



# WASHOE COUNTY

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## STAFF REPORT

BOARD MEETING DATE: July 16, 2024

**DATE:** June 25, 2024

**TO:** Board of County Commissioners

**FROM:** Joanne Lowden, Natural Resource Planning Coordinator,  
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**THROUGH:** Aaron Smith, Operations Division Director  
Community Services Dept, 328-2172, [aasmith@washoecounty.gov](mailto:aasmith@washoecounty.gov)

**SUBJECT:** Recommendation to: 1) approve a Non-Funded Cost Share Agreement between Washoe County and the United States Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest with an estimated Washoe County non-cash contribution of [\$215,510.00; \$209,310.00 in personnel costs and \$6,200.00 in light maintenance costs] over a 5-year period to allow Washoe County to maintain existing and future trails that cross both jurisdictions along the Sierra Front and to continue maintaining the Whites Creek, Thomas Creek Canyon, and Michael D. Thompson Trailheads; and 2) authorize the Assistant County Manager [Dave Solaro] to sign the Agreement on behalf of the County. (Commission Districts 1 and 2.)

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### SUMMARY

Washoe County Parks currently maintains the Whites Creek, Thomas Creek Canyon, and Michael D. Thompson Trailheads. The original agreement with the Forest Service for trailhead maintenance was executed in 2002 but has since expired. Parks would like to enter into a new Non-Funded Cost Share Agreement to cover desired trail and trailhead maintenance on Forest Service lands. Under the new agreement, Parks will continue to perform light maintenance and basic operations of the Whites Creek, Thomas Creek Canyon, and Michael D. Thompson trailheads including trash management, signs, restroom cleaning and pumping, landscape maintenance, and weed management. The Forest Service will continue to be responsible for “heavy maintenance” including structure and facility repair and replacement, road construction and maintenance, and paving or repaving of surfaces.

The new agreement includes system trail maintenance along the Sierra Front such as brushing, tread work, drainage improvements, minor reroutes, decommissioning of social trails, sign installation and replacement, and hazard/down tree removal. The agreement also permits the County to use volunteer and/or training events to complete trail maintenance work on Forest System lands. The Washoe County Trails Coordinator will serve as the liaison with the Forest Service to coordinate the planned trail maintenance work.

AGENDA ITEM # \_\_\_\_\_

The agreement between Washoe County and the Forest Service will provide an opportunity to better manage the recreational system infrastructure that crosses both County open space and Forest Service lands. This will provide a level of consistency with safety, resource protection, wayfinding, and messaging. The agreement will provide benefits to both agencies and will allow the County to meet infrastructure maintenance requirements as specified in previously awarded Recreational Trails Program (RTP) grants.

Strategic Objective supported by this item: Fiscal Sustainability – Long Term Sustainability.

### **PREVIOUS ACTION**

**June 24, 2024** – The Open Space and Regional Parks Commission recommended that the Board of County Commissioners approve a Non-Funded Cost Share Agreement between Washoe County and the United States Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest with an estimated Washoe County non-cash contribution of \$215,510.00 primarily in salary and labor costs over a 5-year period to allow Washoe County to maintain existing and future trails that cross both jurisdictions along the Sierra Front and to continue maintaining the Whites Creek, Thomas Creek Canyon, and Michael D. Thompson Trailheads.

**June 7, 2022** – The Open Space and Regional Parks Commission adopted the Carcione and Canepa Ranch Recreation Access Plan.

**September 28, 2021** – The Board of County Commissioners (Board) acknowledged and agreed to the Abandonment and Termination of Right of Reverter by the Grantor, Ridges at Hunter Creek III, which would remove the right of reverter clause from the trailhead easement granted to Washoe County in 2005 and recorded in 2007 as Document #3592575 for the Michael D. Thompson Trailhead on a portion of Assessor's Parcel Number 041-650-08, located off of Woodchuck Circle.

**July 20, 2021** – The Board accepted a State of Nevada, Division of State Parks Recreational Trails Program 2021-10 "Sierra Front Trail Planning" grant [in the amount of \$74,300 with cash match in the amount of \$18,575].

**December 8, 2020** – The Board accepted a State of Nevada, Division of State Parks Recreational Trails Program 2020-14 "Thomas Creek to Ballardini Ranch Connector Trail" grant [in the amount of \$40,000 with a Washoe County cash match in the amount of \$10,000].

**May 28, 2013** – The Board adopted and recorded a resolution accepting real property for use as a public trailhead and trail corridor within the Ridges at Hunter Creek Subdivision (currently identified as APN 041-661-13, totaling 0.57 acres) for use as a non-motorized public trailhead and trail corridor.

**July 26, 2005** – The Board approved an agreement between Washoe County and David J. and Claudia Ann Thompson Family Trust and Ridges Investment, LLC, to grant an easement to Washoe County to develop the Michael D. Thompson Trailhead and Trail on a portion of the parcel currently identified as 041-650-08; and authorized the Chair to execute the associated documents.

**December 10, 2002** – The Board approved the execution, upon presentation, of the Interlocal/Challenge Cost Share Agreement to authorize Washoe County to partner with the U.S. Forest Service to operate and maintain the Whites and Thomas Creek trailheads.

### **BACKGROUND**

Washoe County partnered with the U.S. Forest Service on the funding and construction of the Whites Creek and Thomas Creek Canyon Trailheads located on Forest Service lands along Timberline Drive. The Forest Service did not have the ability to take on the full operations and maintenance of the trailheads at the time of construction and Washoe County Parks was already maintaining other trail facilities in the area such as Galena Creek Regional Park. The Board of County Commissioners approved an Interlocal/Challenge Cost Share Agreement with the Forest Service on December 10, 2002, that allowed Washoe County to operate and maintain the Whites and Thomas Creek Canyon Trailheads. Since the agreement was executed in 2002, the County has continued to maintain the Whites and Thomas Creek Canyon Trailheads.

In 2005, the Board accepted an easement for the Michael D. Thompson Trailhead located on Woodchuck Circle. The County constructed the trailhead in the easement area and maintained it as a County facility. The Forest Service acquired the entire parcel (APN: 041-650-08) where the easement for the Michael D. Thompson Trailhead is located on May 20, 2022. As part of the property acquisition process, the Forest Service required the County to remove a Right of Reverter clause contained in the original easement document. The Board approved the abandonment and termination of the Right of Reverter clause on September 28, 2021. The staff report identified the need to enter into an agreement with the Forest Service after the property acquisition was completed for Washoe County Parks to continue to maintain the Michael D. Thompson Trailhead.

Additional system trails connecting to these trailheads along the Sierra Front have been constructed by Washoe County crossing both County owned open space and Forest Service lands. This includes the Lower Whites Creek and Sierra Front Trails. A Recreational Trails Program (RTP) grant was awarded to the County in 2020 for construction of the Sierra Front Trail connecting the Thomas Creek Canyon Trailhead to the Ballardini Ranch Trailhead. The Ballardini Ranch Trailhead is County owned and maintained. An additional RTP grant was awarded in 2021 for planning of the next section of the Sierra Front Trail that will connect from the Ballardini Ranch Trailhead to the Michael D. Thompson Trailhead. The RTP grants require the County to maintain the funded infrastructure for a minimum of 20 years.

Future trail construction is planned in the agreement area including trails identified in the Carcione and Canepa Ranch Recreation Access Plan, approved by the Open Space and Regional Parks Commission in 2022. The Forest Service was a stakeholder in the development of the Recreation Access Plan and is partnering with the County to identify desired trail connections and alignments in the area. The agreement includes proposed trails along the Sierra Front and near Canepa Ranch and will give the County the ability to maintain these trails after construction is completed.

The Non-Funded Cost Share Agreement outlines the responsibilities of the Forest Service and Washoe County Parks for trail and trailhead maintenance. Washoe County Parks will perform light maintenance and basic operations of the Whites Creek, Thomas Creek Canyon, and Michael D. Thompson trailheads including trash management, signs, restroom cleaning and pumping, landscape maintenance, and weed management. The Forest Service will continue to be responsible for “heavy maintenance” including structure and facility repair and replacement, road construction and maintenance, and paving or repaving of surfaces. System trail maintenance may include brushing, tread work, drainage improvements, minor reroutes, decommissioning of social trails, sign installation and replacement, and hazard/down tree removal. The agreement also permits the County to use volunteer and/or training events to complete trail maintenance work on Forest System lands. The Washoe County Trails Coordinator will serve as the liaison with the Forest Service to coordinate the planned trail maintenance work. Washoe County park ranger and maintenance staff will continue to maintain the Whites, Thomas Creek Canyon, and Michael D. Thompson Trailheads as they have in the past.

The agreement between Washoe County and the Forest Service will provide an opportunity to better manage the recreational system infrastructure that crosses both County open space and Forest Service lands. This will provide a level of consistency with safety, resource protection, wayfinding, and messaging. The agreement will provide benefits to both agencies and will allow the County to meet infrastructure maintenance requirements as specified in previously awarded Recreational Trails Program (RTP) grants.

### **FISCAL IMPACT**

The Non-Funded Cost Share Agreement includes estimated non-cash contributions in the amount of \$215,510.00 (\$209,310.00 in personnel costs and \$6,200.00 in light maintenance costs) over the 5-year term of the agreement. The County has continuously maintained these trailheads since they were constructed utilizing General Fund operating budget from CSD Regional Parks & Open Space (140-0). FY25 has budget authority for the annual estimated maintenance costs under this agreement in CSD Regional Parks & Open Space (140-0).

### **RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the Board of County Commissioners: 1) approve a Non-Funded Cost Share Agreement between Washoe County and the United States Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest with an estimated Washoe County non-cash contribution of [\$215,510.00; \$209,310.00 in personnel costs and \$6,200.00 in light maintenance costs] over a 5-year period to allow Washoe County to maintain existing and future trails that cross both jurisdictions along the Sierra Front and to continue maintaining the Whites Creek, Thomas Creek Canyon, and Michael D. Thompson Trailheads; and 2) authorize the Assistant County Manager [Dave Solaro] to sign the Agreement on behalf of the County.

**POSSIBLE MOTION**

Should the Board agree with staff's recommendation, a possible motion would be: "Move to: 1) approve a Non-Funded Cost Share Agreement between Washoe County and the United States Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest with an estimated Washoe County non-cash contribution of [\$215,510.00; \$209,310.00 in personnel costs and \$6,200.00 in light maintenance costs] over a 5-year period to allow Washoe County to maintain existing and future trails that cross both jurisdictions along the Sierra Front and to continue maintaining the Whites Creek, Thomas Creek Canyon, and Michael D. Thompson Trailheads; and 2) authorize the Assistant County Manager [Dave Solaro] to sign the Agreement on behalf of the County."