

# Chapter 5: Recreation

## Introduction and Setting

---

Recreational opportunities within Nevada County are varied, ranging from public parks with intensively used active recreational facilities, to vast tracts of forest lands, which provides a natural environment for passive recreation and visual enjoyment.

Nevada County is blessed with a wide variety of landscapes and scenic resources which provide passive recreational opportunities for residents and visitors alike. Chief among these scenic resources are the views available from many roadways to surrounding open areas as well as to vistas of the foothills and mountains. Major roadways in the County which are important for their scenic resources include:

- **Interstate 80 and Highways 49, 89, 174, and 267** for their entire length in the county;
- **Highway 20** from Highway 49 to Interstate 80; and
- **Donner Pass Road** (Old Highway 40) from the Interstate 80 intersection at Soda Springs to Donner State Memorial Park.

The number of existing bicycle, pedestrian, and equestrian trails in Nevada County is limited. However, there are a number of non-auto trails within Nevada County that are either complete or partially complete. These trails are oriented toward recreational use and do not provide logical connection for non-auto transportation within the urbanized areas of Nevada County. A brief description of each trail is given below:

- **Scott's Flat Trail** is a 50 mile trail that crosses both Forest Service and private property. It serves Upper Burlington Ridge, Deer Creek Forebay, Indian Springs and Towle Mill.
- **Nugget Trail** is approximately 50 miles at the Sierra County Line. It also crosses both Forest Service and private property.
- **South Yuba Trail** begins at the South Yuba Recreation Area and extends approximately 5 miles to campgrounds.
- **Missouri Bar Trail** extends north of Highway 20 across the South Yuba River.
- **Pioneer Trail** parallels Highway 20 east of Nevada City. Approximately 15 miles are complete, with plans for an extension to the Pacific Crest Trail by 1993.

## Chapter 5: Recreation Element

---

- **Emigrant Trail** is a historic trail of regional significance extending through the entire County.
- **Wildwood** is a proposed equestrian center and trail system of approximately 25 miles near Lake Wildwood.
- **Empire Mine State Park** is a trail of approximately 10 miles off Highway 49 in Grass Valley.
- **Independence Trail** is a two-mile trail adjacent to Highway 49 north of Nevada City designed for handicapped and wheelchairs.
- **Pacific Crest Trail** is a north-south trail extending from Canada to Mexico through the eastern portion of the County.
- **Mount Olive Bike Path** is a Class I path adjacent to Mount Olive Road adjacent to Lower Colfax Road.
- **Magnolia School Trail** is a short path that serves Magnolia School students along Magnolia Road.

The 1989 Nevada County Master Bicycle Plan includes bike lanes within the urbanized areas of the County that improve non-auto access and mobility. Further, to improve pedestrian travel, the County has applied its non-auto Transportation Development Act funds entirely to sidewalk construction in Nevada City, Grass Valley, Truckee, and urban unincorporated areas.

There are three recreation and park districts in Nevada County: Western Gateway Regional and Bear River in western County and Truckee Donner in eastern County. Western Gateway operates the Western Gateway Park, a large park offering a variety of recreational facilities. Truckee Donner operates a number of park and recreational facilities, primarily within the Town of Truckee. Bear River is a new District and currently operates the Magnolia Sports Complex in conjunction with the Pleasant Ridge School District.

Nevada County owns no recreation land other than the Western Gateway Park site in Penn Valley, which is leased to the Western Gateway Park District, and the County does not operate any recreation facilities. However, the County does collect Quimby Act fees on new subdivision lots and distributes those fees to the cities, to existing park and recreation districts, to specific community recreational facilities, or to school districts for enhanced recreational opportunities.

There are several public land ownerships that cover a significant amount of the County's total land area. In addition to the County of Nevada, the State of California, and the United States Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) also has ownership within Nevada County. BLM is responsible for administering public lands and resources following the principles of multiple use and sustained yield set down by Congress in the landmark 1976 Federal Land Policy and Management Act.

The County lands are primarily located in and around the cities of Grass Valley and Nevada City and the town of Truckee. Such lands are limited to those occupied by county buildings except for park land in Penn Valley leased to the Western Gateway Park and Recreation District. State lands include Empire Mine State Park near Grass Valley, Malakoff Diggins State Historical Park north of Nevada City, Donner State Park within the Town of Truckee, and the South Yuba

Project along the South Fork of the Yuba River. Also about one-half of the 11,000 acre Spenceville Wildlife Management and Recreation Area is located in the County, west of Penn Valley. National forest lands are located along the county's northern border, throughout the San Juan Ridge and Chalk Bluff Ridge and due east towards the California-Nevada state line. The major areas administered by BLM are located within the South Yuba River Recreation Lands; north from Rollins Reservoir to Poore Mine and east to Deadman's Flat; west from the South Yuba River Recreation Lands to Bridgeport; and south from Rough and Ready to Ranch Hill. Smaller areas of BLM lands are located along the western and southern borders; south of Grass Valley; and pocket areas around Nevada City and in Willow Valley.

The Tahoe National Forest covers approximately 169,000 acres or 264 square miles of land in Nevada County. The Toiyabe National Forest covers 2,600 acres in eastern County. The Spenceville Wildlife and Recreation Area contains 11,000 acres or 17 square miles, with half the tract in Nevada County and the other half in Yuba County. The Bureau of Land Management has some 11,000 acres of land in Nevada County. These areas cover a total of 294 square miles (or 30%) of the County's 978 square miles.

In addition to the public lands, Nevada County supports a variety of private and commercial recreational facilities. These include ski areas and resorts, golf courses, and campgrounds. Among the most extensive private facilities are those provided by the Tahoe Donner Association in the Truckee area, with a golf course, swimming, tennis, downhill and cross-country skiing.

Camping and other passive recreational opportunities are provided by the U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, Army Corps of Engineers, State Parks and Recreation, the Nevada Irrigation District and the two parks and recreation districts, on public lands, and by the Pacific Gas and Electric Company in conjunction with hydroelectric power facilities. In addition, the County has around 2,500 campsites in private campgrounds and water-oriented facilities provided by parks and recreation districts and concessionaires on public lands.

Further discussion of recreation resources and facilities in the county is contained in Section 4: Open Space/Conservation Inventory, of Volume 2 of the Nevada County General Plan; and in Sections 9 and 11 of the Nevada County Master Environmental Inventory, which is part of Volume 3 of the Nevada County General Plan.

## Goals, Objectives, and Policies

---

The County has an extensive amount of scenic highways, trails, and state and federal forest covering hundreds of thousands of acres of scenic land. Provision of public park facilities by the County and by local park districts has been hampered due to rapid growth and funding limitations.

Additional goals, policies and objectives generally related to recreation are located in Chapter 1: Land Use; Chapter 3: Public Facilities; Chapter 4: Circulation; Chapter 6: Open Space; Chapter 11: Water; Chapter 15: Forest; Chapter 16: Agriculture and Chapter 18: Aesthetics.

**Goal 5.1**

**Provide a variety of active and passive recreational opportunities.**

*Objective 5.1*

**Provide a diverse range of recreational opportunities at a regional, district, community, and neighborhood level.**

**Directive Policies**

**Policy 5.1**

Development of parks and recreation facilities in the County park system will focus upon regional facilities providing County-wide services, or serving large areas of the County including *Community Regions* and *Rural Regions*. Design of the regional parks should focus on natural resources, environmental education, and provide areas for diverse recreation interest. Regional parks should provide for both active and passive uses which may include open play, picnicking, walking, cycling, nature enjoyment, cultural activities and historic interpretation. Use of environmentally sensitive areas should be limited to open space or low-intensity passive activities.

**Policy 5.2**

The County shall encourage the formation of local park districts to provide neighborhood community and district parks within *Community Regions* and *Rural Regions*, which are responsive to the diverse recreational needs in the different regions. The County shall encourage such districts to adopt specific levels of service for local park and recreation facilities.

**Policy 5.3**

Encourage all park districts serving the County to develop and to regularly update a Park and Recreation Master Plan which specifies the districts' policies and requirements for facilities based upon buildout of the County's General Plan. The County shall review all proposed facility sites in the districts' Facilities Master Plans for consistency with the General Plan.

**Policy 5.4**

The provision of linear parks or greenways within *Community Regions* is encouraged to provide linkages between park facilities and from residential areas to parks. Inclusion of bikeways and pathways should be considered for all linear parks and greenways, and where possible greenways should be utilized to link *Community Regions* to the County-wide trail system.

*Objective 5.2*

**Acquire, develop and maintain park lands to serve the needs of Nevada County.**

**Directive Policies**

**Policy 5.5**

The County shall base park and recreation facility planning on the following level of service standard for County park land to provide regional parks serving both *Community Regions* and *Rural Regions*:

- 3.0 acres of park land for each increase of 1,000 persons in county-wide population.

**Policy 5.6**

Planning for acquisition and development of regional park and recreation facilities shall be based upon development of a comprehensive system of open space, linked to County Bicycle and Non-Motorized Trails Master Plans. The system should also be based upon serving multiple functions, including provision of active and passive recreation opportunities, preservation of natural features, and enhancing the aesthetic character of Nevada County.

*See: Policy 5.15; Policy 5.16; Policy 5.17*

***Objective 5.3***

**Maintain and implement a Parks and Recreation Master Plan to guide the acquisition, development and management of county-operated recreation facilities.**

**Action Policy**

**Policy 5.7**

The County shall prepare an updated Master Parks and Recreation Plan reflecting buildout of the General Plan. The updated Plan shall identify land, facilities and improvements needed to serve new development and to address existing park and recreation deficiencies for inclusion in the County's long-range Capital Facilities Plan and in the Five-Year Capital Improvement Program.

**Directive Policy**

**Policy 5.8**

The County will include park sites in a long-range program to acquire land needed for future public sites or expansion of existing sites in conjunction with the development impact fee program and Capital Facilitation Plan. This program will involve identification of site areas designated for acquisition in the Park and Recreation Master Plans of the County.

*See: Policy 5.9*

*Also see: Chapter 3: Public Facilities and Services  
Policy 3.7; Policy 3.10*

*Objective 5.4*

**Implement funding strategies for the acquisition, development, and maintenance of park and recreation facilities.**

**Directive Policies**

**Policy 5.9**

Park and recreation facilities shall be included in the County's comprehensive impact fee program. The comprehensive development fees shall be in amounts sufficient to offset the costs identified as the appropriate share of the park and recreation facility improvements necessary to serve future development. The comprehensive development fee structure shall ensure that future growth fully mitigates its direct and cumulative impacts upon the County.

**Policy 5.10**

Implement a comprehensive and aggressive funding program that ensures that all Federal, State and local funding sources are identified, analyzed and used to the maximum extent possible in meeting the funding shortfall in providing County park and recreation facilities.

*Objective 5.5*

**Coordinate future park and trail planning with other responsible agencies.**

**Directive Policies**

**Policy 5.11**

Cooperate with other public and private entities providing recreation activities to coordinate activities in the County and eliminate duplication of recreational services. The County shall encourage those agencies providing recreational programs and activities to continue those programs and activities.

**Policy 5.12**

The joint use of facilities (such as public schools and public and private open spaces) and the joint location of school-park sites shall be encouraged to efficiently use all areas offering recreation potential.

**Policy 5.13**

Encourage cooperation among local, state and federal agencies to maximize the use of public land and facilities for public use and recreation.

*Objective 5.6*

**Implement a comprehensive, and where possible integrated, county-wide trail system.**

**Directive Policies**

- Policy 5.14** Provide a county incentive program which encourages retention of private open space by including such incentives as, but not limited to, tax incentives, insurance programs, and public ownership of open space easements.
- Policy 5.15** The County shall provide for the inclusion of bikeways, walkways, and non-motorized trails in appropriate locations within parks. Where feasible, park sites shall be integrated with the County Bicycle Master Plan and with the Non-Motorized Multi-Purpose Trails Master Plan.
- Policy 5.16** The County shall continue to implement the County Bicycle Master Plan for its recreational value, as well as to provide for non-motorized access to park and recreation facilities.
- Policy 5.17** The County shall implement the Non-Motorized Multi-Purpose Trails Master Plan to provide multi-purpose recreational opportunities throughout extensive areas of the County, and to improve access to other recreational opportunities for residents in both *Community Regions* and *Rural Regions*.

***Objective 5.7***

**Preserve and encourage water based recreational opportunities.**

**Directive Policies**

- Policy 5.18** Cooperate with other public agencies to provide public access to the lakes and impoundments in the County, consistent with their ability to support water based recreation.
- Policy 5.19** Cooperate with other public and private agencies to provide public access to the rivers in the County, with emphasis at road and highway bridges so as to assure access for police and emergency vehicles.
- Policy 5.20** Encourage proper operation and environmental standards for private facilities on lakes, impoundments, and rivers.

***Objective 5.8***

**Recognize the Yuba River Canyon as a recreational resource.**

**Directive Policy**

**Policy 5.21** Recognize and protect the South Yuba River canyon as an important resource in terms of recreation, tourism, aesthetics, water resource, mineral resource, water quality, and wildlife habitat through the following actions:

- a. Designate publicly-owned lands physically adjoining the river as open space in the General Plan land use maps.
- b. Encourage the recreation master planning and development activities by the State Department of Parks and Recreation.
- c. Discourage the placement of dams on the South Yuba River canyon. Other water storage techniques, such as off-stream storage, may be considered as long as significant impacts are sufficiently mitigated.

***Objective 5.9***

**Provide for recreational opportunities for visitors while preserving rural character.**

**Directive Policies**

**Policy 5.22** Encourage the development of private recreation facilities within the Recreation land use designation of the General Plan, including food services, motels/ hotels, resorts, day camps and overnight camps.

**Policy 5.23** Allow the development of limited recreational uses in Rural and Forest land use designations.

***Also see: Chapter 15: Forest***

***Policy 15.6***

***Chapter 16: Agriculture***

***Policy 16.12***