

News Release

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Malakoff Diggins Solar Electric Project is a Go in Governor's Signed Budget

The Governor has signed the 2016-17 State Budget with no line item vetoes, meaning the \$700,000 requested by Nevada County and supported by the Legislature for a solar electric project at Malakoff Diggins State Park will be funded.

The plan for a solar electric project has been a collaborative effort between District 4 Supervisor Hank Weston, county staff, State Parks, South Yuba River Citizens League (SYRCL), local parks associations and solar contractors since 2011 when a State Budget crisis threatened to close a number of state parks, including Malakoff Diggins State Historic Park. Malakoff was considered not enough of a revenue generator to offset its operating costs; including costs to bring power to the remote park for lighting and security systems that protect thousands of artifacts housed in the park's historic buildings. Now, though the park is open and there is no longer a closure list, the effort to install a cost-effective, clean solar project has continued.

With input from local contractors, State Parks developed an estimate of \$700,000 for the project. In the spring of 2016, Supervisor Weston and Caleb Dardick, Executive Director of SYRCL met with Assembly legislative staff to request the item be included in

the Assembly Budget Subcommittee proposal. After testifying at a hearing, Supervisor Weston was successful in getting the item on the Assembly's budget proposal to the Conference Committee. After it passed in the Conference Committee, the Board of Supervisors and the local community generated letters to our legislative representatives and the Governor urging support for the funding in the final Budget.

The Malakoff Diggins funding allocation is contained in the main Budget Bill, SB 826, Chapter 23: "3790-301-0001—For capital outlay, Department of Parks and RecreationMalakoff Diggins SHP: Solar Panel Generator—Preliminary plans, working drawings, and construction....\$700,000."

Supervisor Weston expressed his gratitude to Assembly Member Rich Gordon, who sat on the Assembly subcommittee and the Conference Committee "and who is a strong supporter of this project. Also, we had a very active and persuasive local support group, led by SYRCL. They have been a strong partner in this endeavor." In 2011, SYRCL led the effort to find stop-gap funding to keep the park open. Later, SYRCL secured additional funds from the California State Parks Foundation to conduct an environmental study for the solar power system at the park.

Caleb Dardick added, "As the epicenter for hydraulic mining during the Gold Rush, the park is a stark reminder of the devastating impacts of large-scale mining on the Yuba River environment. Replacing polluting diesel with solar power seemed like a 'no-brainer!'"

Looking ahead, after a capital outlay and planning process, State Parks would issue a Request for Proposals to construct the project.