

# OUR NEVADA

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SECTION



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## RUGGED AND FUN

New trail cuts path through Sierra Nevada pass

By Benjamin Spillman | bspillman@rgj.com

FLORISTON, Calif. — When it comes to welcoming cyclists and hikers, it helps to take down the razor wire.

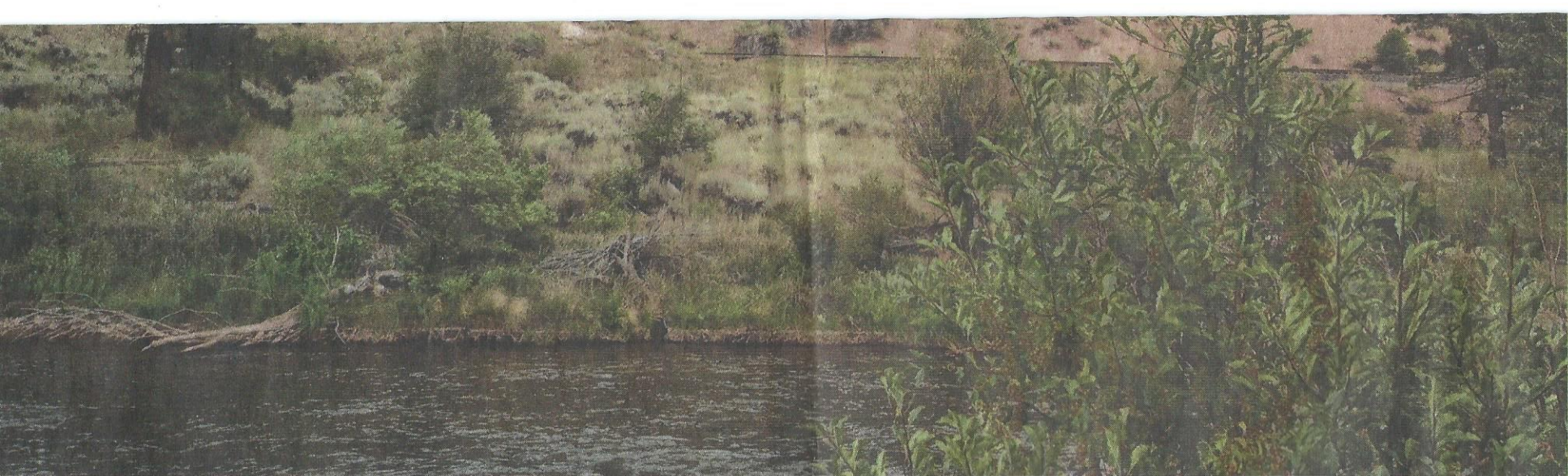
That's what's happening along the Truckee River near Interstate 80 west of Reno.

For the third time this summer, the creators of the Tahoe-Pyramid Bikeway are celebrating another link in the 116-mile trail they want to connect two of Nevada's great lakes.

In early August, it was a paved path connecting downtown Truckee to the Glenshire subdivision. Now, it's a more rugged route that goes about two miles between the Floriston and Farad exits from I-80.

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BENJAMIN SPILLMAN/RGJ

The Floriston-to-Farad link in the Tahoe Pyramid Bikeway is abuzz with activity that includes fishing on the Truckee River and frequent trains along a nearby rail line.

## Trail

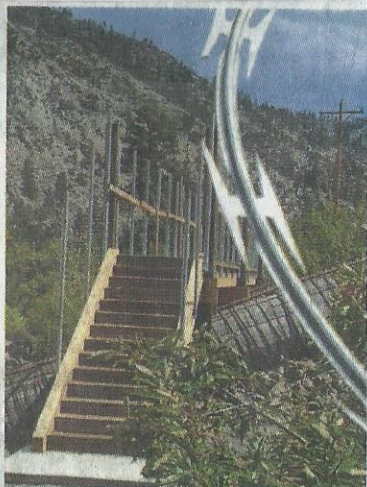
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The new section, which had an opening ceremony scheduled Saturday, winds between the highway, the Truckee River and historic waterworks that once helped generate electricity.

And it's in the scenic Sierra Nevada pass between Truckee and Reno that most people only see from behind a car window.

"It is a beautiful little river, and the fact that you can only see it at 70 mph didn't seem right," said Janet Phillips, president of the Tahoe-Pyramid Bikeway project.

Phillips has been working to piece together the route for 10 years and said that, in terms of opening segments, this has been the busiest season yet. The Floriston-to-Farad stretch goes along parts of what used to be the Lincoln Highway, where remnants of that historic road remain.



BENJAMIN SPILLMAN/RGJ

An agreement with NV Energy to build a bridge to cross the property of a defunct hydroelectric power plant was the final piece needed to open the Floriston-to-Farad link of the Tahoe Pyramid Bikeway

The hurdle organizers cleared that led to the opening was an agreement with electricity provider NV Energy to cross the property of a defunct

power plant near Farad. That meant building a small bridge over some of the power plant works and making a passage through razor-wire-topped fence that was placed there to keep people from the site.

Phillips recently toured the route from Floriston to the western edge of the power plant, before the bridge was opened, to show off the sights.

Parking is available at either exit. When Phillips rode the route, she parked at the Floriston exit, just north of Interstate 80 near some large boulders meant to prevent motorized traffic from driving on the trail.

From there, it was downhill, past some old stone walls that date back to the Lincoln Highway era. The trail quickly turned to the south and underneath an old flume structure then back east to parallel the Truckee River.

It goes underneath Interstate 80 and continues along the river, passing fishing spots, apple trees and historic infra-

structure until it reaches the power plant.

There are a couple of challenging spots, including the steep hill that takes riders under the flume, that might be too much for beginning riders. But the challenging parts are short, making it easy to walk a bike if necessary. No matter what level of riding ability people have, the trail is rocky and should be done on a bike with wide, sturdy tires.

There's another parking area east of the power plant near the Farad exit, so people can do the trail one way with a shuttle or go out and back.

According to NV energy, the Farad power plant was built in 1899 and was the first hydroelectric plant in the eastern Sierra Nevada. The company said it was paid for by mining interests that wanted electricity to pump water out of Virginia City silver mines.

Phillips said bikeway organizers considered routing the trail along the brick, riverfront building, but it wasn't stable

enough so they had to go through the property.

Funding for the new section is from a pending \$350,000 grant from the Federal Highway Administration that's administered by California State Parks. The Tahoe-Pyramid Bikeway backers need to raise \$50,000 by spring in matching funds, Phillips said.

Up next is a plan to connect Farad to Verdi, which would make the link from Reno to Truckee nearly complete. Costs for that section will be higher because it needs to be squeezed onto steep, rocky terrain between the freeway and the river.

Future sections include spots between Sparks and Fernley.

Even though the route still needs more work, it's now nearly 75 percent complete, and Phillips is looking forward to getting more openings on the calendar.

"In California, it is all about money; in Nevada, it is all about landowners," she said.