

American River Conservancy

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**25 Mile Trail South Fork American River Trail to Open October 1st**

Coloma, California - September 30, 2010 - Over the past 20 years, the American River Conservancy ("ARC") and the Bureau of Land Management ("BLM") have worked together to protect a spectacular and pristine river canyon from the impacts of subdivision and development. The South Fork American River conservation initiative was launched in 1990 to protect native fisheries, wildlife habitat and the high quality of water flowing to Sacramento and 22 million water consumers downstream.

The South Fork American River is perched immediately above Folsom Lake and the greater Sacramento region. The trail has three access points: Magnolia Ranch (Coloma), Cronan Ranch (Pilot Hill) and Salmon Falls (newly built bridge at Acorn Creek in El Dorado Hills). It is the most popular river for whitewater boating in the western United States. The river provides drinking water to 22 million Californians via the federal Central Valley and State Water projects.

The canyon hosts 117 bird species including bald eagle and osprey as well as black bear, bobcat, river otter, rainbow trout and kokanee salmon. The trail will open October 1st and take hikers, fisherman, bird watchers, mountain bikers and equestrians through pine and oak landscapes to river side and scenic overlooks of the lower South Fork American River Gorge. There will be a ribbon cutting ceremony to open the trail on Thursday, September 30, 10:00am – 12:00pm at Salmon Falls.

The trail is stunning every season of the year. Winter rains bring lush green landscapes that cultivate spring's abundant wildflowers. The summer's golden hills contrast with the oak woodlands that lead you through fragrant sage-covered ridge tops. The fall colors reflecting against the river take one's breath away. The trail represents the foothills' various healthy ecosystems including grasslands, oak woodland, chaparral and riparian habitats. The trail is a wonderful place to retreat and reconnect with nature.

One element of this conservation initiative has been the acquisition of 16 river front properties and the development of a 25-mile recreational trail between Folsom Lake and Highway 49 just north of Coloma.

It is hoped in the near future that a trail corridor will be completed between Sutter's Fort in downtown Sacramento and Sutter's Mill within the Marshall Gold State Park in Coloma. With the completion of the South Fork American River Trail, 98.5% of that distance will be covered by existing recreational trail.

Over this 20 year period, ARC and the BLM raised \$17 million through competitive grant programs, land exchanges and private donations to complete 16 land acquisition projects protecting 2,632 acres of river canyon lands and public trail corridor. Purchase funding came from federal, state, county and private sources including: the BLM, State Wildlife Conservation Board, State Resources Agency, El Dorado County, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and over 1,500 local business and individual donors.

"Our River Conservation program is a win-win for the greater Sacramento region," stated ARC Director, Alan Ehrgott. "We are protecting native fisheries and wildlife corridors, creating new public trails

through our most scenic landscapes and protecting the quality of central California's domestic water supply all with the same dollar. I think we will all live better, healthier lives as a result of this program".

"We appreciate the opportunity to work with the Conservancy and other partners to protect lands along the South Fork American River and other areas," said Bill Haigh, BLM Mother Lode Field Office manager. "With the rapidly growing population in the Sierra Foothills, we need to preserve these areas to protect the natural resources and provide areas for recreation."

In addition to its river and land conservation programs the American River Conservancy provides environmental education and field science programs to schools and the public and provides land stewardship and habitat enhancement services in partnership with public agencies. A new map and wildlife field guide of the South Fork American River Trail is available at the American River Nature Center bookstore within the Marshall Gold Discovery State Park in Coloma. Membership and volunteers are essential to the maintenance and stewardship of projects like The South Fork American River Trail; go to www.arconservancy.org to help preserve rivers and land for life. ###

Photo and interview opportunities are available upon request