

# COUNTY OF NEVADA

## STATE OF CALIFORNIA

950 Maidu Avenue, Suite 200 • Nevada City, California 95959-8617

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Telephone: (530) 265-1480  
Fax: (530) 265-9836  
Toll-Free Telephone: (888) 785-1480

E-Mail: [bdofsupervisors@co.nevada.ca.us](mailto:bdofsupervisors@co.nevada.ca.us)  
Web: [www.mynevadacounty.com/clerkofboard](http://www.mynevadacounty.com/clerkofboard)

June 14, 2011

The Honorable Jerry Brown  
Governor, State of California  
State Capitol  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Governor Brown:

The Nevada County Board of Supervisors would like to express our strong objection to the proposed closure of two State Parks within Nevada County – Malakoff Diggins State Historic Park and the South Yuba River State Park. While we understand the difficult decisions that must be made to balance the State budget, closure of these two parks could result in an enormous liability to the State in terms of protecting the public health and safety. Both of these parks encompass large areas of land in remote rural locations that can't just be fenced off. There is also no public or private agency that is capable of protecting the historic and environmental values that caused these areas to be included in the State Park system.

Located 26 miles from Nevada City, **Malakoff Diggins State Historic Park** is the site of one of the largest and richest hydraulic mining areas that existed in California. The Park covers approximately 2 square miles of rocky, tree-covered and hilly terrain. It contains the 1-square mile historic Diggins, the carefully restored historic town of North Bloomfield, over 12 miles of trails, campsites, picnic areas, a pond and a 7,847-foot bedrock tunnel that served as a drain. Without oversight by trained law enforcement and a full time caretaker, the Park could fall victim to vandalism, homeless encampments, illegal campfires, and trash dumping; and pose a threat to the public from crime, personal injuries and catastrophic wildfire.

**South Yuba River (SYR) State Park** extends along a 20-mile stretch of the South Yuba River, and lies within a 39-mile stretch that is designated as a California Wild and Scenic River. The Park includes the Bridgeport Bridge—the longest single-span covered bridge in the world, a California Registered Historical Landmark that is also listed in the National Register of Historic Places; the steep rugged river canyon, and the Independence Trail - the first identified wheelchair-accessible wilderness trail in the country. The park is not one single block of land, but is dispersed in sections within a mosaic of (1) lands managed by the California Department of Parks and Recreation, the Bureau of Land Management and the Tahoe National Forest; and (2) private property.

It is unclear how the State can “close” or restrict access to Malakoff and South Yuba River State Parks considering their physical size and geography.

In March 1999 the three forenamed agencies signed a Memorandum of Understanding to jointly write a Comprehensive Management Plan for the South Yuba River. The Plan, completed in June 2005, was needed “to satisfy federal and state needs to protect the ‘Outstandingly Remarkable Values,’ water quality, and free-flowing conditions that caused the river to be recommended as a federal Wild and Scenic River, and designated as a State Wild and Scenic River.” The Plan also provides goals and actions to manage a host of environmental, cultural and wildlife resources, fire suppression and prevention, recreation, transportation infrastructure, and public safety/law enforcement. It is unclear how the State can “close” the SYR State Park without severely compromising its responsibilities to protect the South Yuba River under this Plan.

The SYR Park receives approximately 250,000 visitors a year. In the summer months there is an average of 15-20 emergency medical calls for falls from trails, bridges, and rocks and people trapped in rough currents. Under the new scenario these figures are likely to increase. Without a plan to address theft, vandalism, resource degradation, marijuana farms, crime, injuries, infrastructure system failures, and the extreme likelihood of catastrophic fire from illegal campsites; these impacts will eventually cost the state more than the purported \$11-\$22 million in savings than these closures are meant to achieve.

While the idea of partnering with local governments and non-profit organizations might be realistic for smaller parks, it is unrealistic in Nevada County. These two parks have relied on a dedicated but small (and shrinking) group of volunteers to serve as docents, create and maintain exhibits, pick up trash and operate visitors centers, but the more complex issues of public safety, infrastructure, and law enforcement need to remain with the State. Nevada County does not have a Parks department and our Sheriff, cities and special districts are financially stretched to near the breaking point. Local non-profits may try to help, but in the current economy their reliance on donations presents an unreliable future funding source for the Parks.

In light of the concerns raised above, closure of these State Parks would be irresponsible to the taxpayers who have invested tens of thousands of dollars in these local treasures. The Board of Supervisors respectfully requests that the South Yuba River and Malakoff Diggins State Parks remain open.

Sincerely,



Edward C. Scofield  
Chairman, Board of Supervisors

Copied to:

Senator Doug LaMalfa  
Senator Ted Gaines  
Assembly Member Dan Logue  
Paul McIntosh, Executive Director, California State Association of Counties  
Greg Norton, President/CEO, Regional Council of Rural Counties  
Tom Quinn, Forest Supervisor, Tahoe National Forest  
Bill Haigh, Mother Lode Field Office Manager, Bureau of Land Management  
Jim Branham, Executive Director, Sierra Nevada Conservancy  
Elizabeth Goldstein, President, California Parks Foundation  
Joan Clayburgh, Executive Director, Sierra Nevada Alliance  
Jason Rainey, Executive Director, South Yuba River Citizens League  
Wes Nelson, President, Malakoff Diggins Park Association  
Dave Anderson, President, South Yuba River Park Association  
Olivia Diaz, Chair, Sierra Nevada Group, Sierra Club Mother Lode Chapter  
Carol Malnor, President, Sierra Foothills Audobon Society