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April 12, 2016

Honorable Assembly Member Richard Bloom
Chair, Assembly Budget Subcommittee on Resources and Transportation
P.O. Box 942849, Room 2003
Sacramento, CA 94249-0050

Dear Assembly Member Bloom and Committee Members:

Nevada County is requesting \$450,000 in the 2016-17 Natural Resources Budget to install a solar electric system in the Malakoff Diggins State Historic Park (SHP). Due to the Park's remote location, there is a high cost of fuel to run power to several buildings for generators, lighting and security systems. Security systems are vital to protect approximately 100,000 artifacts housed in the park's historic buildings.

Background: In 2011 as a result of a severe State budget deficit, the State of California proposed to close a number of our State Parks, including Malakoff Diggins SHP in Nevada County. In 2012 the County, State officials, the Park foundation and local non-profits began a collaborative effort to negotiate a solar energy project that will save the State money and have Malakoff Diggins taken off the closure list. Now, though the Park is open and there is no longer a closure list, the effort to install a cost-effective, clean solar project has continued.

Malakoff Diggins SHP is the site of California's largest hydraulic mine. Visitors can see huge cliffs carved by mighty streams of water, results of the gold mining technique of washing away entire mountains to find the precious metal. There is also a 7,847 foot bedrock tunnel that served as a drain. The visitor center has exhibits on life in the old mining town of North Bloomfield. The Park is well-used by locals and tourists alike. for hiking and recreation, and by the local school district for educational field trips. Visitors to the Park bring much-needed tourist dollars to our local rural economy. Visitors from all over the United States attend the long-running Storytelling Festival at the North Columbia Schoolhouse and Humbug Days annual North Bloomfield festival.

The Challenge: We understand the State's primary concern with this park is the cost of fuel—approximately \$70,000 per year—to run power to several buildings for generators, lighting and security systems. Security systems are vital to protect approximately 100,000 artifacts housed in the park's historic buildings. Pacific Gas & Electric stated its cost, not including right-of-way access, would be approximately \$2 million to bring conventional electricity to the Park. Clearly, operational costs need to be reduced. To that end, the County is facilitating a collaboration of local solar system providers to plan and install an adequate solar system to operate the park and enable the campground to expand, thereby reducing a major infrastructure operation cost.

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The Solution: A solar-powered electricity system at Malakoff Diggins State Historic Park (SHP) will reduce costs, keep the park open for the public and serve as a State and National model of a green and more economically efficient rural State park. It would attract a broader mix of schools, educators and tourists who are interested in ecology. Malakoff is an ideal park to use as the laboratory for this model, as the Park stands as a monument to the massive destructive impact we have had on the land, at the expense of more sustainable industries such as agriculture. The park's current power source creates unsustainable and unnecessary costs over time and negatively impacts the environment.

In stark contrast, our proposed solution would leave a legacy of sustainability and cost effective management, by creating a solar electric power source that is completely off the grid and eliminates environmental impacts of bringing a grid to a State Park, while creating an environmental and economically sustainable power source for the park. The result is not only a solution to the impact of a budget crisis on the park's survival, but on the park's long-term ability to withstand future budget threats. Rural parks often lack the supportive constituency that parks closer to major urban areas have, and the model of independent power supplies could reduce annual costs in ways that offsets low visitation in the winter. It is critical to have a State Park system that includes more remote parks, and this approach may be key to ensuring this future.

Summary: All environmental requirements, including a Mitigated Negative Declaration, have been completed and we are now in need of funds to build the solar array and security fencing. The current estimate is at \$450,000. This modest investment will save the Park \$70,000 annually to run a generator and over \$2 million to connect to PG&E. More importantly, the solar project will provide a low-impact, sustainable, and cost-effective way to protect 100,000 historic artifacts and the park campground. The project is strongly supported by the local community. Therefore, we respectfully request your support of funding solar facilities at Malakoff Diggins State Historic Park and ensure its place in California's history is preserved for future generations

Sincerely,

Dan Miller
Chair, Board of Supervisors

cc: Governor Jerry Brown
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Assembly Member Jim Patterson
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Senator Ted Gaines
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