

UNIT 322

GROVER HOT SPRINGS STATE PARK

**MASTER PLAN STUDY
(not approved)**

March 1962

DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION

Northern Service Center • 1725 23rd Street, Suite 200
Sacramento, California 95816-7100



April 1, 1999

Memo to Potential Users of the Master Plan Study (1962) for
Grover Hot Springs State Park

This report by park staff is considered a "draft" or "preliminary" document. No record of revision or approval of this document is known. In 1998-99, a diligent search for records was conducted in DPR's Central Records and in several HQ libraries. One memo, reproduced below, shows the 1962 Master Plan was received in Sacramento for review.

The authorized planning documents for Grover Hot Springs SP are the 1960 General Development plan drawing #4526, and the 1980 Commission resolution amending the 1960 General Development plan. Unfortunately and ambiguously, there were references in both 1960 and 1980 to the "Master Plan" for the park.

Jim Woodward, Associate State Archaeologist

AUG 6 1962

Clyde L. Nowlin
Superintendent
District 3

Grover Hot Springs S.
Master Plan

This will acknowledge receipt of the Master Plan prepared by the staff of Grover Hot Springs State Park for this unit. It represents a great deal of work and, at a glance, has many interesting and well founded and thought-out features. Casual examination indicates that it conforms to the format for the narrative portion as outlined in the Master Plan Handbook.

We will review this plan in detail, forwarding comments or suggestions to you on completion of review and consideration.

ORIGINAL SIGNED BY
ROBERT B. HATCH

ROBERT B. HATCH, Supervisor
of Planning and Development

RBH:bc

cc: Mr. Wardwell
Mr. Waggoner

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MASTER PLAN STUDY
GROVER HOT SPRINGS STATE PARK

Presented by:

Park Staff
Grover Hot Springs State Park
March 31, 1962

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INTRODUCTION

THE PARK

Located in Alpine County and a State Park presently representing the high eastern slopes of the Sierras, Grover Hot Springs lies four miles west of Markiseville, the county seat.

The Park consists of a large Alpine meadow situated at 6,000 feet elevation, surrounded by steep peaks towering another 3,000 feet higher, bisected from west to east by a year around flowing trout stream with the perimeter areas timbered primarily by Jeffrey pine, a scattering of white fir and cedar, with an occasional piñon pine and juniper. This site is typical of the area immediately above the high piñon desert of Nevada.

The unique or natural feature from whence the park derives its name is the hot, mineralized springs that rise in the southwest extremity of the meadow. These springs have been known and used by humans since, probably, centuries before John C. Fremont mentioned them in his Journal of 1846. Thousands of present day folk continue to enjoy the beneficial effects of the springs even when a half mile walk on snowshoes is the only method of reaching them.

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A normal winter will blanket the meadow with from three to four feet of snow and Hot Springs Creek will run under a roof of ice its entire course through the park. Winter temperatures have been known to dip to 40° below zero for short periods of time and the prevalent cold north winds produce spectacular ice pictures of the trees. The precipitous slopes bounding the south side of the meadow retain a considerable snow pack for several months on their due north exposure.

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DECLARATION OF PURPOSE

To provide and perpetuate the scenic, historic, and recreational uses of Grover Hot Springs. To establish, operate and maintain the recreational facilities which are natural to the area.

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OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES

Significant Resources

Significant Values

Concessions

General Preservation and Use Policy

Protection

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SIGNIFICANT RESOURCES

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As the name "Grover Hot Springs State Park" implies, the prime resource of this unit is the mineralized hot springs which have served human needs, both recreational and therapeutically, for several centuries. Starting in the aboriginal past and progressing through California's recorded history to the present.

The springs are located on the southern edge of a large alpine meadow bisected by a trout stream. The perimeter, especially to the east and north, with scattered Jeffrey pines, is ideally suited for individual and group camp sites.

The meadow land is surrounded on three sides, north, west and south, by high precipitous sparsely timbered slopes reaching an average height of 3,000 feet above the valley floor. The north exposure of the ridge, south of the meadow, presents a "natural" site for a winter sports facility and its snow pack retention factor (direct north exposure) points to extended use seasons.

An abundance of potable water, both surface run off and from springs, will enable the development of use facilities

SIGNIFICANT RESOURCES (Continued)

to the limit of the area ecology. There is also adequate water under proven rights for irrigation purposes necessary to perpetuate the present meadow or re-establish the natural flora.

Wild life of the area is typical of the Eastern Sierra slopes with all species being represented in multitudes. The generous quantities of wild life observable in this region stem from the lack of use pressures which are noticeable in many other developed Sierra sections.

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SIGNIFICANT VALUES

Location, a prime value to any park unit, is especially beneficial to Grover Hot Springs State Park. Adjacency on all sides to U. S. Forest Service land tends toward the minimization of ordinary encroachments. Much of the Forest land, especially to the south and west, is proposed for recreational withdrawal and, though multiple use management will be in force, the prime utilization will be recreation as the general economic value of the timber on those other areas nearby is very low, thus there should be no violation of the natural scene in the foreseeable future.

Established trails provide the visitor access to many high mountain lakes, miles of fishing streams, unbroken solitude, and an abundance of game animals, in the surrounding wild lands.

Historically famous sites such as Genoa, Virginia City, Silver City, Bodie and many others are within an easy day's outing. The bright lights and other various forms of amusement and entertainment offered by Lake Tahoe, Reno, and Carson City, are available within an evening's drive.

Easy access to the park via a standard paved county road from Markleeville, four miles to the east, on State Routes 4 and 89, will encourage maximum use. Groceries, gasoline, meals, and lodging are easily available to the overnight or casual visitor, a convenience of considerable importance to the present day vacationer.

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CONCESSIONS

Alpine County is recognized as a prime recreation area and is being planned and zoned as such with 60% of the county economy being geared to recreation services and accommodations. The fact that Grover Hot Springs State Park is located within four miles of adequate private facilities offering meals, lodging, gasoline and groceries, in itself indicates that the establishment of this type of concession is not needed at this time.

The hot water resources shall remain available to the general public without fee above the standard day use or overnight camping charges. If there is sufficient supply, a portion of the hot water might be utilized by a future concessionaire for special convenience to that segment of the public which might be willing to pay for added service.

No winter sports facility is presently available or proposed in the area. It is probable that the public can be best served in this field by concession. The winter sports facility should include the development and operation of a standard skiing facility and a natural skating surface along with the necessary equipment rentals and sales, and furnishing of refreshments and warming conveniences.

CONCESSIONS (Continued)

As mentioned elsewhere in this document, all winter sports facility development shall be aimed toward use by amateurs and the enjoyment of the greater segment of the public. It shall not include professional or competitive slopes, jumps or runs and will be established in stages determined only by reasonable use projections.

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GENERAL PRESERVATION AND USE POLICY

✓ To preserve all natural phenomenon that presently exist and encourage the re-establishment of natural flora and features.

To continue efforts to acquire adequate adjacent lands for use and encroachment buffer zones. To encourage, advise and assist the newly adopted county planning commission in the establishment of suitable and compatible zoning ordinances.

To provide the overnight and day use facilities which are compatible to the area.

To promote early and late seasonal use of overnight facilities to off-set the relatively short season and better justify expenditure of funds for developments which would normally be idle for 60% of the year.

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PROTECTION

As with most mountain areas throughout California, Grover Hot Springs State Park is concerned with a special set of fire conditions. Excepting sweeping wild fires threatening from without, it is felt that the prime menace from a start within will arise from the meadow condition.

The meadow, some 160 acres in area, has been maintained for more than 75 years for grazing and has been supplanted with grasses which are foreign to the region—primarily Kentucky blue grass and a variety of orchard grass. Because of special characteristics this exotic cover tends to mature and retains a heavy dry mat into the following season. Two years observation of this condition reveals a brown, dead looking area when compared to the surrounding lands.

We would recommend that this area be left for a period of five years to be studied closely by the Departmental Forester and his staff as well as the park staff, because it is our feeling that the native grasses, properly taken care of, will supplant the exotic types which have taken over.

Other more or less normal protection problems such as encroachment, vandalism, plant infestations and infections, and flora removal, will present common issues that have become routine to park management and can be resolved in a customary manner. Even regular fire protection methods that have become standard throughout the Sierra parks will be applicable, with the exception of the meadow grass problem, to this area.

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VISITOR USE BRIEF

A letter from a Boy Scout - 1966
General Brief

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VISITOR USE BRIEF

The bathing facilities, using the hot and mineralized waters of Grover Hot Springs, will be made available year long.

Overnight camping and day use facilities will be available seasonally, compatible with the ecological capacity of the general area. The standard use fees will apply.

When visitor attendance, interest and use pressures warrant, a natural history program complete with facilities (camp fire circles, interpretative centers) will be programmed and offered to the public under the policies of the Division.

Winter sports facilities, under concessionaire agreement or contract will be offered the public seasonally. These will include skiing (amateur or layman alopes); skating, utilizing summer reflecting pool which in winter will serve as a natural ice surface; equipment rentals and sales; hot water bathing; warming and refreshment conveniences; cleared access and parking areas.

Group camping areas will be provided and will be available, especially to youth groups, on a reservation basis. These areas will include camping facilities, sanitary units, and separate camp fire circles. All reservations should be written on a deposit basis to assure utilization of areas.

VISITOR USE BRIEF (Continued)

Pre and post season use of facilities, especially overnight camping will be encouraged. This use will be mainly trout fishermen (early) and deer hunters (late). Both deer and trout abound in profuse numbers during their respective seasons. The revenue acquired by this "pre - post" use will help offset expenses incurred in opening and winterization of facilities, and is easily manageable through visitor educational programs and adequate patrol.

An entrance station and visitor information center will be operated seasonally or when use demands. Periods of light use collection of fees and visitor queries will be accommodated by area patrol. Fuel sales should be handled by vending machine whether under concessionaire agreement or by the State.

Public sanitary facilities will be of the standard type with the exception that all hot water, except lavatories or wash basins, will be operated by coin meters. This measure is not recommended as an economical step but one to eliminate excessive use of both water source and disposal systems. Considerable research has disclosed that vending of hot water not only meets with public approval, it tends to expedite and equalize use. Also, it aids considerably in reducing maintenance costs.

VISITOR USE SUMMARY (Continued)

An adequate trail system with at least one self guided nature walk will be developed and maintained. The established ingress and egress to wild area trails will be signed and maintained. One bisecting (east to west) horse trail will be provided to accommodate through passage of horses. The developable areas of the unit are limited and will be utilized to the fullest extent for the enjoyment of the majority of the using public. The Forest Service recreational policies provide for the horseman, therefore, it is felt that no horse camps should be developed in this State park with camping for horsemen available nearby.

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LAND STATUS

LAND STATUS

Present lands held in fee include 180 acres of the valley floor comprised primarily of meadow with a few scattered islands of timber. The hot springs are located on the southwestern corner of this tract. The meadow will be treated as the hub of the natural scenic values and must remain inviolate. The remainder of the deeded land consists of four separate parcels of 40, 40, 100 and 80 acres each. All of these lands are located on steep, rocky and sparsely timbered perimeter slopes and though they have value as scenic and buffer areas no facilities development other than trails would be feasible on them. Of the deeded land held by the Division only a few acres are developable, hence, 80 acres of U. S. Forest Service land have been acquired under term permit which is presently partitioned with 69.7 acres located immediately east of the meadow land held in fee and is ideally suited for the overnight camping development proposed for this area. The remaining 8.9 acres of this term permit is being utilized for the residence and service areas.

The Taiyabe National Forest Supervisor recommends that we establish a floating system with the 80 acre term permit. We will block in areas where we propose developments then after the facilities are established place the actual lands

LAND STATUS (Continued)

under use within a metes and bounds description. Then apply for an amendment of the permit and block the remainder in the next development area. We will repeat this process until the full 50 acres are used. He advises that the U. S. Forest Service is willing to fill in the open areas which will remain after the aforementioned shifting of lands by terminable permit. The U. S. Forest Service is also willing to place "reasonable" buffer areas under terminable permit.

Though cumbersome to management, it is recommended that we "go along" with this method until such a time as a suitable land exchange can be arranged with the U. S. Forest Service. This procedure will comply with the legal requirements of the Finance Department.

We should continue seeking methods to acquire the necessary surrounding U. S. Forest Service lands needed to round out our proposed development of Grover Hot Springs State Park.

PARK ORGANIZATION

Staffing

Service Facilities

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STAFFING (Continued)**3. Interpretative Sections:**

When an interpretative program is instituted in this unit it will be staffed for approximately three months during the summer season by two State Park Naturalists. These people will be furnished trailer or tent type accommodations whichever is more practicable or available. The naturalists will be responsible for presenting to the public the interpretation program including camp fire programs, history, nature walks, displays and the collection of specimens for preservation and display.

4. Maintenance Section:

This section will be comprised of park attendants (limited term) and park aids on a seasonal basis. These forces will be increased as development progresses to the estimated force of 3 seasonal park attendants and 27 man months of seasonal park aid time when in full operation. The duties of this section will include the performance of all maintenance functions. Supervision for this function will be by the Ranger Section.

5. Lifeguards:

When under full operation, it is estimated that 6 man months of lifeguard service will be needed to operate and

STAFFING (Continued)

maintain the hot springs bathing area. During the three months of heavy seasonal use this facility should be attended during the hours it is available to the public. Primary responsibility of this section will be public health and safety.

6. General:

This unit can be adequately administered, operated and maintained by these staffing proposals.

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SERVICE AND ADMINISTRATIVE FACILITIES

NEEDED FOR STAFF OPERATIONS

1. Standard park (office - kiosk) facility either in one building or two in close proximity, with sanitary facilities.

2. A service area comprised of shop building and warehouse combination, equipped with the necessary power and hand tools to accomplish all maintenance functions for the unit; a four bay equipment storage building; and a lumber storage shed. All buildings will be accessible through the gable ends and entire area arranged to facilitate snow removal.

3. Two permanent park residences will be established in the same general area, with one residence presently under construction.

4. A six unit mobile home unit, complete with sanitary and electrical hook-ups will be made available near the service area and will be used to accommodate both State and employee owned vehicles.

5. A one-half ton pickup, a one ton flat bed and a fire unit will be the permanent complement of vehicles to be augmented by rental of necessary vehicles during the summer season.

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FACILITIES DEVELOPMENT

Use Facilities

Utilities:

Water

Sanitation

Power

Garbage

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USE FACILITIES DEVELOPMENT

1. A bathing facility for public use and enjoyment of the hot water from Grover Hot Springs will be developed. (For location see Map.) This unit will include a large standard size recreation pool and a smaller separate bath house type installation. Two years of polling public reaction shows an almost even split on temperature requirements. The older visitors who use the water for therapeutic reasons want the temperature maintained at about 110° F. and the recreational users and children deem 85° F. about right for their needs.

Both units will include dressing rooms and showers, which will be serviced by the natural hot water piped to the location via insulated conduit from the underground collection and filtering system inconspicuously located near the source. The smaller bathing type pool will be made accessible to invalids, i.e., with ramps or elevators to accommodate wheel chairs or crutch cases, and will include adequate safety devices, rails, ropes, floats, etc. Bath units will be surrounded by ample deck space and a wind break of area compatibility, i.e., design and color.

2. Overnight camping facilities will be developed in stages and numbers determined by use pressures, starting with an initial 50 units. Most of the present wooded lands are

USE FACILITIES DEVELOPMENT (Continued)

unsuitable for use development. The overnight units will be located on U. S. Forest Service lands held under term permit. (Map). Constant pressure for eventual acquisition of these lands should be sustained until they come under State ownership. It is estimated that 300 individual camp sites can eventually be accommodated in this area, hence design and lay out of current development will be such that future supplements can be made without undue alteration of existing services.

All units will be of minimum standards and shall be arranged in such manner that use rotation for area recovery management can be maintained.

3. Day Use (Picnic) facilities will be established in two areas: No. 1 - a 35 unit development near the park entrance (presently the temporary overnight camping accommodation which will be converted to day use upon establishment of new overnight area).

No. 2 will be located near the proposed bathing facility and will initially consist of 50 units. This area, unlike No. 1, which will be serviced by spur parking, will be of walk in arrangement serviced by large mass parking area which will also accommodate bathing and winter sports users. All individual day use units will be of minimum standards with permanent stoves

USE FACILITIES DEVELOPMENT (Continued)

and portable tables. A group picnic facility will be established in the general location of area No. 2 and will include permanent table space for 100 people and a large barbeque pit. This until will be reservable.

4. Three group camp areas are feasible within the park. As with individual camp units these should be developed when use demands, starting with one unit and pre-planning for additional. Each group area will include standard utilities to accommodate 50 persons and, though located in the same general area, shall be buffered from each other so as to maintain a degree of privacy. Use of these facilities will be reservable with preference to youth groups. A policy of deposit with reservation should be established to guarantee full utilization of facility.

5. A winter sports facility will be developed near the bathing and day use area No. 2 (see map). This unit should consist of a ski run serviced by a Poma or T bar type lift, a warming hut with refreshment counter and a "natural skating surface" which will be utilized as a reflecting pool during summer season. No major concession facilities should be established at this time. However, a winter sports facility should be developed for family type use at State expense or by a concessionaire. The hot water bathing facility should be maintained by the concessionaire as an added attraction.

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USE FACILITIES DEVELOPMENT (Continued)

Winter parking will be provided by utilization of the large parking area established for summer day use.

6. A park road system will be developed as use facilities are programmed (see map). The proposed primary feeder artery which traverses the park from east to west and crosses Hot Springs twice shall be designed to facilitate snow removal. The large day use parking area shall also be designed to snow removal. The distribution system which the main road serves shall be of minimum standards with preservation of area ecology taking precedence.

7. Though the present park area is small, a trail system adequate to display the natural features shall be established.

At least one over-look trail should be provided on the slopes that lie directly north of the meadow. This can be accomplished either by informal agreement or formal easement from the U. S. Forest Service. A self-guided (numbered posts and brochure) nature trail will be routed through areas representing the natural features of the park. A complete trail system serving the same purposes as the road system shall be developed as facilities are programmed to inter-connect the park use areas and keep pedestrian travel off the roads. Presently established through trails will be maintained (perhaps some re-routing will be necessary to make them compatible with proposed developments) to riding and hiking standards to provide access to the wild lands of the region.

UTILITIESWater System

The primary source of water for domestic use will be from Buck Creek, a spring fed stream which rises high on the ridge that bounds the north side of the meadow. This stream is ideally located to provide a complete gravity water system, and has never fallen below ninety gallons per minute during the two years it has been checked.

The primary distribution mains which will serve the camping and residence areas are presently under contract and will be completed early in the spring of 1962. Provisions have been made for lateral distribution in the future development proposed for the unit.

The proposed 50,000 gallon storage tanks should be augmented by 100,000 gallon underground reinforced concrete storage reservoir when needs arise. It is estimated that this source will be adequate for the foreseeable future.

The collection and storage facilities for this system are located on U. S. Forest Service land under easement to the Division. Future acquisition plans should include this area.

Two sources under proven rights of water for irrigation purposes are available. Number 1 is a certain percentage and all of the overflow from the Shay Creek Summer Road Development and though not reliable during the dryer periods, has served in the past to

UTILITIES - Water System (Continued)

sustain the southern edge of the primary meadow. Number 2 is a diversion of Hot Springs Creek arising at the confluence of Saw Mill Creek and Charity Valley Creek. This water has been used over the years for irrigation of the major meadow areas. The distribution (ditch) system which conveys this water is still in a fair state of repair. It is proposed that the No. 2 source be utilized to service the reflecting-skating pond during the summer season.

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UTILITIES - Sewage Disposal

Since the institution of Marklee Village, a proposed subdivision of some 400 units, there have been rumors of founding a sewage disposal district which may include Grover Hot Springs State Park and the Shay Creek Summer Home Tract. Until such a time as this proposal either is solidified or abandoned, it is felt that individual septic systems for each unit developed would be the most logical and economical solution of the sewage problem.

Soil composition in all of the proposed development areas appears to be satisfactory for leaching. Soil studies by the U. S. Forest Service during recent appraisal calculations have shown that a relatively thick layer of gravel underlies the entire valley floor. This, coupled with the fact that no stream side developments are proposed, points toward the use of septic systems until either a district is formed or it becomes necessary to construct a central sewage disposal system. Natural drainage of the entire area is such that in the future a disposal plant can easily be utilized.

A treatment system will need to be engineered and installed to purify the out-flow from the swimming pool before it can be drained back into Hot Springs Creek. The volume of this hot water is such that it is felt that no other means of disposal will be feasible other than returning it to its natural drainage

UTILITIES - Sewage Disposal (Continued)

as is presently being done with the existing facility without treatment. As the water in the pool will have to meet contemporary coliform counts, it is probable that the major concern of purification will be the neutralizing of the chlorine or other chemical used to lower coliform count so the water out-flow will not be injurious to fish life or stream side flora.

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UTILITIES - Garbage Disposal

after considerable research of the subject, it is recommended that all garbage and refuse disposal be accomplished by contract to private enterprise. Reasons for this recommendation are:

1. Use of the present county dump is going to require a certain charge or other method of compensation, as the county is small and operating on a "tooth skin" budget. Any "partnership" with Alpine County will result in the state bearing the lion's share of the costs and maintenance.

2. Though we could acquire land for dumping from the U. S. Forest Service, the responsibilities for fire proofing and trash containment would be too costly and besides winter availability would be expensive, if possible at all.

3. Present land held in fee is too small and unsuitably located for either a dump site or incinerator installation.

4. A garbage contractor can be encouraged to institute service in this county with our business. Local District U. S. Forest Service Ranger is very interested in placing all of their recreational and service garbage and refuse disposal under contract for the same reasons as listed above.

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UTILITIES - Electric Power

The area is presently served by the Sierra Pacific Power Company which has a 7200 volt line serving both the Park (present facility) and the Gray Creek Summer Home Tract. A company representative claims that the present peak load of this line is at a very small percentage of its planned capability and that it is designed to handle a very high anticipated load without modification.

All primary and secondary lines should be of the overhead installation. Perimeter fringes of light to moderate timber cover are especially ideal to conceal power services.

Because of undependable winter service, due to snow and wind damage, any and all units which will depend on electricity for heat or operation should be equipped with an auxiliary power plant of minimum wattage requirements. Where practicable, all space heating or winterization systems should be the LPG type not dependent upon electricity for air distribution.

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