

## SOUTH YUBA INDEPENDENCE TRAIL

A joint project of the California Department of Parks and Recreation and the **Sequoia Challenge** (A Nevada County United Way Agency). For information and group reservations call: **530-738-2111**

### Description

Access into wilderness by physically disabled visitors is very rare in this world. Work done in 1859 by emigrant laborers has resulted in a pre-engineered access way which is both safe and exciting. In that year, an aqueduct five feet wide was built to carry water from the South Yuba River in Nevada County to the hydraulic gold mines in Smartsville 25 miles away. While it traversed steep hillsides, the Excelsior Canal followed the contours and was virtually level. Thus it affords the perfect opportunity today for access to nature for everyone without negotiating grades.

The stone levee now has wildflowers, ferns and



small creatures living in its nooks and crannies at lap level of a visitor in a wheelchair.

Over the years, John Olmsted the steadfast father of the project has raised funds and organized volunteers to transform the abandoned water ditch into a magnificent trail accessible to everyone including visitors in wheelchairs. Extensive efforts

by volunteers re-built crumbling wooden flumes and cleared debris which had accumulated over the years.

Extraordinary accomplishments were achieved by the California Association of 4-Wheel Drive Clubs, Pacific Telephone Pioneers, and the Pacifica High School Environmental Education Project. Today, working closely with the California Park Service, the non-profit group, **Sequoia Challenge**, is responsible for the annual maintenance of the trail.

This cooperation between public and private sectors has meant that a vast effort which would never have happened with only one or the other entity became a reality. Park Service efforts resulted in recent grants for construction of wooden flumes to carry people across side ravines and to skirt the flanks of granite slopes. **Sequoia Challenge**



organizes work parties to remove debris and open up new segments of the trail. Where practical, a wheelchair width trail is also maintained along the levee with ramps up to it and railings where required. This gives visitors the option of traveling either pathway.

In 1985 **Sequoia Challenge** rebuilt flume 28 with no government funds, adding the amazing switch backs leading to the water in 1988.

Here at the end of one mile of trail are streamside adventures, a fishing platform, covered lunch spot, large picnic/camping deck, great views and an outhouse!

### Docents and Program

A slide carousel and written script are available on request depicting the Independence Trail and surrounding landscape. Outing can be greatly enhanced by arranging for a trained docent to accompany your group. Learn history and natural features. School class visits need reservations with or without a guide. Please call

Disability groups may make special arrangements to camp out at one of the picnic/camp sites.

### Join a Work Party

Outings occur year round to maintain the trail in safe and esthetic condition. People are needed to remove debris, rake the trail, fill in holes, clean out culverts, carry lumber and repair wooden structures. Help is crucial on various levels including trail work, funding, office help, publicity and board membership for **Sequoia Challenge**. Your assistance would be much appreciated.

### Support Through Membership

**Sequoia Challenge** is constantly struggling to meet its financial obligations. In order for the Independence Trail to remain open, support by users is most necessary to meet costs. *Your membership matters!* Your dollar stretches a long way with extensive volunteer help. Please take time to send a \$10 membership (or more) to

### Sequoia Challenge

P.O. Box 3166  
Grass Valley, Ca 95945

Many Thanks & Happy Hiking.

## Trail Care & Courtesy

Please

- Dogs on Leash
- Take only photos and leave only footprints
- No bicycles/motorcycles
- Sign in and out at visitors' register (At overlook) This helps visitor counts as well as funding & safety
- Aluminium and plastic containers only
- Take back out and help remove all trash

