

Tahoe-Pyramid Trail secures future in Farad

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For more than a decade work has gone on to create a bikeway linking Lake Tahoe to Pyramid Lake.

The project recently cleared another major hurdle when an existing section of trail in Farad, California, was secured after the Truckee Meadows Water Authority granted a permanent easement on property it intends to sell, paving the way to protect the continuity of the trail into the future.

"That easement will be an encumbrance on that property," said Truckee Meadows Water Authority Director Jenny Brekhus. "Encumbrance is often a burdensome word, but this is an encumbrance to the public's advantage — to transport through the trail connection."

Brekhus said no matter the buyer of the property, the easement will allow for future use and maintenance of the trail by the nonprofit organization, Tahoe-Pyramid Trail.

"It's huge because the section of the canyon that they own, there really is no other way to go through there," said Tahoe-Pyramid Trail founder Janet Phillips. "It's a huge, important step."

The real estate for sale consists of roughly 70.53 acres in the Truckee Canyon, which includes the 2.8 MW hydroelectric plant built in 1899, and also permits related to the operation of the plant and the reconstruction of a diversion dam.

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"(Truckee Meadows Water Authority) doesn't see a utility function for it, that's why we are disposing of it," Brekhus said. "From my perspective, I do want to see it go toward a good use. I really want to see the building stay, even if it's in a private capacity."

TRAIL HISTORY AT THE SITE

In 2013, before the property's title was transferred to Truckee Meadows Water Authority, NV Energy entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with Tahoe-Pyramid Trail, according to documents from the water authority, in which NV Energy granted a revocable license to access and use the property to construct and maintain the trail. Tahoe-Pyramid Trail has since built and maintained a trail, including a bridge, on the property.

The water authority's board of directors voted unanimously on June 20 to grant a permanent easement for the section of trail, clearing the way for future use regardless of the property's owner.

TRUCKEE RENO LINK REACHES MILESTONE

Work began earlier in the year on the final two miles of trail needed to link Truckee to Reno, which, according to Phillips, has been a priority of trail builders since work began in 2003.

Upon completion the section will offer cyclists and hikers unparalleled views of the canyon and Truckee River below.

Phillips started Tahoe-Pyramid Trail 15 years ago to investigate the feasibility of creating the route and has been working to link existing trails, paths and roads to create 114 miles of trail connecting the two lakes.

"As much as we could we used existing paths or roads," Phillips said in an interview earlier this year. "For instance there's remnants of Highway 40 in the canyon. We used that, and there's also a few little utility dirt roads that we used. Unfortunately for us, there's some sections where there's just nothing to work with, and that's where we get into the really expensive construction."

Since work began this year, volunteers have held maintenance and cleanup days on the trail, completing usual spring work on the trail. Volunteer teams have also dealt with the unexpected, including last month when a semi-truck and trailer crashed over the guardrail and onto the trail.

"Our new shared trail concept with trucks," Phillips joked. "The truck got removed right away and that was a good thing, but the remaining problem we have is there are some boulders it

knocked down onto the trail that are still there. They're too big for volunteers to move, so we're hoping to get some help somehow on making big rocks into little rocks, and then moving them. You can still get through on the trail, it's just narrower than normal."

Most recently work crews on the Tahoe-Pyramid Trail hit a major milestone when the two contractor teams working on opposite ends of the missing link between Reno and Truckee connected. Though the crews have met up at a midway point on the missing section, Phillips stressed the trail in that area is not yet open to the public.

"You've got two different groups working on different legs of the trail and when they can actually see each other, and then they can actually shake hands, it's kind of a nice celebration," said Phillips.

COMPLETING THE TRAIL

Going forward Tahoe-Pyramid Trail is in need of funding to complete the link between the lakes. The organization recently hit a funding goal after receiving \$30,000 from Renown Health, according to Phillips, as well as a trio of sizeable individual donations.

"We're always trying to raise money to complete the trail and we never know when there is going to be an unexpected cost or a complexity that we didn't foresee," Phillips said. "We always need volunteers and the farther we get upriver toward Truckee, the more it would be helpful to get some Truckee-based volunteers, because most of our guys are from Reno."

With a connection between Truckee and Reno expected to be completed sometime this year, there will only be a couple of missing sections of trail between Reno and Pyramid left to finish.

For more information visit TahoePyramidTrail.org or check out the organization's booth at Truckee Thursday on Aug. 2.

"If people want to stop by and see the maps and get a brochure, that's where we'll be," said Phillips.

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