

Parks and Recreation Commission
Comments on
Discussion item 2
August 20, 2015 Meeting Agenda

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the priority list for Parks in El Dorado County, specifically District 4, on the agenda for August 20th.

In regard to the 16 acres at Chili Bar which is paid for and owned by the County, and is a source of revenue to the County through a percentage of put-in fees collected for rafting from the American River Conservancy which manages the collection of fees, maintenance of the river front land area, and supplies bathroom facilities, I feel it is short sighted to dismiss the potential and actual benefit of the land to the County.

El Dorado County manages the South Fork American River and Chili Bar is one of only two places where individual boaters can access the upper run of the river. The other is privately owned and not open to the public (The Nugget). American River Conservancy owns the public conservation easement for the land which includes the road down the river river and the beach area and this easement remains with the property in perpetuity.

American River Conservancy is not a land ownership entity. They facilitate purchase of lands and grant them or sell them to managing parties like BLM, USFS, or in this case, El Dorado County. You received this property at a hugely discounted price. To sell or return the property without exploring the potential value of the property is premature.

El Dorado County is in the business of managing the South Fork of the American River from Chili Bar to Salmon Falls. The land that is Chili Bar is a vital part of managing this river. The River Trust Fund received approximately \$4,000 from ARC last year (20% of revenue) and this helped fund management programs for the river.

Henningson Lotus Park which is also a County owned and maintained riverfront park is at peak capacity on weekends throughout the summer because it is a water based park and people want to play on the river. Chili Bar is closer to metropolitan areas and a visitor base and has tremendous potential for use for swimming, picnics, events, etc. which could take some of the burden off HLP.

One of the items on the Tier List for priorities at HLP is a Whitewater Park. Chili Bar would be an ideal site for this type of activity for several reasons. It is surrounded by relatively few landowners, it has very limited means to access the area as opposed to HLP which means potential revenue is easier to collect. It is not in the middle of any designated quiet zone areas like HLP so conflicts between users and property owners would be minimized. It also has the potential to spread water based usage out among parks.

I would urge you to keep Chili Bar on your Park inventory list. If you look at other water related parks and facilities in the County you will see tremendous usage and demand.

Cronan Ranch also has tremendous potential and sees year-round use for hiking, biking, running, horse riding, gold panning, and hunting to name a few of the primary activities. I would not be opposed to having an MOU with BLM who currently manages the land from Greenwood

Creek to Salmon Falls along the South Fork American River to manage this County owned land especially if more parking were created. It would be a shame to lose this land since it is already paid for.

Regarding the purchase of additional land at Henningson Lotus Park, I am opposed to this for the following reasons:

The river and the land surrounding the current park has a capacity that has never been considered. There are only a finite number of cars, people, and use that this section of the river can be expected to support and remain healthy and this has not been studied in any of the Draft or Final Plans. The Park sits in the middle of the quiet zone and the impact of more use in this zone has not been addressed in either of the Plans. Coloma and Lotus reach saturation capacity many days, especially during the summer months on weekends. To add to this potential number in this compressed area is not appropriate in my opinion. Use should be encouraged to be spread out and not condensed to the point of conflict. Existing dirt lots on the side of Lotus Road should be better marked and managed for additional parking capacity. The river is a finite resource and the land surrounding it should match what the immediate environment can support.

In regards to expanding the TOT tax to campgrounds, I am in favor. These campgrounds bring river users that currently contribute nothing to the management of, and enforcement efforts on the river. The tremendous explosion of casual floaters in the middle section of the river the past few years needs to be addressed with more river patrol, sheriff presence, and education. The River Trust Fund is not adequately funded to maintain all of the programs needed to properly manage this river use that is directly associated with the campgrounds in the area. As a property owner I would like to see the tax extended to the businesses in the area that directly cause impact to the river and to my property and see that the fees collected go directly to managing the resource.

Thank you for allowing me to comment on the above issues,
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