

James J. Navicky (1970-2012)

On 27 July 2012, the conservation community lost a true friend, ambassador, and family member. Born in Sacramento on June 23, 1970, and after a second bout with cancer (he had been in remission for 10 years), James Joseph Navicky was taken from us at the very young age of 42. Over the weeks ahead there will be many quiet, personal moments of reflection on his life by those of us who had the privilege of knowing him and, as James would hope, on our own lives as we wrestle with the reality that, for each of us, our time here on Earth is finite.

Many in the California Department of Fish and Game knew James as a coworker and colleague. His career with the Department started as a volunteer with the Wildlife Investigations Lab. He next worked as a member of the American River salmon carcass retrieval crew. He played a significant role in the removal of northern pike from Lake Davis. And, while spending a good portion of his early career in fisheries, later in CDFG's Habitat Conservation Program, and then in the Water Branch, deep inside he longed to be a Fish and Game Warden.

James was well known for his positive outgoing manner. He was one of the truly "go to" people in Region II. He knew everyone, where everything was, and if he was asked to do something — pretty much anything — he would get it done sooner rather than later. To say James was high energy would not do him justice. He would often volunteer for things and "drag" his lovely bride and soul mate, Jennifer, into whatever project was before him — activities that included such diverse tasks as organizing barbeques, helping serve as a CDFG host for meetings of the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, rescuing salmon and sturgeon from the Sacramento River's Yolo Bypass, participating as a member of the CDFG certified dive team, helping in the organization and coordination for the Lake Davis pike removal project, and on, and on, and on. After leaving Region II for CDFG's Water Branch, I found myself missing the times James would come into my office and say, "Good morning Kent, how can I be of service to you today?" Above all else he was, in two words, enthusiastic and reliable!

The return of James' cancer brought not only new unknowns and new fears, but at the same time, new hope and fullness in his life. Those of us who had the opportunity to spend time with him over the past months know that his and Jennifer's lives both were transformed by more than just his illness. Over the past year James came to a deep understanding that life is a precious gift to be celebrated each and every day. He sincerely found a depth and an appreciation for life that few of us will likely ever know. And in this, in the midst of turmoil and pain, he found peace. He marveled at his family and friends, and especially his wife, and at the truly unconditional love they showed him. He would

