

Entry 16

Subject: Napa River and Tributaries

My favorite landmark in Napa County is the Napa River. If I had to choose a specific spot, I would tell you to go back behind the St. Helena Public Library and follow the path all the way back past the drainage pipe and the habitat restoration area and down into the riverbed. That is where my love for the Napa River (and all its tributaries) began. It might look a little different each time you visit, but rivers are known for changing. Ever since we were little, my sister and I have gone down to that river. We've waded in it, built rafts and 'bridges', and swam in it. As we got older we paddleboarded and kayaked in other parts of the river, across the Napa Valley.

In high school, we joined the applied science program and started to go to the Napa River for more than just fun. Our class works to monitor the local fish populations in a conservation effort in line with the preservation efforts of the Fish and Wildlife service. We take measurements like water depth and water temperature to determine if our local steelhead and king fish populations are able to move freely and survive in our river and its tributaries. Last year we had a record breaking salmon run and just this past year we got to see the Sulphur Creek fish ladder removed, opening the way for better fish passages upstream and improving the habitat in the surrounding river. I have grown to see the Napa River for both its enjoyment and its ecological importance for the Napa Valley.

Some of my favorite memories are times we hung out at the river with our friends on a hot day, and that enjoyment of the river is a unifying force across the valley. The Napa River and its tributaries connect us not just literally (it's the only landmark that spans the whole valley after all), but figuratively as well. People of all ages and backgrounds can enjoy the river, whether for its natural beauty, cooling qualities, or wonderful fish populations. I have seen people young and old enjoying the river by themselves, with family, or friends, or their pets. Even those just passing through the valley get to enjoy the river, as many of our roadways run next to or over the river. Many other favorite landmarks such as the Pope Street Bridge, Trancas Crossing, and Bothe Park all include tributaries of the Napa river. Even the Bale Mill was once fed by Mill Creek, which connects to the upper Napa River. Rivers are the lifeblood of many communities, and Napa County is no different: Napa County's past, present, and future is rooted in the Napa River. I hope that as a community we can recognize both the ecological and aesthetic importance of the river to preserve it and its wildlife for generations to come.

