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The State of Nevada receives donation of more than 12,000 acres in Lyon and Mineral Counties to establish new state park along Walker River

YERINGTON, Nev. – The creation of a new Nevada State Park, known as the Walker River State Recreation Area is official! Today, the Nevada Division of State Lands accepted the gift deeds facilitated by the Walker Basin Conservancy, and will assign the donated property to the Nevada Division of State Parks for the development and management of the new park along the East Walker River in Lyon and Mineral Counties. This historic opportunity was made possible by a generous donation from the Walker Basin Restoration Program, which acquired these historic ranches along the Walker River with support through the Desert Terminal Lakes Act. The Walker Basin Conservancy’s mission is to help restore and maintain Walker Lake, while protecting the important agricultural and watershed interests along the Walker River. The new park stretches along 29 miles of the scenic East Walker River, and includes the Pitchfork, Rafter 7, Flying M and Nine Mile Ranch properties.

The majority of former ranchland and river frontage included in the transfer has not been accessible to the public for over 125 years. Through the establishment of the Walker River State Recreation Area, visitors will soon have access to a pristine river corridor along the East Walker River. Diverse recreation opportunities include camping, kayaking, OHV-designated terrain, equestrian trails and fishing. The Nevada Division of State Parks also plans to establish a fishery at the Pitchfork Ranch property in cooperation with the Nevada Division of Wildlife.

“We are excited to begin developing this new state park for the enjoyment of all Nevadans,” said Eric Johnson, Administrator of the Nevada Division of State Parks. “This is a rare opportunity to open these historic ranch properties to the public and to give Nevadans access to a unique part of the state.”

The Nevada Division of State Parks will work with the Walker Basin Conservancy and the Nevada Department of Wildlife on stewardship activities that address dust abatement, soil stabilization, and noxious weed control on the former agriculture fields. They will also work to protect priority habitat for the Bi-State Sage-Grouse.

“Establishing a new state park for Nevada ensures these historic ranches continue to be managed and protected for the health of the Walker River and Walker Basin. I’m looking forward to the transition and working alongside the Division of State Parks well into the future” said Jeff Bryant, Executive Director of the Walker Basin Conservancy.

While the land transfer is an important first step in development of this park, the Walker River State Recreation Area will not officially open until the Nevada Division of State Parks has staffed the area, completed a safety assessment, and finalized preliminary development. Limited access is due to begin in the fall of 2017. Visit parks.nv.gov for details and updates.

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The **Nevada Division of State Parks** plans, develops and maintains a system of parks and recreation areas for the use and enjoyment of more than 3.5 million visitors a year. The Division was established in 1963 by the Nevada Legislature to form a new state park agency within the **Department of Conservation and Natural Resources**. The Division manages and maintains 23 parks, historic sites and recreation areas in Nevada.

The **Nevada Division of State Lands** provides land use services to the State, its agencies and its people, and coordinates natural resource management programs, such as the Environmental Improvement Program at Lake Tahoe. The agency holds title to and authorizes the buying of, disposing of and use of state owned lands. Upon statehood, the Division received title to all sovereign lands submerged beneath navigable bodies of water, including Walker Lake

Established in 2014, the non-profit **Walker Basin Conservancy** (WBC) is leading implementation efforts to restore and maintain Walker Lake while protecting agricultural, environmental and recreational interests in the Walker River Basin. WBC currently manages thousands of acres of land in the Basin and oversees revegetation activities, habitat enhancement and ongoing research. WBC also protects and monitors acquired water resources to ensure that they are used as intended for riparian and watershed stewardship and to increase stream flows to Walker Lake.