

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

Update about Auburn State Recreation Area • May 2006

A Message from the Managers

The Auburn State Recreation Area (Auburn SRA) provides recreation opportunities to nearly one million visitors every year. Over the past two decades a lot has changed in the Auburn SRA and our region. The population of the region has grown rapidly over the past twenty years and visitor use within Auburn SRA has increased dramatically in that same time period. New recreation uses of Auburn SRA have developed and grown during the intervening years as well, including whitewater boating and mountain biking. California State Parks (State Parks) and the United States Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) are working together to develop an updated plan to help guide the management of the Auburn SRA, so we can protect the natural and cultural resources within the area and provide quality outdoor recreation experiences for visitors.

We are very excited to begin this planning effort and we invite your participation in this process.

Thank You,



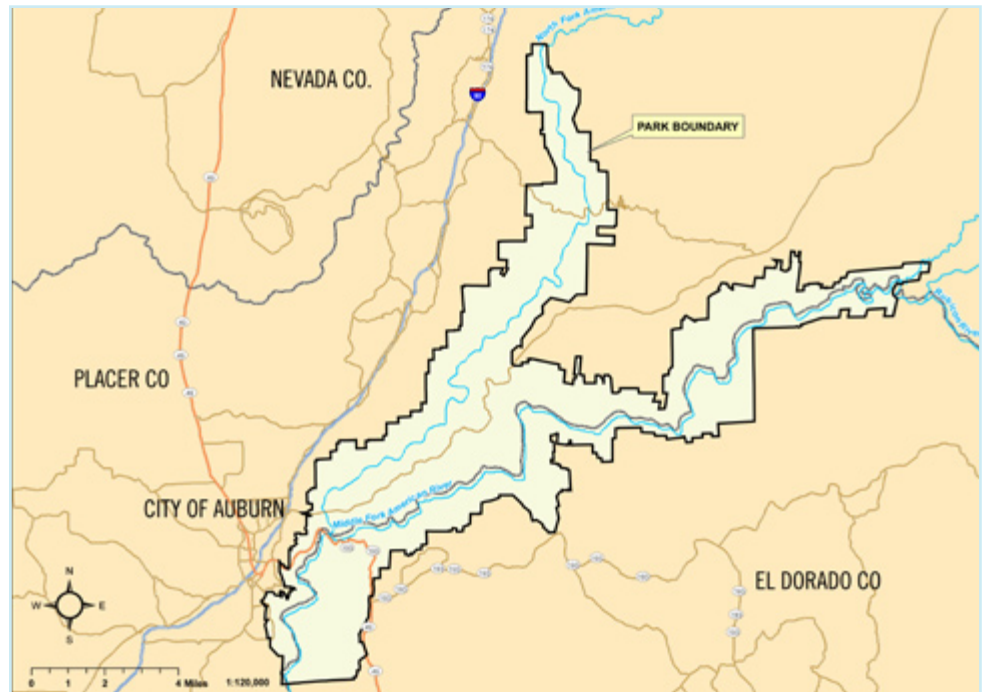
Scott Nakaji, District Superintendent
Gold Fields District, California State Parks



Michael Finnegan, Area Manager,
Central California Area, U.S. Bureau
of Reclamation

WHAT IS THE AUBURN STATE RECREATION AREA?

The Auburn State Recreation Area (SRA) is comprised of lands set aside by the Federal government for the construction of Auburn Dam. Auburn SRA has been managed by California State Parks through an agreement with the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation since 1977. The Auburn SRA includes lands along over forty miles of river canyon on the North and Middle Forks of the American River. Auburn SRA is located south of Interstate 80 in portions of both Placer and El Dorado Counties.



Occupying 42,000 acres, the Auburn SRA includes lands along 40 miles of river canyon in the North and Middle Forks of the American River.

CURRENT MANAGEMENT PLANS FOR THE AUBURN SRA

The existing General Plan for Auburn SRA was completed in 1978 (in combination with the Folsom SRA General Plan). This plan assumed Auburn Dam would be completed and an Auburn Reservoir would fill the river canyons. Active construction of the Auburn Dam was halted about the same time the 1978 plan was completed (see *Status of Auburn Dam Project*). In 1992 an Interim Resource Management Plan was prepared to address the resources, conditions and uses of the river canyons. Recreation use of Auburn SRA has grown immensely over the intervening 14 years. We now need to develop an updated and comprehensive recreation and resource management plan for the SRA

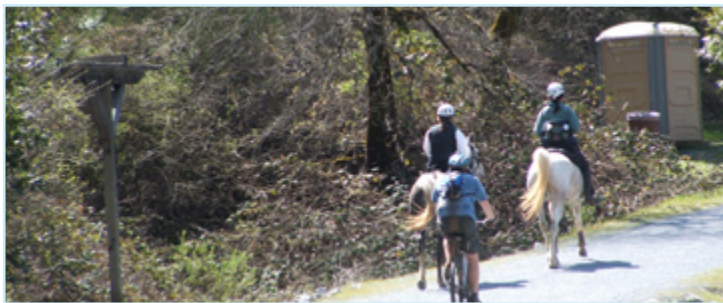
WHAT IS THE MANAGEMENT PLAN?

The goal of State Parks and the Bureau of Reclamation is to create a combined General Plan (GP) and Resource Management Plan (RMP) that meets the planning needs of Auburn SRA for both agencies. This project will include a Resource Inventory which will summarize information on the existing uses and resources within the area and a programmatic EIS/EIR that will evaluate the GP/RMP.

A GENERAL PLAN is a State Parks planning document which provides programmatic long-term management direction for a park unit through a framework of broad policies and guidelines for natural and cultural resource stewardship, recreation use and management, interpretation, public safety and other program areas. The GP will provide both unit-wide and area-specific direction. A GP generally will not define specific methodologies or designs on how to accomplish the broad goals and guidelines. This type of more detailed planning would occur in subsequent project specific plans and environmental analyses.

A RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN (RMP) is a Reclamation planning document which guides management decisions, activities and actions affecting the resources under Reclamation's jurisdiction. The RMP establishes goals and objectives for the management area, identifies desired future conditions, defines land uses, provides direction that seeks to balance recreation use land facility development with the protection of natural and cultural resources.

This planning process will develop a single document that fulfills both of these similar planning needs.



PRELIMINARY KEY ISSUES TO STUDY

We have initially identified some of the key issues to be studied and addressed during the planning process. We will be expanding upon and adding to these key issues through public involvement.

Recreation Use & Access

MAMMOTH BAR OHV. Use of Mammoth Bar as an off-highway vehicle use area has developed from an informal interim recreation use in anticipation of a Dam and Reservoir into an established and popular use within the SRA. This GP/RMP will determine the future use of OHV use at Mammoth Bar and the management of OHV use within the SRA.

WHITewater RECREATION AND MANAGEMENT PROGRAM. Whitewater rafting and kayaking are popular activities on both the North and Middle Forks of the American River. Maintaining high quality recreation experiences, providing adequate access and ensuring protection of resources as the popularity of these activities grows will be issues addressed in this plan.



TRAILS. Hiking, running, equestrian use and mountain biking are all popular activities on the 100 miles of trails within the SRA. Equitable access, the management of diverse trail users and maintaining a sustainable trail system will be a key issues in this plan.

LEARNING ABOUT THE SITE

The process of developing a GP/RMP begins with a thorough investigation of the site to learn about and understand the existing natural and cultural resources and recreation uses of the area. By the time the investigation is complete, planners, scientists and other specialists will have compiled information about the natural, cultural, aesthetic, and recreational resources of the area including archaeological and historical resources, native vegetation and wildlife, special status species, invasive exotic species, geology, soils, and hydrology.

This study will include an assessment of the existing recreation activities and trends, use patterns within the SRA. A key part element of this part of the study is understanding how recreation opportunities within Auburn SRA fit into the local, regional and state context.

The results of this investigation will be compiled into a Resource Inventory. This information will be used in the development of a long-term vision, the exploration of alternatives, and the selection of a preferred concept for the Auburn SRA.



MINERAL COLLECTION/DREDGING. Gold dredging has a long history along the American River. Recent recreational dredging activity is an interim use that has been accepted in the SRA in anticipation that a dam and reservoir would eventually be constructed. The future of recreational dredging and management of this use will be addressed in the plan update.

EMERGING AND GROWING RECREATION USES. Rock climbing, downhill mountain biking and free riding are some of the newer recreation activities that have occurred within the SRA. This planning process will determine the future of these activities within the SRA and the management of these uses if they are provided for within the SRA.



STATUS OF AUBURN DAM PROJECT

The Auburn Dam was originally authorized by Congress in 1966 as a multi-purpose dam, providing consumptive water supply, flood protection and recreation. Construction of the dam proceeded for a decade including the building of a coffer dam and diversion tunnel to de-water the dam site and major excavation for the dam foundation. Concerns over potential seismic risks halted construction of the Dam in the late-1970's. Since that time Congress has elected not to fund the Auburn Dam project. Because the Auburn Dam is still an authorized project, Reclamation's management intent for the area is not to approve the construction of significant permanent recreation facilities within the take line of the dam area or a potential Auburn Reservoir.

The purpose of this plan is to provide direction for the management of resources and recreation uses in the existing river canyons within Auburn SRA. The Plan will not to address the issue of whether or not Auburn Dam should be constructed. The GP/RMP process will need to ensure that proposals for recreation facilities within the SRA are consistent with Reclamation's constraints in managing a still authorized dam project. If and when the decision is made to proceed with the construction of an Auburn Dam, new management direction would need to be developed for managing recreation use and resources for the area.

Wildland Fire, Fuel and Vegetation Management

Auburn SRA is located adjacent to a number of growing communities including Auburn, Applegate, Weimar, Colfax, Foresthill and Cool. The risk of wildfire along this wildland-urban interface is a key concern for these communities. . Much of Auburn SRA consists of steep canyons with native vegetation that is fire-prone or fire-dependent. This GP/RMP will provide broad direction on how the concern with wildfire risk will be addressed and how native vegetation will be managed within the SRA.

2006

2007

PHASE I

PHASE I: PROJECT INITIATION

- Project Initiation
- Site Reconnaissance & Data Collection
- GIS Map Preparation
- Stakeholder Identification and Mailing List

PHASE II

PHASE II: UNDERSTANDING THE SITE & PLANNING CONTEXT

- Stakeholder Focus Group Meetings
- Inventory of Existing Conditions
- Newsletter #1
- Public Workshop #1 – Scoping (June 15, 2006)
- Final Resources Inventory
- Identify Key Issues, Opportunities and Constraints
- Newsletter #2

PHASE III

PHASE III: DEFINING THE VISION

- Summary of Resources
- Statement of Park Purpose and Vision
- Stakeholder Focus Group Meetings
- Public Workshop #2 – Draft General Plan/RMP: Concepts, Guidelines, and Alternatives
- Newsletter #3

PHASE IV

PHASE IV: PREPARE GENERAL PLAN

- Prepare Draft GP/IRMP and Draft EIR/EIS
- Stakeholder Focus Group Meetings
- GP/RMP and Draft EIS /EIR for public review
- Public Workshop #3
- Newsletter #4
- Final GP/RMP

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT & PUBLIC WORKSHOP

Public involvement will be a key component in our planning process, which will continue throughout 2006 and into 2007. We will be holding stakeholder meetings and public workshops at key points in the process to keep you informed and to solicit your input. Newsletters will be distributed periodically throughout the process to keep you updated on the project progress. We will soon be developing a webpage for the Auburn SRA GP/RMP on the California State Parks internet site at www.parks.ca.gov. When this webpage is completed you will be able to access the site via the “Find a Park” feature and the Auburn SRA web-page or the links to “General Plans in Progress”.

The first public workshop for the Auburn SRA GP/RMP has been scheduled. This workshop will introduce the planning project and gather initial public input on key issues to be addressed in the planning process.

PUBLIC WORKSHOP #1

- **Date, Time:** June 15, 2006, 6 – 9 PM
- **Location:** Canyon View Community Center
471 Maidu Drive
Auburn, CA 95603

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:



Jim Micheaels, California State Parks, Gold Fields District
(916) 988-0205 extension 102

CALIFORNIA STATE PARKS

Gold Fields District
7806 Folsom/Auburn Road
Folsom, California 95630

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED