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Contact:

Betsy Brunner, Communications & Engagement Director
South Yuba River Citizens League
Tel: (530) 265-5961 x220
E-mail: betsyb@yubariver.org

The Yuba River “Secret” is Out – Summer Volunteers Needed to Protect the South Yuba River

Nevada City, CA – Visitor numbers to the Yuba are expected to spike again this summer and we need our community to help keep the Yuba from being “loved to death” by volunteering to become a River Ambassadors through the South Yuba River Citizens League (SYRCL).

SYRCL has stationed River Ambassadors at river crossings since 2012 in an effort to educate newcomers about river safety and etiquette in collaboration with California State Parks. The program helps to create the person-to-person contact so important to making this educational initiative a success.

“The South Yuba River, a state-designated Wild & Scenic River, has quickly changed from being a hidden gem to a social media influencer tempting newcomers with its stunning emerald green pools and dramatic granite boulders,” says Daniel Belshe SYRCL’s Community Engagement Manger, “Our best option this summer will be to engage with visitors via the River Ambassador program so they can teach newcomers how to love the Yuba like a local. To do that, we need a lot of help from our community.”

In a typical year, 800,000 people visit the Yuba. Though the river has been rising in popularity for some time, 2020 was an unprecedented year, as thousands of new visitors ventured to the Yuba River for the first time to escape quarantine fatigue. This influx of visitors created unsafe parking problems, trash, illegal fires, and human waste issues up and down the river canyon. While SYRCL had to cancel the in-person component of River Ambassadors last year, it plans to use COVID-safe protocols to bring it back this summer.

“The River Ambassadors are vital protectors of the South Yuba River and its visitors. From greeting and educating first-time river visitors to assisting in emergencies, I really don’t know what we would do without them,” says Nevada County Supervisor Heidi Hall, District 1, “Their work is a highly valued service to this community.”

River Ambassadors use a friendly, non-confrontational approach to educate and inform visitors about river rules and ethics while recreating on local beaches and trails. Each weekend, a team of River Ambassadors sets up booths and signage at the busiest river crossings, provides information to visitors, removes trash & graffiti, dismantles illegal fire rings and interacts with visitors along trails and beaches. River Ambassadors are also equipped with satellite phones from Nevada County Office of Emergency Services and serve as an emergency contact for guests when accidents happen at the river.

SYRCL needs help to effectively implement this program, which is why it is recruiting 70-100 volunteers to be River Ambassadors at the South Yuba River this summer on weekends from 10am to 2pm starting May 29 and running through September 6. COVID-safe protocols will prioritize the health and well-being of volunteers. The first online training will be Wednesday, May 12 from 6pm to 7:30pm. For more information and to sign up for volunteer dates visit yubariver.org.

About the Yuba River Public Safety Cohort: Made up of County supervisors and staff, local and regional fire protection districts, law enforcement, state and federal agencies, local NGOs, and community representatives, the Yuba River Safety Cohort has been collaborating for five years in an effort to address public safety issues within the South Yuba River canyon such as access, fire prevention, stewardship, and responsible use.

About SYRCL: The South Yuba River Citizens League (SYRCL, pronounced “circle”), based in Nevada City, CA, is the leading voice for the protection and restoration of the Yuba River watershed. Founded in 1983 through a rural, grassroots campaign to defend the South Yuba River from proposed hydropower dams, SYRCL has developed into a vibrant community organization with over 3,500 members and volunteers. See: www.yubariver.org.