

Letter: Golf course at Washoe Meadows not all bad

To the community,

I was the Sierra District superintendent for the California Department of Parks and Recreation when the state acquired and classified Washoe Meadows State Park and Lake Valley State Recreation Area during the 1980s. During the 1980s the state was in protracted litigation with a developer who had approval from El Dorado County to construct thousands of homes on the property that became Washoe Meadows State Park and Lake Valley State Recreation Area.

The state opposed the development for environmental reasons. It was estimated litigation costs would be in the millions. Greg Taylor represented the state from the Attorney General's Office. All concerned believed it would be best if we could settle the matter out of court with the state buying the property. El Dorado County and the city of South Lake Tahoe would only agree to the state's purchase of the property (concern of losing tax revenue and tourism) if the golf course would remain. Negotiations were held with State Parks, AG, city of South Lake Tahoe, El Dorado County and the League to Save Lake Tahoe. It was agreed the state would purchase the property for \$5 million, the golf course would remain, and the property would be managed by California State Parks. The developer was required to relinquish all development rights.

State Parks structured the golf course concession contract with very tight environmental restrictions. The concession contract was written in close consultation with the Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board. We had concerns about fertilizer entering the Upper Truckee River. We limited the amount and type of fertilizer used on the course and we required that the golf course establish monitoring wells above

the golf course, in the middle of the course, and downstream from the course. Results of the tests were sent to State Parks and Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board.

All parties agreed that it would make good environmental sense to move the holes away from the Upper Truckee River to lessen impacts to the river. To attain this goal it may require some of the holes be moved.

If the state did not take a lead on this issue in the 1980s, we would have thousands of homes instead of an environmentally sensitive golf course (acknowledged by the Audubon Society) and several hundred of acres in open space park lands.

It is my understanding that the current proposed plans call for the removal of 10 percent in the turf area, this results in reducing water usage, and reducing the footage next to the river from 8,000 linear feet to about 1000. These proposed actions have a positive environmental effect on the Upper Truckee River watershed and water quality at Lake Tahoe.

Charles Goldman is an outstanding environmentalist and is very knowledgeable about Tahoe issues; however his recent viewpoint article did not fully share the history and politics of the acquisition of Washoe Meadows SP and Lake Valley SRA by the state of California. State Parks share a common vision with Dr. Goldman's of protecting Lake Tahoe, but an understanding of the history of the property and the politics is necessary to make informed decisions.

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to comment on this issue.

Bob Macomber, Graeagle (Sierra District superintendent 1979 to 2000 – California State Parks)