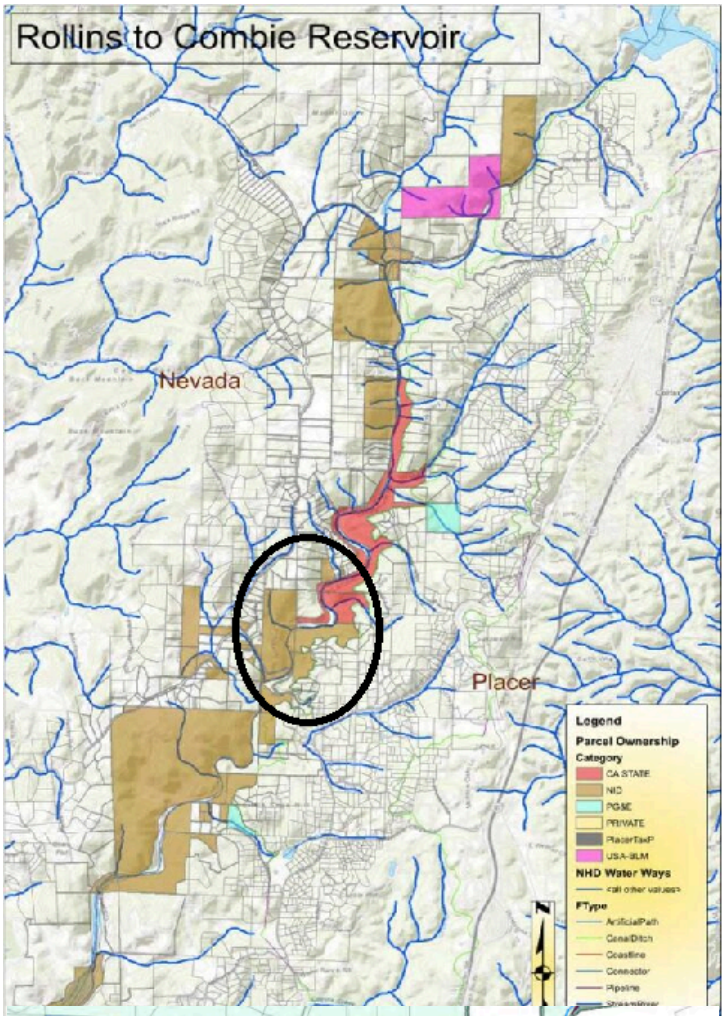
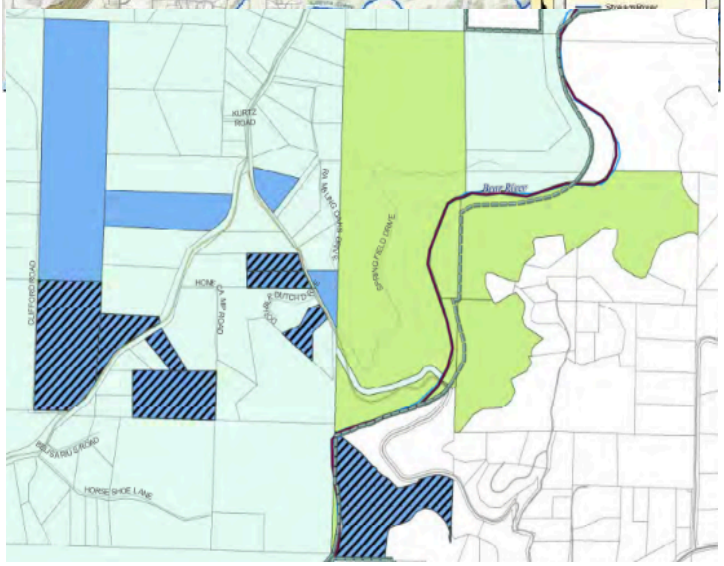
A Vision for the Future of Dog Bar Road NID Properties

Nevada Irrigation District (NID) is planning divestment of properties acquired for the purpose of Parker/Centennial Dam since 1926. This paper will focus on NID parcels in the vicinity of Dog Bar Road at Dog Bar Bridge and the Bear River.





The map at left shows all the parcels between Rollins Reservoir and Combie Reservoir that may be subject to divestment. All parcels in brown are owned by NID. The Red parcel in the middle is the CA Department of Fish & Wildlife owned Bear River Fishing Access Park. Placer County on July 22, 2025 entered into a five-year management agreement with CDFW. The pink parcel at the top of the map is owned by the US Bureau of Land Management.

The map below is an NID map of the Dog Bar Road bridge area. Parcels in blue are currently being offered in the real estate marketplace for sale. Solid blue are parcels without homes, and the black cross hatching indicates parcels with residential houses. Parcels in green are the focus of this paper; one is located in Nevada County, and two in Placer County. The river is the county jurisdictional boundary. The Placer County parcels are defined on one side by the Bear River, and on the eastern side by the Bear River Canal, currently owned by PG&E.

Watershed Values:

Recreation. The Dog Bar Bridge area is a well established recreational area. Upstream of the bridge are trails that connect to the Bear River Fishing Access Park and beyond. The first half mile upstream of the bridge is a popular swimming hole with numerous diving rocks. Downstream of the bridge is a popular cobble beach area, which served as an informal campground before the 1970's.

Summer recreational use is intense. Users park on both sides of Dog Bar Road on both Placer and Nevada County sides of the river wherever there is pull-off space, and even where there is not adequate space. This causes serious public safety problems

because it narrows the road passage to one lane. Emergency vehicle access and evacuation routes are severely impacted every summer weekend. With no sidewalks or paths on either side of Dog Bar Road, pedestrians are seriously endangered as they walk from roadside parking to the river or cobble beach. This year the new Dog Bar Bridge is being completed, shown below. The new bridge has a sidewalk that will at least provide pedestrian and bicycle safety crossing the bridge itself. But with no paths or bike trails along the narrow road, there is a significant safety problem when cars are parked on the roadside.



Interestingly, the old lane bridge with 90 degree turns at both ends actually slowed traffic to less than 5 mph and made it safer for pedestrians. With the new bridge nearly completed, there is a sidewalk on the bridge making river crossing safer. However, the new two lane bridge will increase vehicle speed to 20mph and above, making it even more hazardous to pedestrians on both Placer and Nevada County sides of the river. This will remain a critical public safety problem for both counties, and can only be solved by providing a significant parking area off road with sidewalk and trail access to the river. To address the public safety challenge fully, an off road parking area will need to be complemented with an off-road loading zone immediately adjacent to the cobble beach area. This area on the Nevada County side of the river is used by boaters/kayakers/rafters as a take-out area, causing additional congestion near the bridge. The new bridge construction will hopefully provide some loading zone access; it is also likely that the new bridge will reduce currently used off-road parking, further exacerbating the public safety problem.

The Dog Bar Road bridge crossing area has a long history of recreational use. Until the early 1970s, it was possible to drive down to the cobble beach area and park off-road. This area was used as an informal campground for decades. After the sickle bar slaying incident in 1971, guard rails and gates were installed and any camping was prohibited, ending vehicle access to the cobble beach parking area. (https://goldcountrymedia.com/news/150707/mad-slasher-of-bear-river-rampage-cast-chill-over-1971/)
The recreational potential at the Dog Bar Bridge crossing will only increase in the future, as the natural amenities offer high quality swimming, boating, fishing, goldpanning, and hiking to name some of the major

recreational uses. Accommodating current uses and anticipating increased user days in the future requires a bi-county partnership. These recreational and environmental amenities are located in the middle of a densely zoned and increasingly densely populated area, with increasing uses by tourists from outside the bi-county area.

Wildlife. In addition to recreation, this area provides wildlife habitat, wildlife corridors, wildlife connectivity both upstream and downstream to protected areas, and Open Space amenities serving the whole region.

Wildland fire management has become a high priority for our area. The three large NID parcels all have fuel loaded forests that need to be managed. The fire history shows few fires in the past 100 years, and none recently. The River Fire demonstrated the conflagration potential of these fuel loaded canyon sides. Both NID parcels on the Placer County side are identified in the recently completed Placer County Forest Plan as within a “Placer 10-year Action Plan Focus Area” for fuel reduction. BearPARC advocates for the highest level of fuel reduction and oak forest restoration to the level of prescribed burning management. These areas are in the heart of our community, and offer an ecological education opportunity for the community to understand fire ecology and use of fire as a management tool. Public spaces should embody the highest level of fire ecology management as an educational model and demonstration area, where the community can witness and experience the full range of fire ecology restoration and management.

Native American knowledge and resources are also a salient value. These parcels were part of the Nisenan homeland. There are archeological sites on these parcels, as well as Nisenan resources that should be preserved and/or cultivated, and protected with resource conservation easements that promote cultivation and access. The local tribes have developed fire crews and have trained and accredited “burn bosses” that can guide and assist in the fire ecology restoration, and become part of an ecological education demonstration area and ongoing program for the community to understand and develop skills in fire management.

Infrastructure protection is an additional value and issue for the two parcels on the Placer County side. Both of these parcels are bounded by the Bear River Canal. While currently under PG&E ownership, this facility will likely be divested by PG&E to public agencies. Most of the canal water is used by Placer County Water Agency and Nevada Irrigation District. An attempt by PG&E to split its FERC license to divest the Bear Canal portion of the Drum-Spaulding system was challenged by PCWA. This divestment by PG&E was intended to transfer ownership to a Joint Powers Authority of PCWA and NID. In the future, it is likely that the entire Drum-Spaulding system will be divested either to the JPA or to PCWA. PCWA has already stated its intention to acquire the system in its Strategic Plan. It is in the interest of any owner of the canal to manage the adjacent forests to minimize risk of erosion/landslide and/or damage from wildfire and snags, and the utility should be a partner in forest management. Local public agency ownership and management of this power/water system would include ownership of the easement rights for the utility access road(s) above the canals; public ownership of these utility access roads adds another dimension to the discussion of future potential uses.

BearPARC has advocated for a **Bear River Watershed Trail** from the Bear Valley to the confluence with the Feather River. There is already an existing trail on both sides of the river that connects from Dog Bar Road to the Bear River Fishing Access. The Nevada County side requires access across several privately owned parcels that are located on the river; access across these parcels is allowed within the cobbles up to the high water mark, as the Bear River is a designated “navigable river”. It is necessary to ford the Bear River to reach the Bear River Fishing Access facilities including parking, but this is easily crossed during summer flows.

This image shows the NID property on the Place County side between Dog Bar Road and the Bear River



Fishing Access Park. The canal serves as the NID property line. Note the private landowner above the canal has done fuel reduction, weed eating the surface vegetation, and pruning up ten feet on the trees. The NID land below the canal is completely unmanaged and utterly overgrown. This creates a hazard to the canal from burn debris and risk of mass wasting. These parcels are Placer County fuel reduction priority parcels.





Another view of the Placer County NID parcels. On the left, the fuel reduction of the private landowner above the canal, and on the right, the totally unmanaged and fuel loaded NID parcel. Note trail along canal.



Above is a view of the swimming hole and diving rocks immediately upstream of Dog Bar Bridge. The view is looking downstream toward Bear River Bridge which is several hundred yards below the river bend. Nevada County is on river right, with the access trail that leads from the bridge all the way to Bear River Fishing Access Park. On the left is Placer County, with a trail that links Dog Bar Road with the Fishing Access Park at Plum Tree Road. All of the lands in view are currently NID property and are planned for divestment.



This is the swimming area just upstream of Dog Bar Bridge. These inner tubers began their float at the Bear River Fishing Access Park Day Use Area. The float takes an hour minimum, and is possible in Spring and early summer flows. Summertime flows are 140 cfs, which is the irrigation delivery requirement for NID deliveries made from Combie Reservoir, half the flow going to canals delivering to Nevada County, and half going to irrigation needs of Placer County. It would be possible to manage the 140 cfs constant flow as a daily mid-day recreation flow of approximately 300 cfs for four hours and the balance of 20 hours per day at approximately 100 cfs. This recreation flow would have no impact on NID irrigation deliveries, and would have a relatively small impact on fluctuations in the level of Combie Reservoir that would not substantially affect reservoir recreation. The flow fluctuations would have to be studied for their ecological impacts to aquatic resources, public safety, and tradeoffs among the watershed services of this river reach. If this recreation flow were implemented today, the popularity of this Class II float between Ben Taylor Crossing to Bear River Fishing Access Park to Dog Bar would sky rocket, as it would be available for floating daily throughout the summer. Currently there is no infrastructure at either Ben Taylor Road/Hansen Quarry or the Dog Bar Bridge access that could handle the surge of user days. The environmental, social, and economic tradeoffs would need to be studied in depth.

Public Safety and Parking. For the new bridge construction, a parking area and laydown yard was created on the Placer County side of the river. This was a previous informal trailer site, and was littered with trash before construction. Shown below, this area provides the only potential parking area close to the river that has adequate line of sight views in both directions for safe ingress and egress to Dog Bar Road.



The parking area has adequate spaces to alleviate any parking along Dog Bar Road. If this parking lot were developed and made public, no parking could be poasted along the all of Dog Bar Road, thus eliminating the public safety problem, and preserving the efficacy of the evacuation route. A loading zone would also be needed near the cobble beach for boat take out and beach supplies off loading.



Above is a closer view of the parking available at the current construction yard on the Placer County side of the river. Acquisition of NID properties on both sides of Dog Bar Road will be necessary to provide parking. There is also a hiking trail from this point connecting upstream to the Bear River Fishing Access Park at Plum Tree Road. Both counties need to collaborate to make this popular area a community asset for the future.

In summary, the Dog Bar Bridge access to Bear River recreation has deep historical roots. A bi-county collaboration is necessary to plan and implement a project to meet the needs of recreation, Open Space, public safety, emergency services, evacuation concerns, fuel reduction, wildlife preservation, wildlife migration corridors, oak woodland restoration, fire ecology management and fire safety, parking adequacy, sanitation facilities, signage and ecological education, and collaboration with bi-county non-profits to establish ongoing education and scientific research programs such as those conducted by Sierra Streams Institute, BearPARC, South Yuba Citizens League, The Nature Center, and the like.
It is our hope that both counties engage in a cooperative dialogue with stakeholders and a collaborative decision-making process that can anticipate an enlightened future for our community including economic development, and the well being of our citizens and our environment.

The following page is an aerial photo of the Dog Bar Bridge area and the NID lands. This is an older aerial photo prior to 2025 and shows the old bridge prior to construction of the new curved bridge.

Google Earth view of area of concern



Bear River Canal is the property boundary

Bear River trail, connects Dog Bar Rd with Bear River Fishing Access Park

Potential parking area is approximate 600 feet from Dog Bar Rd

Diving rock area; popular float
(see photos above)

Parking area access to new bridge area has good traffic visibility in both directions

There is inadequate space for parking above beach; curves in Dog Bar Rd also prevent safe visibility of oncoming traffic

Popular beach area & boating takeout.

Dog Bar Road is parallel to seasonal creek; parking space limited, and likely not viable.

A professional bi-county analysis of the Dog Bar Bridge area is needed to develop options for accommodating the inevitable increase in user days and variety of recreational uses.