director, Jessica Bilecki***

Though I’ve not spoken to Jessica in some weeks I continue to send her images from The 3 Acres that she has been kind enough to post on her office’s social media pages along with my descriptions and notes. She also reported during one of our brief chats that the UOP solar panel installation work is nearly completed but that the system is not expected to be online until mid-January, 2022. It appears all the main parking lots on the campus are now solar farms. When General Membership in-person meetings resume we might consider having Jessica speak about that project and about her work in the Robb Garden and with students on the variety of projects she supervises.

***6. Meeting August 6 with Tracie Glaves San Joaquin Delta Neighborhood Watch***

JD Wikert, two of his USF&W colleagues and I met Tracie Glaves at Stagg HS and took a short walk along the Calaveras directly opposite the school.

There is a long finger of floodplain—a peninsula or spit--at this location that has been a well-known and chronically congested homeless encampment for a number of years. A number of fires as well as drug and alcohol arrests have taken place there. The river flows along one side and the other is a dead end tidal slough making the place—for all practical purposes—a long, narrow island. It is a couple of hundred yards long with a narrow entryway where old cottonwoods, blackberry brambles and other dense vegetation provided cover and concealment for campers.

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Tracie and her group have been working with law enforcement and social services agencies and other NGO’s in the greater Stockton area to clear these camps along the waterway and to coordinate large-scale trash removal work.

Stockton PD and the County Sheriff’s office are among the collaborators as is UOP Security. We spoke briefly with Officer Robert Johnson of SPD while on the site. His view is that SJD Neighborhood Watch’s work has been very effective. He and his partner were on site after it being reported that someone appeared to be setting up or scouting a campsite shortly before our arrival.

Tracie’s group also monitors water quality, blue-green algae outbreaks and other environmental conditions in and around Stockton. They were key players in a major clean up of Smith Canal. Members of their crew have been instrumental in locating and reporting to law enforcement a large number of stolen watercraft as well.

We had a tour of the site opposite Stagg—now completely clear of campers and largely trash free—while learning more about her group’s volunteer work.

The UOP reach of the river has now been clear of large-scale encampments for some months though I still occasionally see evidence of recent campsites there particularly in the large Sandbar Willow grove between transects 4-8.

It bears noting that the Stagg peninsula—about ¾ mile downstream from UOP--supports a wide variety of native plants and animals. Among others there is a dense expanse of chest high wild licorice I would estimate at a couple of acres in extent. This species is a host plant for many butterfly species and is highly desirable for these prolific pollinators. There are two much less vigorous patches of this plant on the UOP site.

I also noted growth of Creeping Wild Rye grass on the peninsula. ~10,000 plugs of this perennial native rhizomatous bunch grass species were planted at UOP over a two year period and have been spreading slowly there while simultaneously replacing the non-native annual grasses. It is impossible to say if the plants seen further downstream last week may have arrived there after seeds and roots were carried downstream from UOP during high water (what is known as “passive restoration”) or if they’ve been there all along. However, the presence of this native grass is highly desirable also.

One goal of Tracie’s group is development of safe and informative nature trails along the river free of garbage and campers. This, as I’ve said many times, has been a goal of FCR from its earliest days as well. The Calaveras is a greatly undervalued treasure for the city. Tracie and her group recognize this and are working to improve it and to spread that news.

I look forward to further collaboration with San Joaquin Delta Neighborhood Watch-Stockton Area (Crime/Safety/Environmental). Tracie can be reached at:

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And on Facebook at San Joaquin DELTA Neighborhood Watch