

COUNTY OF EL DORADO

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KIM DAWSON
Clerk of the Board



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September 10, 2019

Bureau of Reclamation
c/o Bonnie Van Pelt
7794 Folsom Dam Road
Folsom, CA 95630

Re: Comment on Preliminary General Plan

On behalf of the El Dorado County Board of Supervisors, I am writing to convey the Board's dismay at the lack of outreach throughout the process of updating the Auburn State Recreation Area General Plan/Resource Management Plan and concerns regarding the impacts of the proposed plan to our communities.

The areas of Cool, Auburn Lake Trails, Greenwood, Sliger Mine Road, Georgetown, and many stakeholders in El Dorado County were left out of the early stages of the environmental review process. The intent of CEQA is to enhance public participation in the environmental review process through scoping meetings, public notice, public review, hearings, and the judicial process. However, the only meeting held in El Dorado County was on August 15, 2019, long after the scoping process was completed, as evidenced by the meeting schedule from your website and provided for reference at the end of this letter. This was despite numerous requests from El Dorado County officials and residents to hold a meeting in El Dorado County, which will be greatly impacted by the proposed project. Perhaps if more input from residents had been included in the scoping process, the resulting plan would better address the concerns of the people who live here.

Adding hundreds of campsites into our high fire-risk communities will only exacerbate the risk of catastrophic wildfire. It is apparent by the comments being made that this is causing our residents to fear that your proposed plan will make it even more challenging to keep their homes safe. In a recent news article published in the Tahoe Daily Tribune, the public affairs specialist for the forest service's Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit is quoted as saying, "We were having so many problems with unattended campfires that we decided to make the area campfire free." Even with those restrictions, which were

put in place approximately three years ago, there were two wildfires on August 25, 2019, likely caused by illegal campfires.

The concerns regarding wildfire are intensified by the lack of infrastructure to accommodate current traffic loads, let alone the additional traffic proposed in the plan. For example, the Cherokee Bar/Ruck-a-Chucky management zone is located in the canyon at the end of Sliger Mine Road, which is a narrow, windy, rural road that can be dangerous to unfamiliar drivers due to its blind curves and pinch points. El Dorado County has no plans or funding to improve the road, yet your plan proposes to add 30 individual campsites, one group campsite, and up to five alternative camping facilities at this location. Unless State Parks or the Bureau of Reclamation is planning to fund the improvements needed on Sliger Mine Road to accommodate the project, increased traffic will cause dangerous conditions by adding many visitors who are unfamiliar with the area, and unprepared for these existing roads.

Another example is at the Confluence along Highway 49. Currently, this heavily traveled section of highway is frequently clogged due to the unmanaged parking situation near the river. Visitors vie for these parking areas because it is free whereas a fee is charged for parking along Foresthill Road on the other side of the river. Cars often pull in and out of traffic to park in this area without regard for the through traffic using Highway 49, causing backups and forcing pedestrians onto the highway to navigate their way between parked cars while walking to the river. It is stressful and dangerous for both drivers and pedestrians alike. Adding amenities to this area to attract additional visitors without drastically improving the parking situation or completely eliminating parking in this area is a recipe for disaster.

These are just a few of the many concerns that have been raised regarding the proposed plan. We have received a copy of the comment letter submitted by the Foresthill Fire Protection District dated August 15, 2019. This excerpt from their letter can be applied to all communities surrounding the project and summarizes this Board's thoughts on the proposed plan:

"The Foresthill Fire Protection District stands with the community of Foresthill in opposing further development and increased utilization of the Auburn State Recreation Area until such time that adequate relief from obvious community impacts can be completed, and appropriate support for fire and life safety service impacts mitigated."

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this project.

Sincerely,

Sue Novasel, Chair
El Dorado County Board of Supervisors

PUBLIC INPUT PROCESSES

FIRST PUBLIC WORKSHOP

November 2015

Learn about the plan and let us know what is important to you

SECOND PUBLIC WORKSHOP

Winter 2017-18

Provide input on plan alternatives and the scope of environmental review.

THIRD PUBLIC WORKSHOP

Summer 2018

Provide your feedback on the proposed plan.

45 Day Public Review Period (July 19, 2019 – September 3, 2019)

Summer 2019

Review the Auburn State Recreation Area Preliminary General Plan and Auburn Project Lands Draft Resource Management Plan along with the Draft Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement online and at selected locations.

FOURTH PUBLIC WORKSHOP

August 15, 2019

Northside Elementary School Cafeteria
860 Cave Valley Road, Cool, CA 95614
No Scheduled Presentation | Children are Welcome

STATE PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION

T.B.D. 2020

Provide final input as plan approval is considered

Check this webpage regularly as this schedule is subject to change.