

COUNTY OF NEVADA
STATE OF CALIFORNIA
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS



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NEVADA COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
Board Agenda Memo

MEETING DATE: August 10, 2021

TO: Board of Supervisors

FROM: **Heidi Hall, District I Supervisor**

SUBJECT: Letter of Advocacy urging for the increase of Law Enforcement Officer (LEO) staffing and resources for efforts of public safety on Federal public lands within the United States Forest Service Region 5 Tahoe National Forest and Bureau of Land Management Mother Lode Field Office

RECOMMENDATION: Approve the attached Letter of Advocacy

FUNDING: N/A

BACKGROUND:

As an unintended consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic, Nevada County has seen an unprecedented number of visitors recreating outdoors. With only a modest population of 100,000 residents, Nevada County is receiving nearly 800,000 visitors annually to our various Federal and State forests and parks which is 8 times more than our entire population. Across the County our most popular trailheads and river crossings are being overrun, creating a public safety and public health crisis. With the increased visitation, coupled with a devastating drought and extreme fire danger, Nevada County is in jeopardy from escaped campfires. Rampant illegal parking block evacuation routes exacerbating the potential tragedy at our overwhelmed recreational areas, not to mention the impacts of increasing trash and human waste on environmental degradation.

Most of all Federal public lands within Nevada County are owned and managed by the United States Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management. The United States Forest Service (USFS) Tahoe National Forest (TNF) is one of eighteen (18) national parks within the Pacific Southwest Region (Region 5). Within the 1,179,000-acre boundary of the TNF there are 855,000 acres of public lands that are divided into four Ranger Districts. Out of its four Ranger Districts, sections of the Yuba River Ranger District and Truckee Ranger District are located within Nevada County. Currently out of the 193,000 acres of national park lands within Nevada County, there are only three (3) law enforcement officers (LEO) assigned to sections within Nevada County. TNF does have three (3) Fire Prevention Patrols who have limited citation authority that overlap in areas within Nevada County (Truckee area, Big Bend area and White Cloud area). Adding to the patchwork of public lands, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Mother Lode Field Office encompasses 10 counties and manages 230,000 acres of public lands that include 17,349 acres in Nevada County alone with an estimated one-third of its area residing in the South Yuba River Corridor. Currently the Mother Lode Fields Office has only three (3) FTE LEO allocations to serve its entire district.

This means that out of approximately 328 miles of federal public lands in Nevada County, there are only a total of six (6) LEOs assigned to sections within our County. However, with law enforcement resources in high demand, LEOs are continually forced to juggle their time against competing priorities in other areas across the two agencies that manage a combined 1,058,000 acres of public lands. Resources are further strained by staffing shortages, slow recruiting processes, work-related injuries and succession. Despite the efforts from our federal agency partners actively coordinating with one another and with State Parks to address these impacts in forums like the Yuba River Public Safety Cohort and elsewhere, a significant gap in resources and law enforcement staffing exists across the board.

In an effort to curb major threats to public safety due to a lack of law enforcement on Federal public lands, I request the Board submit the attached Letter of Advocacy to our federal delegates urging for an increase of resources and at bare minimum an increase in staffing allocation of at least one FTE law enforcement officer shared between USFS and BLM specifically for use within Nevada County across the South Yuba River watershed and Truckee high sierra. If we know that current resources are not enough to potentially prevent catastrophic risks to public safety, then we are obligated to advocate. Therefore, I request the Board of Supervisors approve and authorize the Chair to sign and submit the attached Letter of Advocacy.

Respectfully submitted,

Heidi Hall
Board of Supervisor, District I