

NEVADA COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

2025 UPDATE: MINES CHARTER

BACKGROUND:

On January 24, 2025 Supervisor Hall, District 1, brought forward a recommendation to direct staff to further explore various options and provide recommendations for an Environmental Health/Natural Resources/Mines pilot position for the Board's consideration. The accompanying memo prepared by the Community Development Agency (dated January 15, 2025) provided a high-level overview of natural resources in Nevada County and current County roles in protection of our natural resources.

Nevada County is home to important environmental assets and is also home to thousands of abandoned mine features which have not all been mapped and pose potential physical and chemical threats to residents and visitors. After the 2025 Board Workshop staff were tasked under the Mines in Nevada County Charter to identify opportunities to protect the public and the environment from mine-related chemical and physical hazards. This effort included engaging with stakeholders to assess available data, mapping known mine hazards in relation to areas used for recreation to identify locations of focus, and evaluation of educational information gaps in the community.

- **Stakeholder Engagement.** Staff queried local government leaders (cities and towns), non-profits engaged in work related to mine impacts (Sierra Streams Institute, South Yuba River Citizen's League, Wolf Creek Community Alliance etc.), state agencies (California Department of Conservation, Abandoned Mine Lands Unit), federal agencies (United States Environmental Protection Agency), and landowners/recreation agencies (Nevada Irrigation District) to discuss priorities around natural resource protection and abandoned mine remediation.
- **Mapping of Mine Features.** Staff consulted the best available data to identify mines with known hazards in Nevada County on public (United States Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, State Parks) and private land. Per existing literature, there are 39 identified mines with known hazards. Of these, 23 are on public land. Five of the 23 mines on public land are considered higher priority based on hazard and the potential for exposure. Data on all 39 mines have been tabulated into a spreadsheet and mapped in relation to local recreation assets (Attachment A: Mines in Nevada County, Maps).
- **Educational Information.** An overview of the two types of mines prevalent in Nevada County was produced, inclusive of basic information about the potential threat these mines might pose to the public. General recommendations were made about how to minimize potential exposure to the chemical and physical hazards of mines (Attachment B: Mines in Nevada County Overview).

The recommended actions as an outcome of Year 1 of the Mines Charter are as follows:

- **Inform Planning Efforts for New Projects.** Incorporate known mine impacts into planning for future implementation projects led by the County. This includes but is not limited to projects to improve recreational access (such as new trails) and fuel mitigation projects on public and private land.

- **Include Mine Impacts in Plan Updates.** Include mine impacts as a component of plan updates such as the Safety Element of the General Plan, the Local Hazard Mitigation Plan, the Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP), the Recreation and Resiliency Master Plan, the CWPP Land Management Plan, and the Resource Resiliency Roadmap.
- **Increase Number and Availability of Educational Materials.** Produce a simple webpage to provide community members with access to basic information about mine impacts, including links to relevant state and federal agencies where additional information may be obtained.

These actions can be accomplished without additional funding and within the next six months. For the first two items, outcomes of the Mines in Nevada County Charter would be shared with relevant County departments so data can be included in planning efforts and plan updates. For the third item, the Office of Emergency Services would take lead alignment with the OES approach to addressing all-hazards County-wide. In addition, it is recommended that the Director of Emergency Services participates on the Scientific Advisory Committee of the Empire Mine Community Assessment Project (funded by the Department of Toxic Substances Control) and attend meetings about the Lava Cap Mine Superfund site (convened by the United States Environmental Protection Agency).