

Lawsuit filed to stop Washoe Meadows State Park from becoming golf course

By Kathryn Reed

A month after the California State Park and Recreation Commission voted unanimously to move Lake Tahoe Golf Course into Washoe Meadows State Park, a group has filed a lawsuit to prohibit that from happening.

“I would like people to know this has consequences for the entire state,” Lynne Paulson, who is part of Washoe Meadows Community, told *Lake Tahoe News*. “The Parks and Recreation Commission has done something that is unprecedented. They downgraded a property where they want to move the golf course. Usually they upgrade classifications to give more protection to land.”



Some cycling and hiking trails would become a golf course if the project continues.

Photo/LTN file

Besides reclassifying state land, the Washoe Meadows Community

– the group that filed the lawsuit Nov. 23 in Alameda County Superior Court – believes the California Environmental Quality Act has been violated.

Lake Tahoe News was notified of the lawsuit Sunday and therefore unable to immediately speak with State Parks officials.

The state acquired the 777 acres in Meyers in 1984 for \$5 million following a lawsuit between developers and the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency.

Part of that decision says, “The unique subject property is scientifically valuable, environmentally sensitive, vital to the maintenance of riparian habitat and to the maintenance of water quality in Lake Tahoe, and is, therefore, highly suitable for public acquisition in order to preserve and maintain these natural resource values ...”

Reclassification came about because water quality experts believe the Upper Truckee River must be reconfigured to near its original meander to best prevent sediment from reaching Lake Tahoe, as well as to restore meadows along the banks, and to create a more robust ecosystem.

In order to change the segment owned by State Parks the golf course on Lake Valley Recreation Area land must be touched. What the state commission approved in October was moving nine holes to what is now state park land and reclassifying it to a recreation area because a golf course cannot be built on park land.

Opponents, including those behind the lawsuit, don’t advocate for the golf course to go away. Instead, they support Alternative 3 – which would take the 18-hole course down to nine holes or convert it to an 18-hole executive course.

“We hope a better solution is brought up,” Paulson said. “We are in favor of Alternative 3. It’s the best balance of the

extremes.”

Paulson and her group would welcome new ideas that have not been brought up or consideration of ones not part of the environmental documents.

This is not the first time the state has tried to reclassify land it owns. In 2010 part of Tolowa Dunes State Park near Crescent City was slated to become a state recreation area to accommodate waterfowl hunting. After several public workshops, the commission voted to keep all of the property a state park.

Washoe Park proponents believe if this South Shore park is downgraded, that it's possible it will happen up and down the state.

The December hearings before the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency on the river restoration/state park/golf course project have been moved to 2012, though specific dates have not been set.

More information about the Upper Truckee River restoration project is online.