



**NEVADA  
COUNTY**  
CALIFORNIA

**BOARD OF SUPERVISORS**

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**Tine Mathiasen**, Chief Deputy Clerk of the Board

**NEVADA COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS**  
**BOARD AGENDA MEMO**

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**MEETING DATE:** September 9, 2025

**TO:** Board of Supervisors

**FROM:** Tine Mathiasen, Chief Deputy Clerk of the Board

**SUBJECT:** Resolution designating Mule Spring, located in the vicinity of Dutch Flat and McGuire Mountain, as Nevada County Historical Landmark NEV 25-10

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**RECOMMENDATION:** Adopt the attached Resolution.

**FUNDING:** N/A

**BACKGROUND:** On July 18, 2025, the Nevada County Historical Landmarks Commission (NCHLC) voted unanimously to recommend to the Board of Supervisors to designate Mule Spring, located in the vicinity of Dutch Flat and McGuire Mountain, as Nevada County Historical Landmark NEV 25-10. Specifically on June 4, 2025, the Mother Lode Field Office Manager of the Bureau of Land Management, Jeffrey Horn, applied to the NCHLC requesting Mule Spring be considered and designated as a county historical landmark. Mule Spring is located about three- and one-half miles northeast of Dutch Flat and one-half mile southwest of McGuire Mountain on Bureau of Land Management property. The map coordinates are 39.24449, 120.80112, Elevation: 3,925 ft. UTM coordinates are 10S689757E 4346212NWGS84. \*BLM map p. 9

As outlined in the attached supporting documents, the Donner Lake to Johnson Ranch segment of the California Trail, locally known as the Overland Emigrant Road, is the earliest wagon route successfully used by emigrants traveling west. In December 1844, Captain Elisha Stephens led a train of ten wagons carrying men, women, and children across this route. By studying emigrant diaries, researchers have traced the road through Nevada, Placer, and Yuba Counties. During the Gold Rush years between 1848 and 1852, this Overland Road became one of the principal routes for wagon trains entering California, carrying large numbers of travelers from the east. Beginning in 1852, toll road companies improved the trail by grading routes over Donner Pass and Echo Summit, making travel somewhat easier and safer.

One notable stop along this historic route is Mule Spring, located on BLM-administered land in Nevada County. Mule Spring offered a vital resting place for emigrants and their

livestock as they journeyed toward Johnson Ranch and Camp Far West in the early 1850s. The site is especially significant as the place where the first relief party set out in 1847 to aid members of the Donner Party. Organized by James Reed, the young rescuers left Mule Spring in hopes of saving the starving emigrants trapped by heavy snows at Truckee Lake, later renamed Donner Lake in their memory.

The historical importance of the California Emigrant Trail, including the Mule Spring segment, has been formally recognized by the National Park Service. In 1992, Congress designated the California Trail a National Historic Trail, affirming its value as a national treasure. Today, the trail serves as a reminder of the emigrant experience and is commemorated through numerous historic sites. Mule Spring remains one of the key locations that highlight the challenges and resilience of those who traveled westward in search of a new life.

With this information, there is no doubt that Mule Spring should be designated as a Nevada County Historical Landmark. Therefore, the Nevada County Historical Landmarks Commission recommends the Board of Supervisors adopt the attached Resolution designating Mule Spring, located in the vicinity of Dutch Flat and McGuire Mountain, as Nevada County Historical Landmark NEV 25-10.

Initiated: Carissa Cyr, Senior Management Analyst  
Submittal Date: August 22, 2025