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Contact: Keiko Mertz keiko@friendsoftheriver.org
Elias Rappaport elias@nextgeneration.org

Friends of the River Expands Top Leadership Team to Fight for California Rivers

Sacramento, CA — Friends of the River, one of California’s oldest and most respected river advocacy organizations, has announced the hiring of four experienced senior water experts from the Bay Institute (TBI), another of the state’s leading water-focused nonprofits, to dramatically increase FOR’s ability to protect and restore rivers and defeat river-killing water projects.

2024 has marked a pivotal year, as California finds itself at a crossroads between a water-sustainable future and succumbing to another century of wasteful water policy.

As FOR ramps up its fight against California’s most dangerous and harmful water projects (namely the Triple Threat of Sites Reservoir, the Delta Tunnel, and the Voluntary Agreements), it is expanding its team and bringing on experienced water warriors from across the state.

After the TBI staff resigned this past May, TBI Program Director Gary Bobker and FOR Executive Director Jann Dorman decided to bring the senior members of the TBI team to FOR. In addition to Mr. Bobker, who will become FOR’s Senior Policy Director, the new staff includes Greg Reis, one of the environmental community’s leading analysts of water project operations, who will become FOR’s new River Restoration Hydrologist; hydrogeographer Peter Vorster, a key player in the fights to restore Mono Lake and the San Joaquin River, who will become a consulting staff scientist; and John Shelton, former executive director of the San Joaquin River Conservancy and TBI staff scientist, who will become FOR’s San Joaquin Valley Restoration Coordinator.

“The TBI team is extremely excited to join FOR, where we can not only continue our work to restore California’s aquatic ecosystems but combine with FOR’s existing powerhouse staff to up our game in ensuring that healthy rivers remain a legacy for future generations and in reshaping California water policy to be more adaptive to climate change,” said Mr. Bobker, whose 32-year tenure at TBI included leadership roles in negotiating the historic agreement to restore flows and fisheries to the dewatered San Joaquin River; securing new, stronger endangered species regulations and water quality standards for native fish and wildlife and their habitats in the San Francisco Estuary and its watershed; and pursuing initiatives to successfully reduce and eliminate contaminated runoff from irrigated agriculture in the Central Valley.

“With the Newsom administration continuing its unfortunate push to revive the same failed water policies of the 20th century that got us into this mess, we need talented, experienced, and highly knowledgeable senior leaders who can make our case to lawmakers, the public, and the courts,” said Ms. Dorman. “We are in the midst of fighting on a number of legal, administrative and political battlefields in order to save the state from falling down the disastrous path of tapping our state dry, and we intend to bring an all-star team to this fight.”

For more than a half-century, Friends of the River has been at the forefront of California’s environmental movement, fighting the good fight to defend our treasured waterways. FOR is dedicated to protecting and restoring California’s rivers, streams, and watersheds, while advocating for sustainable water management and water solutions that protect the environment. With the state’s water crisis approaching a breaking point, FOR is in its biggest fight yet as it works to stop the Voluntary Agreements, the Sites Reservoir and Delta Tunnel boondoggles while offering sustainable alternatives that would preserve California’s remaining healthy rivers.