

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE
DIRECTOR'S OFFICE
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**CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT STATUTORY EXEMPTION FOR
 RESTORATION PROJECTS
 CONCURRENCE NO. 21080.56-2026-108-R2**

Project: Lake Valley SRA Upper Truckee River Restoration Project – Reach 7
Location: El Dorado County
Lead Agency: California Department of Parks and Recreation
Lead Agency Contact: Nathan Shasha; Nathan.Shasha@parks.ca.gov

Background

Project Location: The Lake Valley State Recreation Area (SRA) Upper Truckee River Restoration Project – Reach 7 (Project) is centered at approximately 38.869875, -120.014031, and located at 2500 Emerald Bay Road, South Lake Tahoe, CA 96150. The Project will be completed along an approximately 1.5-mile segment of the Upper Truckee River located just north of the unincorporated town of Meyers and approximately 4.5 miles south of Lake Tahoe, in El Dorado County. The Project includes a total target restoration area of 238 acres, which includes 26.5 acres within the 608-acre Washoe Meadows State Park (SP) and 211.5 acres within the 224-acre Lake Valley SRA, including portions of the Lake Tahoe Golf Course.

Project Description: The California Department of Parks and Recreation (Lead Agency) proposes to conserve, restore, protect, or enhance, and assist in the recovery of California native fish and wildlife, and the habitat upon which they depend or restore or provide habitat for California native fish and wildlife. The purpose of the Project is to restore ecological functions, improve geomorphic processes, increase habitat value, increase nutrient uptake, and improve adjacent riparian habitat. The Project will restore geomorphic and ecological function to a 1.5-mile reach of the Upper Truckee River by creating a wider river corridor that functions under current hydrologic conditions, reconnects the river to its active floodplain, and enhances aquatic and riparian habitats. This work will result in improved river and meadow conditions and greater habitat complexity and diversity. The Project is designed to benefit aquatic and terrestrial species in the area, including, but not limited to, Lahontan cutthroat trout (*Oncorhynchus henshawi henshawi*), western pearlshell (*Margaritifera falcata*), and Paiute sculpin (*Cottus beldingii*).

The Lake Tahoe Golf Course, which is located within the Lake Valley SRA and portions of the Washoe Meadows SP, was constructed in the mid-1950s and significantly constrains the Upper Truckee River channel within the Project area with bridges, golf fairways, and golf

greens on the streambanks. The golf course essentially locks the Upper Truckee River into a modified alignment, preventing natural river meandering and causing streambank incision and channel instability. The historic channel modifications have prevented historically active groundwater recharge, sediment deposition, and uptake of excess nutrients by meadow and floodplain vegetation.

The Project will include the following restoration activities:

- Approximately 15 acres of inset floodplain will be graded to restore hydrologic connectivity observed in other portions of the Project reach. The target grading will include the use of approximately 35,000 cubic yards of fill. The floodplain elevation modification will increase flooding frequency and will increase flow to currently disconnected or rarely inundated channels within the Project area.
- The main channel will be armored with approximately 460 linear feet of riffles, engineered log jams, and log crib walls, and approximately 815 linear feet of buried toe protection will be installed along the inset floodplain. The riffles and crib walls will be installed where there is not sufficient room for floodplain grading.
- Armored riffles, in-channel boulders, and engineered log jams will be used throughout the Project reach to increase channel and habitat complexity, encourage aggradation, promote floodplain inundation, and protect banks from unintended incision.
- Two bridges will be removed and relocated from Hole 6 and Hole 7, and will be replaced and widened with a single, 150-foot, full span structure to account for the targeted increase to channel size. The existing bridge crossing near Hole 12 will be elevated and modified to accommodate the enhanced floodplain. All modifications are necessary to accommodate the increased post-Project channel capacity and will reduce the overall footprint of necessary infrastructure.
- Hole 12 will be moved out of the floodplain and reconfigured into an upland area to significantly reduce the impacts to the channel and associated floodplain. Following removal of Hole 12, the floodplain previously occupied by Hole 12 will be restored. Holes 6, 10, 11, and 13 will all be partially modified to reduce impacts to the floodplain and allow for increased floodplain habitat.
- Existing cart paths at Holes 6, 10, and 12 will be removed, reduced, or modified to allow for increased channel inundation, reduce the overall footprint of paths, and relocate the paths outside of valuable riparian and floodplain habitat.

Initial restoration activities are intended to span two seasons. Following initial restoration, the Project will be monitored by the Lead Agency, and an adaptive management approach will be implemented. Project-related adaptive management is expected to occur over approximately a five-year period and may include physical work to address functionality of the activities described above. Following the adaptive management period, the Lead Agency will be responsible for ongoing maintenance indefinitely to ensure restoration and enhancement success.

Tribal Engagement: The Native American Heritage Commission was contacted to conduct a search of the Sacred Lands File for the Project study area on February 2, 2022. The Lead Agency sent letters requesting consultation to all identified tribes on May 2, 2022, including the Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California, United Auburn Indian Community of the Auburn Rancheria, Wilton Rancheria, Colfax-Todds Valley Consolidated Tribe, Tsi Akim Maidu, Shingle Springs Band of Miwok Indians, and Lone Band of Miwok Indians.

The Lead Agency also conducted in-person meetings with the Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California on June 7, 2024, August 20, 2025, and November 12, 2025. Detailed cultural surveys have been conducted by the Lead Agency, and interested tribes will be invited to participate in defining and establishing cultural resource avoidance measures. The Lead Agency will retain qualified archeological and tribal monitors to monitor ground disturbances during restoration activities.

Interested Party Coordination: The Lead Agency has engaged with interested members of the public, regulatory agencies, media, and other agency partners. The Lead Agency has continued close participation in the Upper Truckee River Watershed Advisory Group and Tahoe Watershed Information Group. These groups include the California Tahoe Conservancy, City of South Lake Tahoe, South Lake Tahoe Airport, United States Forest Service, South Tahoe Public Utility District, Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board, Bureau of Reclamation, League of Save Lake Tahoe, Tahoe Fund, El Dorado County, Sierra Club, and the local Washoe Tribe. Media releases of the most recent Project update and Project status were completed in July 2024, and Project area tours have been made available to interested parties. Additionally, ongoing public and regional agency partner engagement will continue through the final design of the Project.

Anticipated Project Implementation Timeframes:

Start date: July 2028

Completion date: October 2033

Lead Agency Request for CDFW Concurrence: On June 19, 2026, the Director of the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW Director) received a concurrence request from the Lead Agency pursuant to Public Resources Code section 21080.56, subdivision (e) (Request). The Request seeks the CDFW Director's concurrence with the Lead Agency's determination on June 19, 2026, that the Project meets certain qualifying criteria set forth in subdivisions (a) to (d), inclusive, of the same section of the Public Resources Code (Lead Agency Determination). The CDFW Director's concurrence is required for the Lead Agency to approve the Project relying on this section of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). (Pub. Resources Code, § 21000 et seq.).

Concurrence Determination

The CDFW Director concurs with the Lead Agency Determination that the Project meets the qualifying criteria set forth in Public Resources Code section 21080.56, subdivisions (a) to (d), inclusive (Concurrence).

Specifically, the CDFW Director concurs with the Lead Agency that the Project meets all of the following conditions: (A) the Project is exclusively to conserve, restore, protect, or enhance, and assist in the recovery of California native fish and wildlife, and the habitat upon which they depend; or is exclusively to restore or provide habitat for California native fish and wildlife; (B) the Project may have public benefits incidental to the Project's fundamental purpose; (C) the Project will result in long-term net benefits to climate resiliency, biodiversity, and sensitive species recovery; and includes procedures and ongoing management for the protection of the environment; and (D) Project construction activities are solely related to habitat restoration. Pursuant to Public Resources Code section 21080.56, subdivision (g), CDFW will post this Concurrence on its CEQA Notices and Documents internet page: <https://wildlife.ca.gov/Notices/CEQA>.

This Concurrence is based on best available science and supported, as described below, by substantial evidence in CDFW's administrative record of proceedings for the Project.

This Concurrence is also based on a finding that the Project is consistent with and that its implementation will further CDFW's mandate as California's trustee agency for fish and wildlife, including the responsibility to hold and manage these resources in trust for all the people of California.

Discussion

- A. Pursuant to Public Resources Code section 21080.56, subdivision (a), the CDFW Director concurs with the Lead Agency that the Project will exclusively conserve, restore, protect, or enhance, and assist in the recovery of California native fish and wildlife, and the habitat upon which they depend; or restore or provide habitat for California native fish and wildlife.

The Project will assist in the recovery of hydrologic and geomorphic function of the channel and the adjacent floodplain within the 238-acre Project area. As a result, the Project is expected to increase floodplain and groundwater connectivity, enhance aquatic and floodplain/riparian habitat quality and diversity, enhance terrestrial wildlife quality and diversity, reduce anthropogenic structure footprints, and help to stabilize erosion. This restoration is expected to increase aquatic habitat complexity, improve riparian vegetation diversity, and increase the spatial extent of floodplain inundation, which will result in wetter floodplain conditions and an increase in the extent and vigor of riparian, wet meadow, and aquatic species such as Lahontan cutthroat trout.

- B. Pursuant to Public Resources Code section 21080.56, subdivision (b), the CDFW Director concurs with the Lead Agency that the Project may have incidental public benefits, such as public access and recreation.

The Lead Agency expects the Project may incidentally result in certain public access and recreation benefits associated with fishing, nature viewing, and other recreational activities while maintaining, but not increasing, existing golfing opportunities. The Project includes restoration activities to remove or lessen the impact of existing

recreation and access within the site's floodplain, which will largely be accomplished by moving and/or consolidating existing recreation and access facilities out of the floodplain. The Project may also result in minor incidental public safety benefits due to the Project creating increased flood channel capacity and lower water surface levels.

- C. Pursuant to Public Resources Code section 21080.56, subdivision (c), the CDFW Director concurs with the Lead Agency that the Project will result in long-term net benefits to climate resiliency, biodiversity, and sensitive species recovery, and includes procedures and ongoing management for the protection of the environment.

Long-term Net Benefits to Climate Resiliency: The Project area is expected to experience changes in hydrology due to climate change. These predicted changes include larger and/or more intense and unpredictable weather patterns, including rain-on-snow events, which could result in increased flooding or periods of extended drought, which would result in drier conditions more prone to wildfire.

By reconnecting the floodplain, the Project will result in a system that is more resilient to future changing flow regimes. The floodplain enhancements will also advance the channel evolution process to widen the riparian corridor for more valuable floodplain habitat and allow for wetter floodplain conditions, which will increase wildfire resiliency and improve the extent and vigor of riparian vegetation.

Improving the connection to the floodplain will also result in a net benefit to climate resiliency by increasing groundwater recharge and storage capacity in the alluvial aquifer. This will minimize the effects of flooding and improve water supply. This groundwater recharge will also help offset the effects of future drought within the watershed. During wetter seasons the groundwater recharge may also increase the extent of wetland soil and vegetative growth, which would increase the rate of carbon sequestration.

Long-term Net Benefits to Biodiversity: The Project will create over 15 acres of floodplain habitat. Improvements to habitat quality will result in additional breeding, rearing, and foraging habitat for aquatic and terrestrial species. Localized aggradation of the streambed will decrease suspended sediment in Upper Truckee River and improve water quality, benefiting native aquatic habitat, as well as the overall ecosystem biodiversity. Aquatic species that have the potential to benefit from the Project include mountain whitefish (*Prosopium williamsoni*) and Lahontan Lake tui chub (*Siphateles bicolor pectinifer*).

The increased foraging habitat will improve food web stability and result in a long-term net benefit to biodiversity of native birds that have the potential to occur in the Project area, including California horned lark (*Eremophila alpestris actia*), white-crowned sparrow (*Zonotrichia leucophrys*), and black-crowned night heron (*Nycticorax nycticorax*). The Project will also increase foraging opportunities for native mammal species that have the potential to occur within the Project area, including the Sierra Nevada snowshoe hare (*Lepus americanus tahoensis*) and white-tailed jackrabbit (*Lepus townsendii*).

Long-term Net Benefits to Sensitive Species Recovery: The Project will restore natural habitat conditions for native sensitive species, providing long-term opportunities for species recovery. Restoration of native habitat in the Project area will benefit sensitive species, as the improved habitat in the Project area is also connected to quality habitat upstream of the Project. Two sensitive species that are likely to occur in the Project area include the endemic, freshwater bivalve, western pearlshell, and California spotted owl (*Strix occidentalis occidentalis*; a CDFW Species of Special Concern [SSC]). Restored instream habitat is expected to benefit a range of aquatic species within the watershed, including Lahontan cutthroat trout (listed as threatened under the federal Endangered Species Act and a CDFW SSC).

Procedures for the Protection of the Environment: The Project includes design criteria and minimization measures that have been specifically developed to minimize environmental effects during the restoration activities. Minimization measures include, but are not limited to:

- Limited fencing will be erected and maintained to ensure that all activities occur within delineated boundaries.
- Preventative dust control measures will be implemented to reduce air quality effects.
- No trees or wetland vegetation will be removed unless they are shown and identified for removal on the approved final plans or as specified onsite by the Project engineer with appropriate agency agreement.
- Clean gravel will be placed along the channel bottom on riffles in the reconnected and constructed channel sections and in portions of the existing channel.
- A combination of native sod blanket, willow transplants or wattles, woody debris, strips of salvaged sod, or mulch or erosion control fabrics over seeds will be used on restored floodplain and excavated inset floodplain surfaces.
- All imported gravel, cobbles, or boulders used in restoration activities will be washed before installation.
- The western pearlshell occurs within the lower reaches of the Upper Truckee River and is known to be a highly sensitive indicator species within the watershed. Pre-construction surveys will be conducted to avoid species impacts. If avoidance is not possible, a relocation plan will be developed following best management practices for salvage and relocation.

Ongoing Management for the Protection of the Environment: An adaptive management plan will be implemented that will include a 5-year post-restoration monitoring plan inclusive of surveys, monitoring, field adjustment recommendations,

and recommendations for follow-up restoration actions if success criteria are not met. Follow-up actions may include but are not limited to hand placement of additional low-tech biotechnical treatments, additional native plantings, placement or repair of additional woody debris structures, or addressing unforeseen scour that compromises the integrity of the restoration actions.

- D. Pursuant to Public Resources Code section 21080.56, subdivision (d), the CDFW Director concurs with the Lead Agency that the Project does not include any construction activities, except those solely related to habitat restoration.

The Project includes modifications to the existing golf course. All golf course modifications will be made with the purpose of restoring valuable habitat and will only include actions necessary to facilitate restoration and enhancement of the floodplain. Habitat restoration activities will result in river channel stabilization, with significantly increased hydrologic connectivity, creating and restoring approximately 15 acres of inset floodplain habitat.

Scope and Reservation of Concurrence

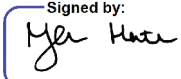
This Concurrence is based on the proposed Project as described by the Lead Agency Determination and the Request. If there are any subsequent changes to the Project that affect or otherwise change the Lead Agency Determination, the Lead Agency, or any other public agency that proposes to carry out or approve the Project, shall submit a new lead agency determination and request for concurrence from CDFW pursuant to Public Resources Code section 21080.56. If any other public agency proposes to carry out or approve the Project subsequent to the effective date of this Concurrence, this Concurrence shall remain in effect and no separate concurrence from CDFW shall be required so long as the other public agency is carrying out or approving the Project as described by the Lead Agency Determination and the Request.

In its request for a concurrence, the Lead Agency set forth potential bases for a determination that the Project will result in long-term net benefits to climate resiliency, biodiversity, and sensitive species recovery. Although the CDFW Director agrees with the Lead Agency that the Project will provide such benefits, this Concurrence is not intended to be and should not be construed as an endorsement of every argument set forth in the Lead Agency's concurrence request.

Other Legal Obligations

The Project shall remain subject to all other applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations, and this Concurrence shall not weaken or violate any applicable environmental or public health standards. (Pub. Resources Code, § 21080.56, subd. (f).)

CDFW Director's Certification

Signed by:

By: 19042A1B72454D8... Date: 7/23/2026
Meghan Hertel, Director
California Department of Fish and Wildlife