



COUNTY OF PLACER
Community Development/Resource Agency

Michael J. Johnson, AICP
Agency Director

PLANNING
SERVICES DIVISION

Paul Thompson, Deputy Director

MEMORANDUM

TO: Honorable Board of Supervisors

FROM: Michael J. Johnson, AICP
Agency Director

DATE: July 23, 2013

SUBJECT: STATUS UPDATE – TRUCKEE RIVER CORRIDOR ACCESS PLAN CEQA-NEPA
PROCESS

ACTION REQUESTED

Truckee River Corridor Access Plan CEQA-NEPA Process – Status Update. No Board action is requested.

BACKGROUND

The Truckee River is an important resource that serves functions ranging from water supply to transportation to recreation. The river is a regional natural resource that provides a recreational trout fishery, habitat for the endangered Lahontan cutthroat trout, and riparian habitat for wildlife.

The Truckee River is also an essential transportation corridor. State Route (SR) 89 parallels the river, serving as a regional gateway to the North Shore of the Tahoe Basin. SR 89 also provides essential circulation for local residents living along the river and in both Placer and Nevada counties, and is a key route for visitors to access major ski areas and the Lake Tahoe.

The Truckee River Corridor is also an outstanding recreation resource that provides a popular destination for paddlers, hikers, anglers, cross-country skiers, and bicyclists. The existing Class 1 trail along the southernmost river reach is popular with both families and more serious athletes. However, the public's love for the river, combined with the recent growth in the local population and development, has to put substantial pressure on the Truckee River corridor. These pressures include habitat impacts, such as eroded streambanks, and degraded riverside wetlands and meadows. Safety hazards occur at intersections and where drivers park along SR 89 to walk to the river. Visitors and locals are currently inappropriately crossing private property to reach or cross the river.

Public interest in and use of the Truckee River is increasing among local and visiting recreationists, such as fly fishers, paddlers, bicyclists, and hikers. The Truckee River is an increasing attraction to tourists from outside the area. This is particularly evident with the recent revitalization of the Truckee River at the outlet of Lake Tahoe.

Today, no single agency, organization, or stakeholder has jurisdiction over all the land in the river corridor or control of all these issues; however, leadership in the form of coordination of plans and projects can go a long way toward creating solutions. The Placer County Planning Division took the first steps toward this coordination by preparing of the Truckee River Corridor Access Plan in 2006.

The vision of the Truckee River Corridor Access Plan is to restore and enhance the river corridor's ecological, water quality, recreational and non-motorized transportation values for the benefit of residents and visitors, while protecting private property rights of corridor landowners. The 2006 Plan is intended to serve as the guiding vision to help agencies and organizations:

1. Direct land management activities;
2. Enhance, restore and protect natural resources; and
3. Construct a trail from Squaw Valley to the Town of Truckee line, linking to other trail systems in the Truckee-Tahoe region.

Staff is currently preparing a California Environmental Quality Act-National Environmental Policy Act (CEQA-NEPA) document that analyzes the 2006 Plan at a programmatic level. When specific implementation projects come before the County for approval, these projects will be reviewed in light of the analysis embedded within a completed CEQA-NEPA document.

As a program-level document, the environmental review is intended to comprehensively examine the potential environmental effects of the series of potential projects proposed for the Corridor Access Plan (CAP), consistent with Section 15168 of the State CEQA Guidelines. Completion of the CEQA-NEPA document will allow Placer County to seek additional funding to move forward with the construction of a multi-purpose trail linking Squaw Valley to the Town of Truckee that promotes safe public access and recreation and the sustainable use of this sensitive resource.

Planning Division staff will give the Board of Supervisors a status update concerning the Truckee River Corridor Access Plan CEQA-NEPA document at the July 23, 2013 Board hearing. Project environmental review is expected to be completed in early 2014.

FISCAL IMPACT

Funds to complete CEQA and NEPA compliance for the Truckee River Corridor Access Plan came from a 2011 North Lake Tahoe Resort Association Infrastructure Grant award (\$265,000) and the Open Space Trust Fund (\$50,000). In addition, \$35,000 of in-kind staff time has been allocated to CEQA-NEPA document preparation, grant administration, and public outreach. There is no new net County cost at this time.