



County of Sacramento Regional Parks Department

Staying Safe on Area Rivers

Although some of the local rivers may seem to be a cool way to beat the summer heat, the water is often moving fast and is very cold. There may be a number of potential hazards under the surface or along the shoreline.

Wear a life jacket: Whether you are fishing, boating, swimming, or just floating down the river, make sure you wear a life jacket that fits you properly, and that you keep it on at all times.

If you can't afford a life jacket, the County Department of Health and Human Services offers the "**Kids Don't Float**" life vest loan program. Along the American River, life jackets are conspicuously placed on pegboards with 10-15 life jackets available for temporary use at nine locations along the Parkway. Those locations are Howe Avenue, Watt Avenue, Ancil Hoffman Park, American River Park South (formerly known as Goethe Park), and two sites at Discovery Park, Negro Bar, Folsom Point, and Nimbus.

Learn how to swim – Even with life jackets, it is important that you and your children know how to swim.

How to help someone in trouble –Yell "Help" to bring attention to the situation. You can reach towards the person in distress with a pole, branch or paddle, or you can throw out a floatation device such as a life jacket or even an ice chest to help them stay afloat until they are able to get to shore or help arrives.

Never use rope swings and/or jump off bridges – No matter how deep the water is, these are inherently dangerous activities and can result in serious injury or death.

Stay out of deep water -- The riverbeds can drop off sharply with little warning. Stay close to shore to avoid deep water and potential currents.

Scout unknown rapids – If you are encountering a new set of rapids, first scout them out from the shore to determine how you may safely pass through.

Watch out for hazards – Murky river water can hide logs, sharp rocks, or trash that can cut your feet. It is recommended that you wear old shoes for protection.

Don't follow your equipment downstream – Never risk your life to save equipment or personal belongings.

Stay with your boat –Stay with your capsized boat unless it is unsafe to do so and it becomes safe to swim.

Obey the signs –Read any signs you may see in the area before you go swimming or enjoy any type of recreation to make sure you stay legal and safe.

Alcohol, Drugs and Water Sports Don't Mix – Alcohol and drugs impair your judgment and could put you in an unsafe situation.

Wear sunscreen – Spending all day outdoors at the river can give you painful sunburn. Be sure to wear SPF 15 or better, and apply when needed.

Don't get too tired! – Overdoing the activities at the river can tire a person out, and people, especially children can become unsafe when they are too tired.

Watch out for hypothermia –. Keep an eye out for initial signs such as excessive shivering and fatigue, and get out of the water at once. Cold water can zap the strength of even strong, young swimmers very quickly.

Keep an eye on children – Never leave children unattended near the river.

Respect the animal inhabitants of the river –Do not bother any animals, and watch out for stinging insects and poison oak.

-Information from the Sacramento County Regional Parks and, Health and Human Services Departments, the Sacramento Emergency Preparedness Plan, and the California Department of Boating and Waterways

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