



# County of El Dorado

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**To:** Honorable Board of Supervisors

**From:** Jennifer Franich, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer

**Subject:** Parks Update

This update is to provide the Board with details on parks projects and an assessment of the program. Current projects, new opportunities, and a summary of staff recommendations are provided below. Our work this year includes expanding recreational opportunities at our existing parks, delivering on new projects, and focusing on our collaborations throughout the community.

The updates below will provide details on some of our current projects, our plan for ongoing public engagement, the River Management Plan Five-Year Update, the Parks Volunteer program, coordination with other recreation agencies, and the status of the Parks Master Plan.

## CURRENT PROJECTS

The following are projects we are currently actively working on. There are others that are more minor (sign replacement, skate park equipment installation at Pioneer Park) pending Board decisions (Diamond Springs Park, Sacramento-Placerville Transportation Corridor Use, Placer County Rubicon maintenance, Cronan Ranch property) or being worked on currently but with more limited involvement from Parks staff (El Dorado Trail Missouri Flat Road crossing). We can provide answers to any questions on these items, or those detailed below.

### **Ellis Creek Building**

On January 26, 2021 (Legistar Item #21-0041) the Board approved the development grant from State Parks Off Highway Motor Vehicle Division (#G19-03-06-D01) for the construction of a maintenance building at Ellis Creek off the Rubicon Trail. The grant will fund the construction of an oversized two car garage (45'X23') to securely store the pumper truck and pumper trailer in the Ellis Creek drainage as well as house a small emergency shelter for the County and Forest Service employees. On December 12, 2023, the Board awarded the bid to MWCH Construction

LLC. At this time, the building has been ordered and we are on track to begin construction as soon as weather permits.

Total projects costs: \$335,343.

State OHV Grant: \$171,841

SMUD: \$60,374

OHV registration (Green Sticker) funds: \$103,124

### **Railroad Dog Park and Playground**

In 2009, the El Dorado County Board of Supervisors approved the concept plan for the El Dorado County Historical Railroad Park to be located within the SPTC corridor at Oriental Street in the community of El Dorado. Railroad Park is a 6.3-acre site with a section of operational track, and multi-use pedestrian, bicycle, and equestrian trails. The concept plan has not yet been fully implemented.

A major source of funding over the last several years has been through the California Drought, Water, Parks, Climate, Coastal Protection, and Outdoor Access for All Act of 2018 (Prop 68) funding through the California Department of Parks and Recreation. Prop 68 awarded funding for individual projects throughout the state through an application process, but also provided funding on a per capita basis. The County was allocated \$400,000 for capital outlay; that is, acquisition of land, or improvements to existing property beyond its original condition. Three projects were approved for use of the County's allocated Per Capita funding by the Board on September 1, 2020 (Legistar Item 20-1141). Of the \$400,000, \$50,000 was allocated for a dog park and \$50,000 was allocated for a playground at Railroad Park.

The dog park was moved to the Railroad park location from the previously approved site adjacent to the El Dorado Trail off Jacquier Road (Legistar Item #23-0937). The relocation of the park means that the funding now needs no match requirement, since it is located in a severely disadvantaged area. The dog park is almost complete. Staff is also working to finalize dog park rules and will return to the Board with an ordinance.

Prop 68 Per Capita Funding: \$100,000

### **Forebay Park Renovation**

The Forebay Reservoir, located in Pollock Pines on Forebay Road, is owned and operated by EID. The County acquired Forebay Community Park on December 16, 2014, Legistar #14-0132 from EID. The park features a little league ball field, batting cage, bleachers, a scorer's booth, snack shack, championship horseshoe pits, and a recreation center.

The Park needs several improvements. Parks staff submitted an application for a Prop 68 grant for improvements in 2019 and 2020, but the grant application was unsuccessful (Legistar #19-0687 and 20-1141). The County has since allocated substantial funding for park renovation (see below). The community has also been working to fundraise for improvements at the park,

including for a senior exercise area. On January 23, 2024 (Legistar Item #23-1967) the Board approved an agreement with Nichols Consulting Engineers (NCE) to provide schematic planning and civil engineering design services for Phase 1 of the Forebay Community Park renovations, which will include the parking lot, access roads and entry gates, major grading, fuels management, utilities, and the playground. Parks and Facilities staff will be working together with NCE to complete this phase of the project in 2024, with the intention to commence construction in 2025.

General Fund: \$100,000

Accumulative Capital Outlay Fund: \$43,000

Prop 68 Per Capita: \$300,000

American Rescue Plan Act Funds (ARPA): \$3,000,000

(Plus donations from the community!)

### **Chili Bar**

Chili Bar is a rafting/kayaking put-in downstream of the Highway 193 Bridge over the South Fork of the American River. The site is approximately 16 acres and is owned by El Dorado County. The lower area of the property, located adjacent to the river, is operated for rafting activities by the American River Conservancy (ARC) under the terms of a conservation easement. The upper level includes parking, structures, and the site of a previously existing mobile home park. Chili Bar is a heavily used access point for the South Fork of the American River.

Following the review of the Chili Bar Feasibility Study (Legistar Item #21-1199), the Board of Supervisors directed staff to explore a concessionaire model for management of the site, explore grant and revenue-generating opportunities, and coordinate with the American River Conservancy, who holds a conservation easement for the lower portion of the site and manages and operates the park. As a result of site investigations and review of old plans and documents, it was also determined that an in-depth site assessment would be needed to determine the infrastructure needs (including wastewater, water, and electrical), site layout, and costs. On February 6, 2024, the Board approved an agreement for Lebeck Engineering to evaluate the site and provide four feasible, preliminary development options, with deliverables to include site plans and cost estimates (Legistar Item #24-0198). Staff is also continuing to work with the American River Conservancy to identify possible grant funding, especially for a permanent restroom at the site.

Transient Occupancy Tax: \$250,000

River Trust Fund: \$100,000

General Fund: \$1,000,000

### **Rubicon Parking Lot Expansion**

The Rubicon Trail is a 22-mile trail that traverses through El Dorado County, in the Eldorado National Forest, and through Placer County within the Tahoe National Forest and Lake Tahoe

Basin Management Unit. 23-2156. On January 9, 2024, the Board approved Resolution 008-2024 accepting grant funds in the amount of \$357,586 from the State of California, Department of Parks and Recreation, Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) Division, with a portion for the planning phase of a parking lot expansion project at the Tahoma Staging area on the Tahoe side of the trail along McKinney Springs Road. When current parking lot is full, parking on the road can cause overcrowding and resource damage to the adjacent lands. This project will provide expanded parking to alleviate parking issues on the road. Staff will be returning to the Board with an agreement for biological studies, aquatic studies, cultural studies, and environmental review for this project in the near future. This project is part of our ongoing maintenance of the Rubicon, improvements to user experience, and reduction of impacts to the environment.

OHV Division Grant Funds: \$278,909

### **Henningsen Lotus Park**

Henningsen Lotus Park is a 51-acre park located along the south bank of the South Fork American River in Lotus. The park is located within the floodplain which is inundated up to 15+ feet during large floods. The multiple atmospheric river precipitation events in December 2022 and January 2023 flooded the park damaging the well pump structure and created large mounds and scour channels in the boat ramp, beach, and gravel bar areas. Staff have obtained permits to remove material from the boat ramp area to regrade the area and remove larger rocks and are targeting April 2024 for completion. Staff is also pursuing FEMA funding in the form of mitigation funds to prevent these damages from happening in the future. With additional funds, we hope to be able to clear out the vegetation and repair the swales at the undeveloped part of the property. There is also the possibility of expanding the park to include the currently undeveloped portion of the property, to be funded with a potential California State Parks, Division of Boating and Waterways grant. Staff will return to the Board at a later date with any recommendations for grant applications for funding this project.

Insurance Funding: \$107,355.51

### **PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT**

Public engagement is an ongoing necessity for the Parks program, and there are several efforts we are making to continue to respond to the needs of the public. We have recently convened user groups including those at the skatepark, baseball and softball leagues, Rubicon, and river outfitters. Through these planned meetings and more informal touchpoints, we are able to understand any issues, maintenance needs, or program updates. We will continue to engage as needed. Public engagement on new parks projects is often a requirement at certain points, such as during the environmental analysis phase. However, it has become clear that in addition to engagement at the early phases of project development, we should continue to check in with the community and stakeholders to adjust our decision making as the project comes together. Last, Parks is setting the stage for launching our own social media accounts to better provide

timely updates to the community on upcoming meetings, damages or repairs to features, park closures, or any other news that may benefit our enthusiastic public.

### RIVER PROGRAM

The River Management Plan (RMP) was developed to manage use of the South Fork of the American River. The plan was designed to monitor and evaluate use within and along the river in order to minimize impacts to the environment and private landowners. The RMP specifies that the annual reports be compiled every fifth year, along with County staff recommendations, for submission to the Parks and Recreation Commission for input and comments. In 2018 a comprehensive update to the RMP was adopted and began implementation in 2019. Staff compiled the five-year review summary, including recommended changes to the program, and reviewed recommendations with the PRC at their January 2024 meeting.

As stated in Chapter IV, the RMP is designed to serve as an active, evolving tool that implements the County's river management goals. The five-year periodic review is intended to provide opportunities for ongoing refinement of the RMP in response to results of annual operations review to ensure public safety, environmental protection, and the most efficient use of County resources. It also provides an opportunity to review the adopted and implemented management actions and impact mitigation measures to ensure that they remain meaningful and responsive to current guidance provided by the Board, the public, advisory committees, and other county departments. The following subjects are proposed for further study, including meeting with the outfitters for feedback and ideas:

1. Guide Education and Requirements to focus on training outfitters and establishing all requirements and resources for guides before or early in the season, but training for individual guides is to be handled internally by the individual outfitters. This could include an online training module for completion for each guide, to be submitted by the outfitter as a condition of permit renewal the following year.
2. Outfitters with a weekend day allocation of less than 30 user days may "flex" their allocation if they stay within their season- long weekend day allocation. The Staff recommendation is to clarify whether multiple permit holders should be allowed to use flex days for their permits with 30 or less user days.
3. Group sizes on the river are an ongoing issue. Staff recommendation is to clarify "pod size" language to ensure that all understand that all group or pod sizes are seven or fewer, and that all pods must have 5-minute separations.
4. Permit Process administration may be revised. Currently, the review of permits follows the same process as a permit renewal, so in practice the permits are essentially 1-year permits.
5. Staff is also considering options to revise the structure for fines/penalties to increase voluntary compliance.

Following input and comments from the outfitters, staff will return to the PRC with recommendations. These will then go to the Planning Commission. All staff recommendations, including comments generated by the PRC and Planning Commission will be submitted to the Board of Supervisors for review and consideration.

### VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

The Parks program relies heavily on volunteers, from maintaining the Rubicon Trail to litter pickup at sports fields. Over the next year, we will focus on refining our volunteer program. This will include a written assignment for each volunteer, coordination with Parks staff, and making sure that each volunteer meets County requirements and is both well-trained and well-equipped to perform their volunteer assignment. Staff will also organize Park clean-up days to allow for members of the public to contribute to their favorite parks. For this season on the Rubicon, staff will be pausing the adopt-a-trail program in favor of hosted work parties. The success of the work parties will be evaluated over the season. In the future, adopt-a-trail programs may return to the Rubicon and the El Dorado Trail. These activities have been successful in the past, both in terms of keeping our parks in great condition and for building a sense of community ownership.

### PARKS AND TRAILS MASTER PLAN

Funding for an update to the Parks and Trails Master Plan was included in the recommended budget. Parks staff will complete this project with assistance from the Parks and Recreation Commission.

Currently, the public outreach chapter of the plan is being completed. Staff completed a countywide survey, held stakeholder meetings, hosted five public workshops, and engaged the public in other more informal ways, all to gain insight into the public's needs and wants. At the Parks and Recreation Commission meeting on October 19, 2023, the Commission appointed an ad hoc committee to assemble and attend a meeting of recreation providers and neighboring agencies. The Commission intends this Master Plan Advisory Committee (MPAC) to provide input on the Parks Master Plan update. On February 5, 2024, the MPAC met to discuss the Master Plan and the plans for parks and trails for each of the committee members' respective agencies. At this meeting each entity provided information and ideas on ways in which their organization could potentially collaborate with El Dorado County in meeting the park, recreation, and trail needs of County residents and visitors, including for open space acquisition and management, trail connectivity, and other collaboration. This is the last of the planned public outreach efforts. Staff will return to the Board with a presentation on the outcomes of our outreach, and then will embark on completing the remaining portions of the Master Plan. A final draft is to come to the Board by the end of 2024 for adoption.

### AGENCY COORDINATION

The MPAC Advisory Committee mentioned above highlighted the importance of communication and collaboration with other park and recreation providers within and neighboring the County. As part of the El Dorado General Plan Five-Year Review, we were reminded of General Plan Measure PR-J, which tasks the County to, “Establish a working group... to coordinate the actions of County agencies and resource-based recreation providers in the county.” Throughout the Master Plan process, and moving forward into the future, staff intends to organize this group of stakeholders to collaborate on trail connectivity, providing resources and services, public education, and any other parks topics. It is proposed that this meeting occur twice per year.