

Gaines fights to keep El Dorado County park open



Ted Gaines

Publisher's Note: *The following is a letter Assemblyman Ted Gaines, R-Roseville, wrote to Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger urging him to reconsider his decision to close Marshall Gold Discovery State Historical Park in El Dorado County.*

Dear Governor Schwarzenegger:

I strongly urge you to reconsider your decision to close Marshall Gold Discovery State Historical Park. The closure of this park will threaten public safety and devastate the local economy in my district. It will also have far-reaching and detrimental effects from historical preservation, cultural and educational perspectives.

The economic hit of the park's closure would spread far beyond that of El Dorado County. In addition to the effect on local tourism, businesses such as rafting, horseback riding, and local shops will be devastating. This is not the time to be driving small businesses to shutter their stores and adding to our already high unemployment numbers.

This park is extremely important to the overall economic success of El Dorado County. The people that visit the park also visit local wineries, Apple Hill and surrounding

attractions. This closure will damage our entire County's economy.

Another concern for closing the park is the historic Highway 49 that runs right through the middle of the park. It will be problematic at best to prevent people from continuing to access the park, causing serious health and safety risks. The risk of having a curious family enter the park unsupervised and being hurt would alone warrant keeping the park open.

Marshall Gold Discovery State Historic Park marks the discovery of gold by James W. Marshall at Sutter's Mill in 1848. After Marshall's discovery the hamlet of Coloma swelled to over ten thousand in 1849. The Park includes an operating replica of Sutter's Mill and the Gold Discovery Museum giving students and individuals the telling story of Marshall's discovery.

California's historical legacy began at this park and it offers over seventy thousand 4th graders each year the chance to see and touch one of the most important pieces of California history. To close this park is to deny our heritage and deny school children from around California the opportunity to see this pivotal historical spot.

There are other options to consider than closing the park entirely. Local community leaders, business owners, and education groups have all expressed a sincere desire to find a way to help keep the park open.

Marshall Gold Discovery State Historical Park is where California began its rise to greatness. Please do not let it be where it also starts its decline. I urge you not to threaten an important piece of California history and to instead exhaust every option, such as public private partnerships, to ensure that this park remains open.

Sincerely,

Ted Gaines

Assemblyman, 4th District