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## Strong hopes for governor approval of solar project at Malakoff Diggins

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Nevada County officials are hopeful that Gov. Jerry Brown will approve \$700,000 in state funds for a solar panel project at Malakoff Diggins State Historic Park.

They're advising locals to contact the governor and urge him to approve the project that, if funded, would replace a diesel generator that currently powers the off-the-grid park.

"What we need now is for the governor to sign the budget," said Caleb Dardick, executive director of the South Yuba River Citizens League. "This is just something we've never lost sight of."

Instructions for contacting the governor's office are at [www.yubariver.org/solar-for-malakoff](http://www.yubariver.org/solar-for-malakoff).

Supervisor Hank Weston, a strong advocate for the solar project, helped usher the funding through the Legislature.

Initially estimated at \$450,000, the solar project's cost was then revised to \$352,000. It secured legislative approval at that price.

Then Weston discovered State Parks had placed a \$700,000 cost on it.

"We would have done it quickly," Weston said. "But State Parks has these other rules."

The project then underwent another review at the Capitol, and again got approval.

Assemblyman Richard Gordon, who represents portions of San Mateo and Santa Clara counties, played a crucial role in securing the state funding. Gordon, who has a second home in Nevada County, attended a town hall meeting here earlier this year. He heard about Malakoff Diggins at that meeting, and helped shepherd the solar project fund requests through a budget subcommittee.

"You never know when you put something in the budget if it'll survive," Gordon said.

The Assemblyman has strong hopes for the item getting the governor's approval. One reason is because the project would remove the diesel generator currently powering the park.

Weston and Dardick use the same argument.

"Talk about removing greenhouse gases," Weston said.

In addition to cleaner energy, the new power source would allow heightened security measures to protect thousands of artifacts at the park. It will also provide greater recreational opportunities.

According to Dardick, Malakoff Diggins has been on the chopping block for five years. The solar project will help ensure it remains open.

It was one of 70 state parks that faced closure in 2011. SYRCL became involved in keeping the park open.

Dardick said he learned that Malakoff Diggins faced closure because of its low visitation and high expenses. The solar project will remove the need for the generator, and the fuel costs that go with it.

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