KEEP TAHOE BLUE
League to Save Lake Tahoe

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July 30, 2018

California Department of Parks and Recreation
Sierra District
Cyndie Walck, CEQA Coordinator
P.O. Box 266
Tahoma, CA 96142

Re: League to Save Lake Tahoe's Support for the Upper Truckee River Restoration and Golf Course Reconfiguration Project

Dear Ms. Walck:

The purpose of this letter is to express the League to Save Lake Tahoe's ("League") support for the Upper Truckee River Restoration and Golf Course Reconfiguration Project advanced by California State Parks ("State Parks"), particularly Preferred Alternative 2B ("Alternative 2B"). Alternative 2B is a restoration project that will improve meadow, riparian and floodplain habitat along the reach of the Upper Truckee River passing through Washoe Meadows and provide long-term benefits to Lake Tahoe through the reduction of fine sediment originating from this stretch of river.

The League is dedicated to protecting and restoring the environmental health, sustainability and scenic beauty of the Lake Tahoe Basin. In connection with our mission, we advocate for restoration projects that address sources of fine sediment, the leading cause of Lake Tahoe's dramatic clarity loss over the past half-century. The League also works with partner agencies around Lake Tahoe to conduct hands-on volunteer restoration in meadows and streams, including the Upper Truckee River.

The Upper Truckee River system includes sensitive meadow, marsh and riparian habitats, which have become increasingly rare in the Tahoe Basin over the past century—nearly 50 percent of the meadow and marsh habitats in Tahoe have been lost. What's more, of Lake Tahoe's 63 tributaries, the Upper Truckee River contributes the most fine sediment to Lake Tahoe and is therefore the highest priority for stream restoration in the Tahoe Basin.

The League opposed the last preferred alternative of the Upper Truckee River Restoration and Golf Course Reconfiguration Project proposed in the Final Environmental Impact Report ("FEIR") in 2011, in favor of other alternatives that would have either cut the golf course in half or restored the golf course completely. Neither option proved feasible for California State Parks, and the project has since faced significant delays to the detriment of this reach of the Upper Truckee River and Lake Tahoe. Over the past seven years, the river banks have continued to erode and sediment has continued to flow from the project site into the Lake.

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Protecting Lake Tahoe since 1957

Alternative 2B is a significant improvement over the previous preferred alternative and an appropriate compromise solution that prioritizes important benefits to Lake Tahoe. The project proposed in Alternative 2B will move a significant portion (31 acres) of the current golf course in Lake Valley State Recreation Area away from the river and into less sensitive upland habitat, reducing the extent of the golf course immediately along the river from 6,300 linear feet to less than 1,300 feet. The relocation will include setbacks, restoration of sensitive riparian vegetation, creation of a riparian corridor, and significant buffers between the golf course and the Upper Truckee River. These improvements will help reduce runoff of nutrients (phosphorus and nitrogen) and minimize erosion and other negative impacts related to having the golf course sited along the river. The removal of bridges along this reach of river will also allow for a more natural flow of the river through Washoe Meadows, further reducing sediment input to the river and Lake.

Alternative 2B will return the river to historic meanders in the floodplain, add over 1,700 feet of channel to the river, connect the floodplain to neighboring Angora Creek, and restore function to over 88 acres of meadow and riparian habitat along the river, including a significant portion of the sensitive habitats destroyed or degraded in connection with the original construction of the golf course. Adding meanders to the river and restoring the natural hydrologic function of the river system will slow the flow of the river, trap sediment in the marshes and wet meadows along the river banks, and dramatically reduce erosion and resulting transport of fine sediment to Lake Tahoe.

Finally, although the League is satisfied with the recommended mitigation measures included as part of Alternative 2B to protect a rare fen[1] (a unique wetland environment) in the project area during construction, we encourage State Parks to invest in continued monitoring after construction is complete to ensure that there are no unforeseen impacts to the sensitive fen and surrounding meadow and marsh habitat from construction or golf course-related activities.

The Upper Truckee River Restoration and Golf Course Reconfiguration Project is one of the final pieces of restoration in the lower nine miles of the Upper Truckee River, restoring a river system that has been altered and degraded for the past century. This project has faced many delays since the Final EIR was released in 2011 and Alternative 2B is an improved project design that prioritizes important benefits to Lake Tahoe. The project will return more natural meanders to the river, restore natural hydrologic function to the river system and reduce fine sediment load to Lake Tahoe, protecting the lake's legendary clarity. Additionally, the restoration and mitigation measures proposed in Alternative 2B will advance important restoration objectives for this stretch of the Upper Truckee River while maintaining recreation opportunities for the community.

We appreciate State Parks' diligence in addressing public comments and concerns on this project. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me directly.

Sincerely,

Zack Bradford
Natural Resources Manager

[1] Upper Truckee River Restoration and Golf Course Reconfiguration Project SCH No. 2006082150. Volume VI. Preferred Alternative 2B and Additional Environmental Analysis. Pp. 3-11, 3-13, 3-14, 3-15, 3-16. Impact 3.5-3. Mitigation Measures 3.5-3A, 3.5-3B, 3.5-3. http://www.parks.ca.gov/pages/980/files/DPAAEA_Vol_VI.pdf. 2018.