



WASHOE COUNTY

Integrity Communication Service

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STAFF REPORT

BOARD MEETING DATE: November 2, 2021

DATE: October 20, 2021

TO: Open Space and Regional Parks Commission

FROM: Colleen Wallace Barnum, Park Operations Superintendent,
Community Services Department, 328-2181, cwallace@washoecounty.us

THROUGH: Eric Crump, Division Director, Operations
Community Services Department, 328-2182, ecrump@washoecounty.us

SUBJECT: Possible recommendation to staff to approve a Participating Agreement Interpretive Services between the Great Basin Institute, Washoe County Regional Parks and Open Space and the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest for continued cooperative visitor services and programming at the Galena Creek Visitor Center and Recreation Area, and to be taken to the Board of County Commissioners for possible approval. (Commission District 1.)

SUMMARY

The Galena Creek Recreation Area, including the Visitor Center, was constructed in cooperation with Washoe County and the U.S. Forest Service. A special use permit was issued to Washoe County for the operation and maintenance of the Recreation Area in 2009. The Visitor Center opened in July 2010. Washoe County contracted with Great Basin Institute (GBI), a local non-profit 501(c)3 organization to staff and operate the Visitor Center. GBI has staffed and operated the Visitor Center since 2010 and the first Participating Agreement was entered into in April of 2012. This Participating Agreement between GBI, Washoe County and U.S. Forest Service will continue the formal arrangement between all three entities which recognize and formalizes the cooperative relationship. It also allows Great Basin Institute to offer and expand visitor services and interpretive programming.

PREVIOUS ACTION

On April 13, 2021, the Board of County Commissioners approved a lease agreement between Washoe County and the Great Basin Institute.

On April 6, 2021, the Open Space and Regional Park Commission recommended approval of a lease agreement with Great Basin Institute.

On February 27, 2018, the Board of County Commissioners approved a lease agreement between Washoe County and Great Basin Institute.

AGENDA ITEM # _____

On February 6, 2018, the Open Space and Regional Park Commission recommended approval of a lease agreement with Great Basin Institute.

On January 24, 2017, the Board of County Commissioners approved the participating agreement between USFS, Great Basin Institute, and Washoe County.

On September 23, 2014, the Board of County Commissioners approved a lease agreement between Washoe County and Great Basin Institute.

On September 2, 2014, the Open Space and Regional Park Commission recommended approval of a lease agreement with GBI.

On April 24, 2012, the Board of County Commissioners approved the participating agreement between USFS, Great Basin Institute, and Washoe County.

On October 13, 2009, the Board of County Commissioners approved a lease agreement between Washoe County and Great Basin Institute.

BACKGROUND

In November 2000, voters overwhelmingly approved \$38.3 million for WC-1 Regional Parks, Trails, Open Space and Libraries Bond, which identified \$1,000,000 for the Galena Creek Campground. Through an extensive public input process and in conjunction with the National Environmental Policy Act analysis and environmental assessment for the site, it was determined that the neighboring community did not desire traditional campground sites and had concerns with regard to fire safety. In an effort to preserve elements of the original intent of the bond project and mitigate the concerns of the community, a day use concept developed, now known as the Galena Creek Recreation Area, which includes a trailhead, trails, interpretive elements, parking, restrooms, visitor center, access road, individual and group picnic sites.

The Galena Creek Recreation Area including the Galena Creek Visitor Center is located on federal land adjacent to Washoe County's Galena Creek Regional Park. Washoe County has been working with the USDA Forest Service since 2000 on planning, development and operation of the area. In May of 2006, the Board approved a Challenge Cost Share Agreement, Memorandum of Understanding and Collection Agreement with the US Forest Service for construction and operations of the area including the visitor center. The final joint development cost of the Galena Creek Recreation Area facilities totaled \$3,901,608 (\$1,525,906 County WC-1 bond and grant contributions).

A special use permit to operate and maintain the Recreation Area was issued to Washoe County by the U.S. Forest Service in April of 2009. Due to the significant reductions to the Regional Parks and Open Space budget it was quickly recognized that staffing the facility would be a challenge. Consequently, Washoe County contracted with GBI to staff the Visitor Center and offer various in-kind services in consideration of rent for the resident at Galena Creek Regional Park. GBI has utilized the residence for housing their staff members assigned to the operation of the Visitor Center and has operated the Center since it opened in July of 2010. GBI has provided numerous community interpretive programs including youth summer camps and various environmental education programs.

This participating agreement between GBI, Washoe County and U.S. Forest Service, will continue to recognize and formalize the cooperative relationship between all three entities and allow GBI to enhance and expand visitor services to the area.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no revenue or expense directly associated with this agreement, as it supports the operating relationship with Great Basin Institute (GBI), who is operating the Galena Visitor Center. Under a current Lease Agreement approved by the Board in April 2021, Great Basin Institute provides in-kind services to the Community Services Department as consideration for lease fees for use of the resident housing at Galena Creek Regional Park. The relationship is a revenue and expense neutral arrangement.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Open Space and Regional Parks Commission approve a Participating Agreement Interpretive Services between the Great Basin Institute, Washoe County Regional Parks and Open Space and the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest for continued cooperative visitor services and programming at the Galena Creek Visitor Center and Recreation Area, and to be taken to the Board of County Commissioners for possible approval.

POSSIBLE MOTION

Should the Board agree with the staff recommendation, a possible motion would be:

“Move to approve a Participating Agreement Interpretive Services between the Great Basin Institute, Washoe County Regional Parks and Open Space and the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest for continued cooperative visitor services and programming at the Galena Creek Visitor Center and Recreation Area, and to be taken to the Board of County Commissioners for possible approval.”