

COUNTY OF NEVADA  
STATE OF CALIFORNIA  
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS



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June 6, 2018

Honorable Board of Supervisors  
Eric Rood Administrative Center  
950 Maidu Avenue  
Nevada City, CA 95959

**DATE OF MEETING:** June 12, 2018

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

**RECOMMENDATION:** Authorize the Chair to sign and submit the attached Letter of Support.

**FUNDING:** N/A

**BACKGROUND:**

The California Department of State Parks and Recreation (DPR) operates the State Park System, which includes 279 parks units. The system is organized into 22 districts, which are then sub-divided into 66 smaller groups called sectors, with each sector containing several park units. Nevada County State Parks sector is called the Sierra Gold Sector and includes the South Yuba River State Park, Empire Mine State Park, and Malakoff Diggins State Park, which are within the Sierra District. Nevada County alone can receive an estimated 700,000 to 800,000 visitors annually. 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 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, which the County joined in 2001 and was completed in 2005. The planning area covered 39 miles along the river stretch between Lake Spaulding and Englebright Lake in Nevada County. The Plan's purpose was to establish a cohesive

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management strategy with the agencies and community 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.

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 1, 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.

Presently, the Sierra Gold Sector currently has 13.5 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) positions with 28 seasonal staffing positions. Furthermore, in 2015 a sizable amount of deferred maintenance projects were identified within the Sierra Gold Sector, which contribute to an approximate \$47 Million in identified projects throughout the entire Sierra District. Two significant projects within the Sierra Gold Sector received funding in Fiscal 2017/18, which included the Bridgeport Bridge Restoration Project and the Malakoff Diggins Solar Project for \$4.3 Million and \$625,000, respectively.

It should be noted that in recognizing the fiscal challenges of the Parks System throughout the State, the Governor established a Transformation Team to develop a two-year tactical Transformation Action Plan, which identified and implemented various initiatives to increase efficiencies and strategically determine where to focus DPR to better serve the public. One important initiative, led by the Transformation Team Budget and Allocations Committee, was to develop and implement a Service-Based Budgeting (SBB) model across the entire Department with the purpose to transform the budgeting management system into a mechanism that would determine the level of service parks can provide at the varying levels of funding and assist in setting program priorities and closing gaps of service. In 2017, the Sierra District completed SSB cycle and submitted its findings to the administration, which were then used to develop the budget for FY 18/19.

The California Governor's Budget, which is being finalized now, does include an increase of funding to DPR in local assistance grants, but with decreases of approximately \$100 million in main support for the Department for a total state budget of \$1.17 Billion. While I am encouraged by the State's efforts to restore the Bridgeport Bridge, solarize the Malakoff Diggins State Park, and enhance the budgeting mechanism through the SSB initiative, 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, not to mention the staff themselves, 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 due to the lack of maintenance staff remaining unfilled. Given DPR's Transformation Team initiative, the question begs, how can you entice visitors if you do not properly invest in the facilities and staff to match the demand and ensure their safety and upkeep?

Therefore, in an effort to begin to help frame and communicate the importance of restoring funding to the Sierra Gold Sector and Sierra District in the coming years, I respectfully request the Board to authorize the Chair to sign and submit the attached Letter of Support urging the Governor 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,



Hank Weston

District IV, Board of Supervisors