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Hope for Malakoff Diggins?

New plan could keep historic park open on limited basis

By [Matthew Renda](#)
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Less than two weeks until Malakoff Diggins State Historic Park is slated for closure, officials are preparing to shutter park buildings and various facilities.

Meanwhile, the South Yuba River Citizens League has produced a plan that is being considered to keep the state park open on a limited basis.

The park, located about 30 miles north of Nevada City, will be placed on caretaker status July 1, meaning it will not be “closed” to public access, but park amenities won't be available, officials said.

“Caretaker status means there will be no park services,” said Tamara Sasaki, acting superintendent of the Sierra District of California State Parks.

“The campground and cabins will be closed. There will be a park ranger that will live on the grounds and monitor the park.”

North Bloomfield Road runs through the park, so the state parks department will not be able to keep people from accessing the park grounds.

When asked if the public will be able to use the trails within the park, Sasaki said, “Technically the park is closed, but it is public lands.”

Sasaki said there are no immediate plans to remove historical artifacts housed at the park from the premises. Work is underway on an operational plan to generate enough revenue to make the park more self-sustaining, she said.

Malakoff Diggins Park Association and Alden Olmsted, son of the late naturalist John Olmsted, have made financial pledges to help keep the park operational, Sasaki said.

Meanwhile, SYRCL has compiled a proposal currently under consideration by the California State Parks Foundation board, a nonprofit dedicated to providing financial support to endangered parks.

SYCRL Executive Director Caleb Dardick said Thursday his organization has put together a budget sufficient to operate the park three days per week throughout the coming fiscal year.

The plan leverages funds from the Malakoff Diggins Park Association and Olmsted, who has traveled throughout the state to collect donations, while requesting an additional grant from the parks foundation.

“My understanding is that once a park is closed, it's really hard to re-open,” Dardick said. “We are just trying to keep the park open so that they can have staff in place to supervise the campgrounds, which can generate revenue.”

Dardick also crafted a second proposal that includes installing solar equipment at the park to defray the approximate \$70,000 annual utility costs at the park.

Dardick said California Solar Electric Company in Grass Valley has provided an initial blueprint of costs related to the installation and maintenance of solar panels at the park.

The proposal is being reviewed by the parks foundation, the parks department and officials at the state level, Dardick said.

“There is room for optimism,” he said. “It would be terrible if this park was closed, especially because the presumed savings are negligible. I've seen reports that say it would cost significantly more to close parks than it would to keep them open.”

Dardick said he expects to hear from the parks foundation about the three-days-a-week scenario by the end of June.

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