

COUNTY OF NEVADA
STATE OF CALIFORNIA
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS



Heidi Hall
Supervisor, 1st District
Email: heidi.hall@co.nevada.ca.us

July 15, 2021

Honorable Alex Padilla
112 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510
Telephone: (202) 224-3553
Fax: (202) 224-2200

Re: Resources Needed to Mitigate Recreational Impacts on Public Lands in Nevada County

Dear Senator Padilla,

An unintended consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic was the unprecedented number of visitors recreating outdoors, one of the few safe activities during the stay-at-home order. Unfortunately, the other unintended consequence of so many new visitors is that our most popular trailheads and river crossings were overrun, creating a public safety and public health crisis.

Although the recovery is underway, Nevada County's recreational amenities remain overwhelmed and inundated with an ever-increasing number of visitors. The current situation is unsustainable. We respectfully request your assistance to ensure that our public lands have adequate resources to ensure public safety and preservation of our natural resources.

Nevada County, with a population of 100,000 residents, is receiving nearly 700,000 to 800,000 visitors annually to our various Federal and State forests and parks. This is 7-8 times more than our entire population; the County does not have the resources to accommodate that influx and the attendant risk.

With the increased visitation, coupled with a devastating drought and extreme fire danger, Nevada County is in jeopardy from escaped campfires. Illegal parking blocks evacuation routes exacerbating the potential tragedy at our overwhelmed recreational areas.

While our federal agency partners actively coordinate with one another and with State Parks to address these impacts, it's clear to me that a significant gap in resources and law enforcement staffing exists across the board.

The current level of Federal investment in our recreational infrastructure on our public lands is not sufficient to handle the increasing impacts amount of trash and human waste left by visitors throughout our forest and watersheds. We need increased federal law enforcement presence to enforce parking and camping restrictions and prevent a tragedy. We need resources for public messaging to protect the environment and prevent forest fires.

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In Nevada County, we are proud to host the US Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management, and we have excellent relations with our local staff in both agencies. However, with only one and two Law Enforcement Officers (LEO) Park Rangers in the Tahoe National Forest's Truckee Ranger District and Yuba River Ranger District, respectively, and only three LEO Rangers in the BLM's Mother Lode Field Office (which stretches from Nevada County down to Mariposa County), our region is grossly understaffed. We need Federal leadership and assistance to ensure an adequate level of public safety for both our visitors and our local community. The Nevada County Board of Supervisors raised concerns over the need for additional resources in a letter submitted to BLM on September 25, 2018. Now with the historic level of visitors on our public lands, increased federal resources are urgently needed.

Nevada County is doing everything in its power to address the situation. We have convened the "Yuba River Cohort," which brings together Federal, State and local representatives to coordinate our response to the challenges we face. Together, we have accomplished a lot, including increasing fire restrictions, developing coordinated and unified messaging, increasing illegal parking fines and ticketing, partnering on rescue operations and training, installing emergency call boxes at locations that lack cellphone reception, and identifying partnership opportunities to enhance and develop recreation infrastructure.

But despite these efforts, without a significant increase in federal resources for infrastructure and operational funding, a clear and present danger to public safety exists.

Therefore, I respectfully request an opportunity to meet with you and your staff to discuss opportunities and strategies to increase staffing and other resources to head off this crisis. I look forward to working with you on this important issue and thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

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District I Supervisor
County of Nevada, CA

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July 15, 2021

Honorable Doug LaMalfa
408 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
Telephone: (202) 225-3076
Fax: (530) 878-5037

Re: Resources Needed to Mitigate Recreational Impacts on Public Lands in Nevada County

Dear Congressman LaMalfa,

An unintended consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic was the unprecedented number of visitors recreating outdoors, one of the few safe activities during the stay-at-home order. Unfortunately, the other unintended consequence of so many new visitors is that our most popular trailheads and river crossings were overrun, creating a public safety and public health crisis.

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July 15, 2021

Honorable Senator Feinstein
United States Senate
331 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510
(202) 224-3841 (p)
(202) 228-3954 (f)

Re: Resources Needed to Mitigate Recreational Impacts on Public Lands in Nevada County

Dear Senator Feinstein,

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