A message from Coke Hallowell,
Chairman of the Board

Dear Salutation,

“This time, let the public’s right to share directly in a great natural resource be the primary motive.” Roger Tatarian, A river park for us, future generations.

I was reading the Fresno Bee on a Sunday morning in 1987. The headline captured my attention; A river park for us, future generations. I read it once, and then again, and again. I clipped it from the paper and set it on the kitchen counter. Over the next few weeks, I’d pick it up, read it again, and move it to another space in the house.

The idea captured my imagination and my heart. A river park for us, future generations.

A few years before, the Fresno Bee broke the news that several development plans threatened land along the San Joaquin River.

Concerned citizens mobilized to form a grassroots group called the San Joaquin River Committee. Their advocacy sparked a public debate surrounding long-term planning for the river.

From the organizing groundwork laid by the San Joaquin River Committee, the San Joaquin River Parkway and Conservation Trust was established as a nonprofit community-based land trust.

We defined our three goals of conservation, education, and recreation, and launched two key projects.
The first was a San Joaquin River Parkway Conceptual Planning Effort which gave form to the community’s vision for the Parkway, a linear greenway of natural reserves, parks, and open space between Millerton State Recreation Area and Highway 99.

The second project was a River Education Program with the Fresno, Madera, and Clovis Unified School Districts. By December 1988, Madera Unified earmarked funding to hire a teacher to work with the River Parkway Trust to develop a River Field Trips program. As a result of this early education program, more than one hundred thousand children have taken a field trip to the San Joaquin River.

This spring the River Parkway Trust will celebrate its 30th anniversary year. I am grateful for the generous and committed support of people like you, who have helped advance the effort to create and protect the San Joaquin River Parkway for us and future generations.

And you have an opportunity to advance the Parkway effort right now. Please make a donation of $100, $250 or more to support the River Parkway Trust today.

**Because your commitment to the Parkway effort is critical.** From the start, the effort to save land and create a parkway along the San Joaquin River has relied on people who believe in the vision and want to leave a lasting legacy to future generations. And though much has been accomplished over the last 30 years, the resolve to continue establishing the Parkway is more important now than ever before.

“The tide of development is pushing closer and closer to the river.”*

When the River Parkway Trust was founded in 1988 there were plans for residential and commercial development at Ball Ranch and Spano River Ranch.

Ball Ranch is a riverbottom property located downstream of Friant Dam. The golf-course-anchored housing development planned for the property threatened the Valley oak forest and other important native species found on site.

Spano River Ranch is a river front property located just west of Highway 41. It is also known as Fresno River West, and will be the site of the next major extension of the Lewis S. Eaton Trail. But this trail project would not be possible if the residential and commercial development plans for Spano River Ranch had moved forward.

Advocates from the River Parkway Trust and San Joaquin River Committee were tireless and persisted in preventing these developments from happening. Many hours were spent attending planning commission meetings and speaking out for protecting the river’s resources.

The work of these early Parkway advocates and supporters made an impact.
Of all the work accomplished by the River Parkway Trust since 1988, I am most proud of our land conservation work and every property we have helped protect forever.

The Fresno side of the San Joaquin River has been developed out to the bluff along most of the Parkway reach. In the decades to come, it is estimated that Madera County will grow by 100,000 residents as multiple large planned developments are constructed.

The green swath of land along the San Joaquin River Parkway represents important local open space, especially as the tide of development continues pushing closer to the river.

Your support today will help steward this land for the future. Your donation of $100, $250 or more will protect the open space lands along the Parkway.

Completing the San Joaquin River Parkway is a matter of putting the pieces together. Over the last 30 years, the amount of protected land has grown nearly tenfold.

“...the San Joaquin offers many things: sitting on the bank with or without a book on a summer day, watching water skaters dart across shallow pools, savoring the slightly astringent smell of the green undergrowth or, if the urge for self-exertion becomes overpowering, trying to remember how you used to make flat stones skip on the water to the island mid-river.”*

A few years ago, my daughter and I were leading a group of third-grade students on a nature walk at Lost Lake Park. This group of students had extra energy that day, and we struggled to keep everyone together.

The students were excited to be outside. They wanted to run ahead, climb the rocks, and search for oak galls and acorns.

I remember one young girl in particular who had run ahead of the group. She was twirling around with her arms in the air.

“I love nature,” she exclaimed.

I couldn’t help but think that experiences like this are exactly what we hoped to create in those early days.

Our dream was to save the San Joaquin River bottom so that future generations would have the chance to explore, experience, and enjoy the great outdoors.

We’ve come a long way, but we aren’t done yet.
“This calls for vision to foresee what is possible, and the courage to go after it.”*

Thirty years ago, the River Parkway Trust’s founding board of directors helped lay out a vision to create a Parkway for us and future generations.

Today we remain committed to fulfilling that vision of a linear greenway of natural reserves, parks, and open space.

Throughout our thirty-year history, one thing has remained true. The generosity, commitment, and courage of people like you makes the Parkway possible.

The River Parkway Trust is dedicated to protecting open space, restoring the vital riparian habitat that supports wildlife, and seeking out opportunities to connect you, your family, and your neighbors to the San Joaquin River.

You can help keep the Parkway effort moving forward. Will you make a generous donation of $100, $250 or more to support the River Parkway Trust right now?

As I reflect on the last three decades I am so grateful for your support for the San Joaquin River Parkway. I may not see the day when the entire Parkway is complete, but I know that our efforts today will be part of our legacy tomorrow.

A river park for us, and for future generations.

With gratitude,

Coke Hallowell

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Chairman of the Board

P.S. Please make a donation to support the effort to create and protect the San Joaquin River Parkway. Make a difference today!

*Roger Tatarian, A river park for us, future generations. Fresno Bee, May 17, 1987