

Viewpoints: Truckee River project aims to restore habitat, Tahoe clarity



Lester Snow is secretary of the California Natural Resources Agency. Ruth Coleman is director of California State Parks

Special to The Bee

Published Saturday, Sep. 11, 2010

A Viewpoints article Sept. 4 advocated the need to protect the natural habitat and environmentally sensitive lands regarding the Upper Truckee River Restoration and Golf Course Reconfiguration Project. The commentary suggested creating more wetlands, meadow and wildlife habitat to restore the Upper Truckee. We agree with those points, which are clearly spelled out in the proposed project's goals and objectives. However, given the statements expressed by the author, it would appear that he was unfamiliar with the proposed project.

Contrary to the suggestion that this is a politically motivated golf course expansion, there is no proposal to expand the golf course. There are five alternatives under consideration. Among them are proposals to eliminate the course, reduce the size to nine holes, or keep it at 18 holes and relocate nine holes farther from the banks of the river to less sensitive areas of the existing state park land.

It should also be made clear that there is no trading away of public lands, as the column suggested. One proposal is to move nine holes of the golf course from one section of State Parks-owned lands to less environmentally sensitive State Parks-owned lands. That move would restore the river's meanders and floodplain and provide a buffer zone between the river and the golf course, eliminating the impact from fertilizer runoff from the golf course into the river, thereby significantly improving the stream habitat for trout. The natural environment would get better, not worse. That would help restore the trout population, not threaten it.

The Upper Truckee River Restoration and potential golf course reconfiguration project is an effort to restore and fix that which has been damaging to the native fish and wildlife habitat and the clarity of Lake Tahoe for decades. Over the past century, the Upper Truckee River has been impacted by logging, gravel mining, grazing, river channel straightening and development including the building of the golf course on the former floodplain in the late 1950s, prior to the park's acquisition in 1984. These disturbances have caused decreased clarity in the lake and a diminished stream habitat for fish.

This project was initiated in 2006 in response to several studies that indicated this reach of the river needed to be restored, or damage to the fish and wildlife habitat and the lake clarity would continue. To implement this restoration, a set of goals was established, which includes reducing the amount of fine sediment and nutrients entering the lake, restoring riparian habitat and improving in-stream habitat, while maintaining the existing recreational opportunities and economic benefits.

To put the scale of this restoration in perspective, the effort to restore various reaches of the upper Truckee River is one of the largest and most important watershed restoration efforts currently under way in the Tahoe basin – a joint project of several federal, state and local agencies including: California State Parks, the Tahoe Conservancy, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation and Tahoe Regional Planning Agency. This project is part of a larger effort to restore the upper Truckee River and improve lake clarity.

California State Parks is in the midst of a public outreach process, weighing the community input regarding the five alternatives. There have been numerous public meetings, site tours and newsletters to help articulate the scenarios and the impacts of each, and more are proposed for this month and October. We invite you to join the ongoing public process and take the time to fully understand the true nature of the project to restore the Upper Truckee River: Please visit www.restoreuppertruckee.net and learn more about the project and give your comments.

This project will result in significant environmental benefits for the Lake Tahoe basin. The real threat is not this project. Our work is the environmental remedy for decades of deterioration.

The real threat would come from doing nothing.

<http://www.sacbee.com/2010/09/11/v-print/3020610/truckee-river-project-aims-to.html>

[© Copyright The Sacramento Bee. All rights reserved.](#)