



Channelkeeper News



It's Not About a Fish

By Ben Pitterle

I arrived at work this morning to a voicemail on my phone. An angry caller shouted from the recording: "I'm 67-years old, and I've worked in there [Thatcher Creek] since my late teens. I've never seen one," said the caller, referring to endangered steelhead trout. "We're lucky if we even have water in Thatcher Creek."

The caller was referring to Channelkeeper's lawsuit, which the organization filed in 2014 in an attempt to compel the State Water Resources Control Board to analyze the City of Ventura's use of water from the Ventura River and to intervene to prevent the City from completely drying up the River by pumping too much water from its Foster Park well field.

It's worth noting that various government agencies brought this problem to the City's attention decades ago, but the City chose to ignore, or worse, deliberately evade remedies. Channelkeeper's lawsuit focused solely on the City's water use because of its disproportionate impact on the river, but the City chose to pull every other water right holder in the Ventura River watershed into our lawsuit to protect and prioritize its water right.

Some community members, including the gentleman that left the voicemail, are frustrated because the City of Ventura opted to challenge their water rights, and view Channelkeeper's efforts as misguidedly focused on a single species of fish, the endangered steelhead trout,

which is currently struggling for survival in the Ojai and Ventura River valleys.

Channelkeeper's efforts in the Ventura River watershed are about protecting much more than steelhead, but it's easy to understand why so much attention is placed on the beleaguered species. One of the reasons that Southern Steelhead are endangered is that they require high quality habitat, which is hard to find these days. That means that if a river is good enough for steelhead, it's probably good enough for everything else that lives there as well. So, when you protect steelhead, you protect an entire ecosystem. As a keystone indicator species, steelhead deserve the attention they garner.

Another reason that steelhead are so famous is that many of our environmental laws are designed to prioritize protection of endangered species. Many of our nation's protected and cherished open spaces were established in one way or another to protect sensitive keystone species. But the Ventura River is much more than a haven for an endangered fish.

The Ventura River is the wilderness in our own backyard. It's an entire interdependent ecosystem of birds, fish, mammals, and more that existed for millions of years before humans inhabited the area. That is something worth protecting. To the first humans that lived here, the Ventura River was a sacred source of life and abundance. It remains so to those people today, and that too is worth protecting.

For several generations in the not so distant past, the Ventura River was a cherished source of sustenance and recreation. Each street off Ventura Avenue had its own dirt trail at the end of it leading down to the river, where the community accessed swimming holes and fishing spots, each with its own name, names now largely forgotten. But the river still provides recreational opportunities and local access to nature for thousands of community members today, and that too is worth protecting.

The Ventura River is also a source of drinking water, which we also need to protect. Whether diverted from the surface or pumped from just beneath it, the river and its groundwater basins provide all of the water used in the Ojai Basin and the Ventura River valley. When the river goes dry, it's a canary in the coal mine telling us that we are exceeding the capacity of our resources, living beyond our means, and spending over-budget in ways that are detrimental and unsustainable. A thriving river means a sustainable future, and that is worthy of protection.

The Ventura River is also our legacy. It's the home that we will pass on to our children. It's our own backyard. In this day and age, for all the attention placed on global environmental problems we have no means to control, we can control what we do in our own backyard. We can choose to protect it. If we don't, who will?

That's why Channelkeeper is taking a stand for the Ventura River. It's not just about a fish.

[Learn More](#)

UPCOMING EVENTS

Channelkeeper Student Art Show
March 5



Channelkeeper is thrilled to host our 17th annual ocean-inspired Student Art Show, "**What the Channel Means to Me.**"

Please join us for the opening exhibit, public reception, and awards ceremony this Thursday, March 5th (1st Thursday) from 5-8 pm at the Jodi House Gallery at 625 Chapala Street in Santa Barbara. Senator Hannah Beth Jackson will present winning artists with awards and cash prizes at 6:30 pm.

The goal of the show, which features artwork by high school students from across the South Coast, is to inspire local youth to create art that celebrates the natural beauty and biodiversity of the Santa Barbara Channel, and for their art to inspire others in our community. We hope to see you on March 5th - you won't want to miss this free opportunity to check out some incredible ocean-inspired art created by local teens!

Stream Team March 8



Stream Team is Channelkeeper's volunteer-based water quality monitoring program. Come join us to help monitor and protect our local waterways. Goleta Stream Team will meet on Sunday, March 8th at 10 am.

Please RSVP via [email](#). For more information, visit our [website](#), [email](#) or call us at 805.563.3377 ext. 3.

20th Annual Blue Water Ball March 14



We're getting very excited to celebrate Channelkeeper's 20 years of clean water and community impact at the 20th Annual Blue Water Ball, on Saturday, **March 14, 2020** at Deckers' Headquarters in Goleta.

This year will be extra special as we bring together our community of surfers, sailors, scientists, and water-loving individuals to commemorate two decades of environmental impact and accomplishments.

We're thrilled that this year, Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. will present the keynote address and help us commemorate two decades of achievements for clean water on the South Coast. Mr. Kennedy is an environmental attorney, author, activist, and clean technology entrepreneur. He is the founder, Senior Attorney and President of Waterkeeper Alliance, one of the fastest-growing grassroots environmental movements in the world, with today more than 340 local Waterkeeper organizations protecting 2.7 million square miles of watersheds on six continents. Kennedy was named one of *Time* magazine's "Heroes for the Planet" for his success in helping Hudson Riverkeeper lead the fight to restore the Hudson River.

You won't want to miss this momentous celebration, so get your tickets [here](#) today, and stay tuned for other ways to join in the fun of Channelkeeper's year-long celebration of making waves for two decades! Visit the [Blue Water Ball](#) website to learn more and to purchase your tickets or table today.

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Forces of Nature

UCSB Arts & Lectures Series January to May



Join us on **March 31 at 7:30 pm** at the Arlington Theatre for ***An Evening with Dr. Jane Goodall, DBE*** as she shares stories of ***Gombe: 60 Years of Discovery***.

Dr. Goodall's groundbreaking discoveries revealed remarkable truths about chimpanzee behavior and humankind. Sixty years after her revolutionary work with chimpanzees in Tanzania, Dr. Goodall still inspires each of us to take action on behalf of all living things and the planet we share. This

promises to be an inspiring event. Find more info [here](#).

Channelkeeper is pleased to participate in this exciting UCSB Arts & Lecture series, [Forces of Nature](#), taking place from January through May 2020, which recognizes five decades of environmental activism, education, and research. The series honors the 50th anniversary of the environmental movement by featuring "Forces of Nature" who are carrying us forward, taking action, and offering responses to the pressing environmental issues of today for a hopeful tomorrow. We hope you will join us at one of these amazing lectures!



California Coastkeeper Alliance

Santa Barbara Channelkeeper is fortunate to be part of the **California Coastkeeper Alliance**, which represents us and other Waterkeeper organizations across California on state-level water policy issues in Sacramento.

If you're interested in learning more about their work, we encourage you to visit their website and subscribe to their new newsletter at www.cacoastkeeper.org.



Become a Member!

Your support for Channelkeeper's efforts is needed now more than ever.

Become a member of the Channelkeeper crew today with your tax-deductible donation. You'll be investing in clean water and healthy communities along the Santa Barbara Channel today and for

future generations. With your membership, you will receive our regular newsletters, news updates and action alerts, invitations to special Channelkeeper events and fun volunteer opportunities, and a free Channelkeeper sticker. All new donors contributing \$50 or more can also receive a Channelkeeper t-shirt, and for donations of \$250 or more, bi-annual issues of Waterkeeper magazine. Sign up today by calling 805.563.3377 ext.1, emailing us, or clicking [here](#).

