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*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE*

*Coalition Sues State Parks Over Tahoe Golf Course Plan  
Lawsuit Cites CEQA Violations and Public Trust*

A coalition of parks advocates, scientists, and environmentalists has filed suit in Alameda County Superior Court over the California State Parks Commission's approval last month of a plan to build a golf course in Washoe Meadows State Park in South Lake Tahoe.

The suit, *Washoe Meadows Community v. California State Park and Recreation Commission*, also names the California Department of Parks and Recreation for failing to provide an adequate Environmental Impact Statement and skirting the public review process required under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

The suit also claims that the Commission and the Department violated the terms of a 1984 Settlement Agreement and a corresponding appropriations statute in which the State of California spent \$5 million of taxpayer funds to place 777 acres, including what became Washoe Meadows State Park, into public ownership in order to protect its "unique and irreplaceable natural resources." The purchase ended 10 years of litigation over development of the property.

The Department and the Commission will be required to meet with Washoe Meadows Community within 45 days, and consider whether the parties' differences can be resolved through settlement. If not, the Department and Commission will have to explain to the Court why they should be allowed to convert a state park's unique natural resources to a golf course—a use the suit says is inconsistent with the stated purpose of the 1984 settlement agreement.

The Washoe Meadows Community, formed in 2006, is a coalition of 500 members that includes park supporters from around the state, members of Tahoe Area Sierra Club, scientists, and Defense of Place, a national organization that defends public lands threatened with development. They have questioned a plan promoted by State Parks that ties the restoration of the Upper Truckee River to moving up to 9 holes of the state-owned Lake Tahoe Golf Course to Washoe Meadows State Park. The park harbors forests, rare wetlands, plants, and wildlife that were cited as rationale for establishing the park 24 years ago.

Park Commissioners voted on October 21, 2011 to allow portions of state park to be reclassified as a recreation area to get around park protections that would have precluded such development. Opponents of the plan believe this reclassification sets a dangerous precedent by potentially allowing commercialization of other California parks and public lands.

The plaintiffs advocate for river restoration but the State's determination to annex a significant portion of the park contradicts the intent of the project which is to improve the environment.

“This lawsuit is not only about the future of Washoe Meadows State Park. It's about whether the State of California will be keep its promise to future generations, or sacrifice our state's parks to developers whenever there are budget shortfalls,” says Lynne Paulson, a volunteer for the Washoe Meadows Community.

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