



Yuba County eyes 1,600-acre recreation area

By [Ben van der Meer/Appeal-Democrat](#)

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After putting thousands of acres behind sparkling new levees, Yuba County officials are now looking to make those acres do more than serve as spillway for the Feather River.

County supervisors on Tuesday night approved sending a letter in support of an application for millions in state money to turn about 1,600 acres near Arboga into a recreation area.

Public Works Director Mike Lee told supervisors Star Bend boat ramp would be the starting point for a trail system, meeting a county goal at the same time.

"This property would be right along the lines of what we were envisioning in the parks master plan," Lee said, referring to a goal to include more river access for recreation.

As part of building the Feather River setback levee, the Three Rivers Levee Improvement Authority, under county auspices, acquired about 1,600 acres between the new levee and the Feather River to the west.

Lee told supervisors that TRLIA needed approval to apply for as much as \$5 million in state bond money to make recreation and other improvements to the land.

But Supervisor Roger Abe said he saw reason for concern, especially if the land was developed for recreation but there wasn't any money to maintain it or provide public safety.

He also said he wanted more clarity on who would own the land, the state or Yuba County.

"The concern I have is the state's maintenance efforts already," Abe said.

Up to 20 percent of the money from the state could be used for maintenance and safety, Lee said, and another 20 percent could be part of an endowment to cover future costs.

"When it's developed fully with trails, there will be an increase in usage," he said. "Increased usage means increased safety."

If the endowment is in place, he added, it's possible the state wouldn't be involved at all. Supervisor Mary Jane Griego, who represents the spillway area, said it's also possible the county would access the land through a conservation easement.

He and Griego are setting up a meeting with nearby residents and boat ramp users to discuss safety issues in the spillway area, Lee also said.

Opening spillway land to public use would be part of a process where TRLIA would morph from an agency

charged with upgrading and maintaining levees into something else.

TRLIA this year will begin its last major levee project, improving flood control along the Yuba River between Simpson Lane and the Goldfields.

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