Dear Friend,

Eric is a sixth-grade student who attends school in rural Madera. A few weeks ago, we visited Eric’s classroom as part of the River Parkway Trust’s Madera Unified Sixth-Grade Program.

The final activity of the session is a game called The Incredible Journey. Students imagine themselves as water molecules and visit stations that represent the places water is found on Earth.

As the game wrapped up, Eric approached the Trust’s Education Program Facilitator Katie. He was eager to tell her about his experience. He asked questions about the ocean and glaciers, and why he ended up getting “stuck” in the same part of the cycle over and over. Katie could see he wanted to better understand the process.

“Learning about the water cycle is pretty cool, isn’t it?” she asked him.

“It’s not cool...” Eric said as he turned his activity sheet around and pointed at the game title. “It’s incredible!”

You make incredible things possible with your generosity to the River Parkway Trust. And that’s why we’re writing to you now – to ask you to make a year-end donation right away.

Because supporting the places and programs that connect the next generation to the San Joaquin River matters. The children you help reach today will be the leaders to carry forward the work to protect the Parkway in the future.

Kids need a chance to discover the wonders of the San Joaquin River firsthand.

And that brings us back to Eric. Actually, we need to stop and tell you that Eric is not his real name. But his story is real! And you helped make his experience happen.
Katie enters the classroom. There is a general air of excitement at having someone new presenting to them. The students are curious.

“Today, we are going to learn about water,” Katie says as she begins the lesson. “Raise your hand if you’ve heard the word watershed before.” One or two hands shoot up.

“What do you think a watershed is?” she asks next.

A few brave students will venture a guess. “I think it’s somewhere we store water. Maybe like a shed, that’s full of water or water tanks.” Another suggests, “Maybe it’s like the big water tower in Madera.”

Katie continues the lesson, describing some of the key features of a watershed. Next, she hands out sheets of paper and instructs the class to crumple their sheet then smooth it back out.

Eric works diligently, imagining the paper as a piece of land. He searches for ridgelines and rivers in the crumpled sheet, then draws houses, farms, and streets. Katie comes by his desk and creates a rainstorm over Eric’s watershed with a spray bottle. He watches in wonder as the water moves from the ridgelines into the rivers and out towards the city he’s drawn.

At that moment, a new piece of the world made sense to Eric – maybe for the first time. Things can be known. They can be named. And we can learn how to identify them.

This is where you come in. You can be part of the discovery. Your gift of $50, $100 or more can make a real difference for children like Eric.

Please make a special year-end contribution to the River Parkway Trust. Please write a check today.

“Now it’s time for us to go on an incredible journey through the water cycle,” Katie tells the class.
Students receive a string with a yellow bead representing the sun. Katie explains that each of the nine game stations represents the different places we find water on earth. Imagine you are a water molecule, roll the dice to find out where you’ll end up in the water cycle. With each roll, students will add a colored bead - representing clouds, rivers, the ocean, or plants - to their string.

“Thank you for coming to our class,” Eric said each time he passed Katie during the game.

As Katie finished up the lesson, she told the class that they will be taking a field trip to the River Center in a few weeks. And in the spring, they will get to try canoeing at Sycamore Island.

Eric’s excitement grew. “You’re going to remember me, right?” he asked Katie while she packed up the program supplies.

“Oh course!” she said.

“And I can tell you all the things I learned about the incredible water cycle,” Eric said, beaming.

The San Joaquin River Parkway and Conservation Trust is an organization dedicated to protecting the river and the surrounding lands. And to making the San Joaquin River Parkway available for education and recreation. Scientists, naturalists, volunteers, and students come here to protect and restore land, build trails, and learn about the river – including the incredible journey of the water cycle.

The journey to establish the Parkway began 30 years ago by people just like you. Thousands of acres have been protected forever. And hundreds of acres are now available for public enjoyment.

Places where children like Eric can learn, discover, understand, and enjoy.

Giving local children the opportunity to discover and learn about the San Joaquin River is critical to the future of the San Joaquin River Parkway. The children you help us serve today are the conservationists and land stewards of tomorrow.
You help protect places like the River Center and Sycamore Island. Places where learning about the world happens through hands-on activities that provide opportunities for discovery.

In a few weeks Eric’s class will visit the River Center. He will learn how to use binoculars to see the wild world of the Parkway a little closer. His class will get to handle a variety of seeds to learn about plant adaptations. And a little more of the world will be known.

**You can help by making a gift** to the San Joaquin River Parkway right now, this year. Please consider a gift of $50, $100, or more. If you can do more, please be as generous as possible.

No gift is too small to help foster more of tomorrow’s conservationists and land stewards – like Eric – as they take part in programs next year.

**You can make a difference right now.**

Thank you for your support and for your commitment to advancing the Parkway effort.

Sincerely,

[Signatures]

Coke Hallowell  
Chairman of the Board

Bart Bohn  
Board President

**PS:** Help celebrate the River Parkway Trust’s 30th Anniversary by making a special year-end gift. Don’t forget to make your donation before December 31st!