



# PADDLING GUIDE



## Launching and Parking

The Cosumnes River Preserve offers visitors a dock that is accessible from the Visitor's Center parking lots. The dock is available for launching non-motorized watercraft only such as canoes and kayaks. Due to the distance between the parking lots and the dock, paddlers are encouraged to use canoe carts. The Preserve loans out such carts at the Visitor's Center.

## Safety

Canoeing and kayaking are inherently risky activities at the Preserve. Therefore, paddlers use the Preserve's access points and the rivers at their own risk. The Cosumnes River, Mokelumne River, and their associated waterways present a variety of particular risks, including high flows in the winter, high winds throughout the year, underwater hazards, and motorized boats and other watercraft. Waterfowl hunting legally takes place on the navigable waterways each winter from October through January. Paddlers are expected to have sufficient experience to ensure a safe outing and to be familiar with the waterways. **Paddlers must wear Personal Flotation Devices** (PFDs) if they intend to launch from our facility.

There are only two allowed take-out locations on the Preserve. These take outs are at "The Point" and the "Tall Forest." The remainder of the land along the Rivers is protected or private property; do not trespass.

Please be sensitive to the habitat and wildlife that lives here. Pets are not permitted. Do not approach any nest or den sites or wildlife with young. Be aware also that there are no restrooms or garbage cans along the paddling routes. Please do not litter; pack out what you bring in. There is no camping, fishing, or hunting allowed on Preserve property. Fishing is legal from a watercraft.

# Self Guided Paddling Tour

The Preserve recommends the following paddling route. This route takes approximately three hours to complete when paddling at a leisurely pace. From the launch, head south a short way to enter the main body of Middle Slough, then east and again southerly, away from Franklin Boulevard. Once in Middle Slough, make sure you turn around and make a mental note of where the launch site is, then head left or eastward. Heading left, Middle Slough opens up into a tule marsh. On the left levee is the River Walk trail.

Further on the left and in many places on the waterway, you will see what appear to be trails from the water. These are not human access points. They are made by river otter and beaver who use the muddy slopes as slides to travel to and from their dens and foraging areas. About half a mile south of the Visitor Center, Middle Slough dead-ends at the Cosumnes River. If you turn right onto the Cosumnes River, in about a quarter mile it joins with the Mokelumne River.

Instead, head left and paddle upstream on the Cosumnes River toward the railroad bridge. Notice the nest boxes hanging on trees on the left bank, again paralleling the River Walk Trail. These boxes are used primarily by wood duck, which are cavity nesters. Ideally, the forest's trees would be of varying ages, including old dead trees, or snags, filled with cavities. Today these snags are in short supply, so boxes are used to ensure cavity-nesting birds' long-term survival. Some other cavity nesters include American kestrel, tree swallow, some flycatchers, western bluebird, some owls and all woodpeckers.

The main waterway continues east as you paddle under the railroad bridge. Shortly on your left, you will see cement benches. This is "The Point," a portion of the River Walk Trail and one of the two designated take-out points at the Preserve. Please be careful taking out and be considerate of other visitors.

Back in the water, you are soon upon a fork in the waterways. If you head straight you'll be continuing up the Cosumnes River. If you turn left, you will enter the calm water of Tihuechemne Slough, which dead ends in about one-half mile at a pumping station used for the Preserve's agricultural rice operations. If you turn into the slough, watch for roosting great-horned owls, red-tailed hawk, white-tailed kite and river otter. Please do not pull out at any location on this slough. When you reach the dead end, paddle back to the main stem of the river.

Heading upstream from the fork, you are back on the Cosumnes River. Just ahead, the river channel narrows and bends to the right, then to the left. Use caution here since the current can be swift, dangerous, and difficult to negotiate. Once through the bend, notice the California wild grape hanging from the valley oaks and Fremont cottonwoods. This dense jungle-like riparian forest characterized much of the Central Valley waterways prior to the Gold Rush. Watch also for great blue heron, mallard, swainson's hawk, great egret, double-crested cormorant, western pond turtle and raccoon.

Once the river straightens out, Preserve lands are on your left, and private property is on your right. All year, a great variety of raptors and songbirds, especially scrub jay and rufous-sided towhees, use this area. A bit further upstream on your left the forest opens up. This is the "Tall Forest" landing and the second of the two designated take-out points at the Preserve. Be aware that there is poison oak and blackberry in this area, as well as ticks and mosquitoes. This is the end for the Preserve's guided paddling tours and the recommended destination for your tour.

At the Tall Forest landing, please stay in the clearing area adjacent to the river. ***The forest surrounding the clearing is a highly sensitive wildlife and habitat area and is not open to the public.***

To return to the Visitor Center, head back downstream from the Tall Forest take-out back to the dock, turning north into Middle Slough after crossing under the railroad bridge.

Beginning Paddlers are encouraged to join one of the Preserve's free guided paddling tours. Guided tour schedules are available on the Preserve's website.

Thank you for visiting the Cosumnes River Preserve. If you enjoyed your day on the water, you may enjoy joining the Preserves Guided Paddle Team. To learn more about volunteer opportunities, special events, and general information about the Preserve, visit our website at [www.Cosumnes.org](http://www.Cosumnes.org).

