

RESOURCE INVENTORY

INTRODUCTION

WASHOE MEADOWS STATE PARK

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PURPOSE

The Resource Inventory is a compilation of information on the natural, cultural, esthetic, and recreational resources of a unit of the State Park System. The information included in the Resource Inventory identifies, records, and evaluates these resources in a comprehensive, usable form that is readily available to Department personnel. The Resource Inventory provides the resource data necessary for the classification or reclassification of a unit of the State Park System, as well as provides the basis for the Resource Element of a General Plan. As a planning document, the Resource Inventory contributes to the formation of resource management policies; identifies sensitive resources and constraints inherent in the resources; provides information used in the assessment of environmental impacts and in the development of interpretive programs; and, serves as a reference document for Operations staff.

The compiled information is the result of research and field surveys by staff specialists. The information in the Resource Inventory is intended to be updated as new information becomes available.

The basis for preparation of a Resource Inventory is found in Section 5002.1 of the Public Resources Code:

Prior to the classification or reclassification of a unit of the state park system into any of the categories

specified in Article 1.7 (commencing with Section 5019.50) of this chapter, the department shall prepare an inventory of the unit's scenic, natural, and cultural features, including, but not limited to, ecological, archeological, historical, and geologic features. The inventory shall be submitted by the department to the State Park and Recreation Commission for its consideration when classifying or reclassifying a unit. (Amended by Stats. 1978, Ch. 615.)

Section 5002.1 is also applied to units that have been already classified, but for which a detailed Resource Inventory has not been prepared.

An preliminary inventory was prepared by the Resource Protection Division for Washoe Meadows State Park prior to its classification as a State Park. This material has been used extensively in the preparation of the current resource inventory for this unit (Department of Parks and Recreation 1986, 1987).

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Lake Tahoe Basin is located within the Sierra Nevada Landscape Province (Mason 1970). The Sierra Nevada, the highest mountain range in California, extends for more than 400 miles. Throughout most of the Sierra Nevada, a single crest separates the drainage between the western slope and the eastern slope; near Lake Tahoe, the crest divides. The main crest of the Sierra Nevada trends northwest toward Donner Summit, while the other crest extends to the north to create the Carson Range. The Lake Tahoe Basin is situated between a major division of the crest of the Sierra

Nevada. The shape of the Lake Tahoe Basin is box-like, with sides that dip steeply. The basin is approximately 40 miles long and from 10 to 18 miles wide. The basin perimeter is about 140 miles long and encompasses about 315 square miles. The floor of the basin is at an elevation of 4,700 feet. Rugged mountains with summits from 8,000 to 10,000 feet form the rim of the Lake Tahoe Basin. The highest peaks on the western rim are Mount Pluto (8,617 feet), Twin Peaks (8,878 feet), and Dick's Peak (9,974 feet). The highest peaks of the Carson Range are Snow Valley Peak (9,214 feet), Genoa Peak (9,150 feet), Monument Peak (10,064 feet), Job's Sister Peak (10,828 feet), and Freel Peak (10,881 feet).

The major feature of the Lake Tahoe Basin is Lake Tahoe. Lake Tahoe occupies the depression between the two crests of the Sierra Nevada. Lake Tahoe is the largest body of water in the Sierra Nevada, with a surface area of over 190 square miles. The lake is approximately 22 miles long from north to south, and 12 miles across at its widest point. Water level in Lake Tahoe is approximately 6,225 feet above sea level. There are 64 rivers and streams in the Lake Tahoe Basin. Sixty-three drain into Lake Tahoe, and the Truckee River forms the outflow. There are also numerous ephemeral streams in the Lake Tahoe Basin. There are 169 mapped ponds and lakes within the Lake Tahoe Basin (Western Federal Regional Council 1979).

Principal access to the Lake Tahoe Basin is by Interstate Highway

80, by U.S. Highways 50 and 395, and by State Routes 28, 89, and 267. Driving time from the Sacramento metropolitan area is approximately 2 hours under favorable driving conditions; from the San Francisco Bay Area, driving time is between 4 and 5 hours. Winter storm events and occasional landslides can close the highways or contribute to significant driving delays. The Lake Tahoe Basin can also be reached by major bus lines or by railroad to Reno, Nevada. Gambling casinos often offer discount bus travel to the gaming centers. The Truckee-Tahoe Airport at Truckee and the Tahoe Airport at Tahoe Valley offer air service to the north and south Lake Tahoe Basin, respectively. International air service is provided by the Cannon International Airport in Reno, Nevada.

There are a number of towns and communities in the Lake Tahoe Basin. The largest are Tahoe City, Meeks Bay, and South Lake Tahoe. Smaller communities include Kings Beach, Lake Forest, Homewood, Tahoma, Meyers and Tahoe Keys. Tourism, outdoor recreation, and gambling are the principal recreational activities in the Lake Tahoe Basin, and contribute strongly to the economic base of the basin.

Seven units of the State Park System located within the Lake Tahoe Basin. From north to south, these units are Kings Beach State Recreation Area, Burton Creek State Park, Tahoe State Recreation Area, Sugar Pine Point State Park, D.L. Bliss State Park, Emerald

Bay State Park, Washoe Meadows State Park, and Lake Valley State Recreation Area. Ward Creek, an unclassified project, is also located within the Lake Tahoe Basin. Donner Memorial State Park is located near the town of Truckee to the west of the Lake Tahoe Basin.

INVENTORY STUDY AREA

Washoe Meadows State Park is located to the south Lake Tahoe near the communities of Meyers and South Lake Tahoe. The unit encompasses approximately 628 acres, with feet of frontage along the Upper Truckee River. Elevation in the unit ranges from 6,200 feet to 6,400 feet. The unit is surrounded primarily by urban development. Lake Valley State Recreation Area is contiguous to Washoe Meadows State Park. The Upper Truckee River forms a common boundary for these two State Park System units.

Washoe Meadows State Park is within the Upper Truckee River watershed. The Upper Truckee River arises in the Carson Range of the Sierra Nevada and flows into Lake Tahoe. It is an important natural, esthetic, and recreational feature of the State Park. Angora Creek flows through the unit. A tributary of the Upper Truckee River, Angora Creek originates in Angora Lake to the west of the unit. Diverse types of vegetation, including conifer forest, wet and dry meadows, fen, and riparian woodland, support a rich variety of wildlife within the State Park. The extensive

meadows of Washoe Meadows State Park are a significant natural and esthetic feature of the unit.

Washoe Meadows State Park also contains important Native American sites, consisting of bedrock mortars, lithic scatters, and food milling features. These sites are associated with drier ground above the meadows. There are four historic Euroamerican sites within the unit; however, there are no historic structures.

Washoe Meadows State Park is an undeveloped unit of the State Park System. For this reason, there is no accurate measure of visitor use of the unit.

REFERENCES

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