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June 12, 2018

The Honorable Governor Jerry Brown
State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: Letter of Support for Resources for the CA Department of Parks and Recreation
Sierra Gold Sector within the State Parks Sierra District**

Honorable Governor Brown,

Nevada County is uniquely positioned in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada Mountain Range with a rural population of a little less than 100,000 residents. Nevada County receives an estimated 700,000 to 800,000 visitors annually to the State Parks that include the South Yuba River State Park, Empire Mine State Park, and Malakoff Diggins State Park located within the Sierra Gold Sector of the Sierra District. These parks encompass large areas of land in remote rural locations and contain the historic and environmental values that caused these areas to be included in the State Park system. Since 2012, there has been a steady increase of visitors to the Sierra Gold Sector with a slight decline in FY 2016/17. Visitors in the amount of 510,959, 102,810, and 15,559 attended the three aforementioned State Parks in FY 2016/17, respectively. Moreover, while the sheer number of visitors each year contribute significantly to the County's tourism economy they also bring other impacts, such as increased fire dangers from illegal camping and campfires.

In March 1999 State Parks, Bureau of Land Management, and Tahoe National Forest signed a Memorandum of Understanding to jointly write a Comprehensive Management Plan for the South Yuba River. The Plan, completed in June 2005, was needed "to satisfy federal and state needs to protect the 'Outstandingly Remarkable Values,' water quality, and free-flowing conditions that caused the river to be recommended as a federal Wild and Scenic River, and designated as a State Wild and Scenic River." The Plan formerly establishes the South Yuba River as an important State natural resource.

However, between 2012 to 2015 steady state budget cuts severely dropped 8 fulltime positions in the Sierra Gold Sector from upper management to mid-level positions, which included 3 visitor service positions (2 Rangers, and 1 Supervising Ranger) and 5 technical service positions (Maintenance Supervisor, Maintenance Mechanic, Park Maintenance Worker I, Park Maintenance Assistant and a Groundskeeper). Since such time, the Sector has been able to retrieve 2 technical services positions (Maintenance Mechanic and Park Maintenance Assistant) by transferring them from other locations; however, 6 previous positions remain unfilled today.

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The Sierra Gold Sector currently has 13.5 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) positions with 28 seasonal staffing positions. In 2015, a sizable amount of deferred maintenance projects were also identified within the Sierra Gold Sector, which contribute to an approximate \$47 Million in identified projects throughout the entire Sierra District.

It should be noted, two significant projects within the Sierra Gold Sector did receive funding in FY 2017/18, which included the Bridgeport Bridge Restoration Project and the Malakoff Diggins Solar Project for \$4.3 Million and \$625,000, respectively – we thank you for your continued efforts to support these projects. Moreover, we are also encouraged by the DPR Transformation Team's efforts to increase efficiencies and strategically determine where to focus DPR's programs to better serve the public, including applying a Service-Based Budgeting (SBB) model approach to close service gaps.

However, while the Budget May Revise includes an increase of funding to DPR in local assistance grants, there are decreases of approximately \$100 million in main support for the Department for a total budget of \$1.17 Billion. This raises concerns given that visitor demand continues to increase and has surpassed pre-cut levels, yet staffing and funding remain slow to follow, not to mention needs for deferred maintenance and increased threats from illegal camping and campfires. While we are encouraged by the State's efforts to restore the Bridgeport Bridge, and solarize the Malakoff Diggins State Park, these efforts still fall short of completely closing the gap to pre-cut levels to the Sierra Gold Sector in two serious ways - staff levels for both visitors' services and technical services remain vacant. Visitor services are those staffed charged with ensuring the safety of the parks. If visitor attendance is up but staffing remains stagnant or below pre-cut levels, then an increased level of safety risk puts both the parks and respective visitors in peril. Second, the value of the historic buildings and artifacts, particularly those within the Malakoff Diggins State Park (that houses over 100,000 artifacts and where a ranger and a grounds keeper use to be located onsite), remain at jeopardy from a lack of technical service staffing. Given the State's efforts through the Transformation Initiative, the question begs, how can we entice visitors if we do not properly invest in the facilities and staff to match the demand to ensure their safety and upkeep?

Therefore, with the FY 2018/19 budgeting cycle coming to a close, Nevada County believes it is important to still raise the issue of restoring resources to the Sierra Gold Sector and Sierra District in the coming years. Therefore, on behalf of the Nevada County Board of Supervisors, I am submitting this Letter of Support urging you to ensure the allocation of adequate resources are provided to the California State Parks Sierra District Sierra Gold Sector so that the proper stewardship of our valuable natural resources and watersheds is guaranteed.

Sincerely,

Edward C. Scofield
Chair, Board of Supervisors

Copied to:

Assemblyman Brian Dahle

Senator Ted Gaines

Secretary of Natural Resources, John Laird

Director of Department of Finance, Michael Cohen

Director of Department of Parks and Recreation, Lisa Mangat

Save Our Bridge Community Campaign

South Yuba River Citizens League