



Public says keep Kennedy as it is

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The Union Democrat

Keeping the 240-acres of land surrounding Kennedy Meadows "just how it is" was the most common comment made at the latest meeting to gauge public sentiment about who, and what interests, should be central in controlling the land's future.

The Pacific Forest and Watershed Lands Stewardship Council, which organized the meeting, was formed to select entities to oversee 140,000 acres of land across 22 counties in California, including the Kennedy Meadows plot. The council was formed in response to Pacific Gas and Electric giving up out-right ownership of the land as part of a bankruptcy agreement.

Potential recipients of the land include: Tuolumne County, Cal Alumni Association, California Department of Fish and Game, California State Horseman's Association, Mother Lode Land Trust, New World Foundation, Reliant Camps, Sierra Nevada Conservancy, Today's Youth Matter, Tuolumne Band of Me-Wuk Indians, Tuolumne County Resource Conservation District, the U.S. Forest Service, Wheelchair Adventure Mountain Program Inc., and United Camps, Conferences and Retreats.

The Sonora Opera Hall was filled Thursday afternoon with interested people separated into four different groups to compile a list of qualifications the future landowners and conservation easement holders should possess.

All four groups listed managing the property the way it has been as a central consideration for future land recipients. Other considerations were livestock grazing, and that the recipient should be a stable group with a history of land management and trail improvements.

Ric Notini, director of land conservation for the Stewardship Council, explained potentially multiple groups could share easement of the property.

"We're encouraging potential donees to submit joint proposals," Notini said. "We could end up with a situation where the donee is a collaboration of groups."

PG&E has requested certain rights on 12 acres among the 240 acres, including a nine-acre plot near the pack station and the 20-foot wide Huckleberry Trail that runs through the property.

These 12 acres will have a separate easement, which potentially means different groups could hold easements on this acreage and the other 228 acres.



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Notini also said that \$70 million was provided by PG&E to the council to fund studies, maintenance and improvements to the 140,000 acres. The money is yet to be allotted, but Notini said that the Kennedy Meadows plot will receive some money.

"It's yet to be determined," Notini said. "We're going to make money available to this site, but we need to make sure we have money left for the other 43 sites."

By December, the Stewardship Council will issue a Land Conservation and Conveyance Plan draft which will include the council's recommended owners and donees.

Before it is accepted, there will be a 30-day draft review.

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