

## **3D Project Cohort 3 Project Selection Recommendations**

### **Executive Summary**

The 3D Project provides rural communities across Nevada with the opportunity to expand their tourism economies through a process of discovery and reflection with our team of consultants led by Travel Nevada's Destination Development Manager and the Industry team. Each selected project will complete six months of consulting and plan development, followed by the opportunity to apply for their share of \$1M in funding to kickstart their destination development efforts. Initially, six projects were selected to participate in the first two cohorts of the 3D Project in October of 2022. The recommendations presented below represent the next generation of 3D Project participating destinations.

In order to provide robust support to each selected destination and in recognition of Travel Nevada's capacity to provide that support, combined with the desire to provide more impactful financial support to the destinations, the Working Group has opted to select two destinations to participate in Cohort 3.

Those applications have been carefully reviewed and evaluated by a panel of experts including representatives from the Governor's Office of Economic Development, the Nevada Arts Council, The Nevada Division of Outdoor Recreation, the Nevada Small Business Development Center, the Bureau of Land Management, and Travel Nevada. The panel considered each destination's proposed concept based on selection criteria outlined in the project guidelines, including the ability of the project to positively impact local residents while stimulating the visitor economy, ability to foster collaboration with partners, alignment with Travel Nevada's Industry strategic initiatives, and impacts around resource preservation, among other criteria.

Following lengthy discussion on the merits of each application, the working group offers the following project selection recommendations for Cohort 3.

## Walker Basin Conservancy

Feedback from the Working Group: This exciting project presents a unique opportunity to develop tourism in a space where there is not currently a strong tourism component, while also offering project priorities around sustainability, regenerative tourism, and cultural tourism. These are all areas that align with Industry strategic initiatives and are priorities for the members of the working group. The organizational strength of WBC stands out among the applicants and their strong partnerships with local communities and tribal leaders add excitement. Finally, this project has the potential to support economically challenged communities develop new revenue streams while supporting their local culture.

### **Project Summary (from the Walker Basin Conservancy's application):**

The Walker River Basin is located in rural western Nevada and spans Douglas, Mineral and Lyon Counties. Just over an hour's drive south of Reno, the Basin is home to generational ranching and agricultural families, Native American communities, and residents whose lifestyle is reflective of the Walker River. Nestled in the high desert and home to wide open spaces, public lands, proud and authentic communities, and the serene and picturesque Walker Lake, the Walker Basin is truly one of a kind. The purpose of this proposal is to link the communities connected by the Walker River with a unified place-based tourism experience and marketing campaign. The history, culture, recreation, and economics of communities including Topaz, Smith, Yerington, Schurz, and Hawthorne all blossom from the Walker River. With strong partnerships rooted in trust and promotion of the region, the Walker Basin Conservancy (Conservancy) is uniquely qualified to successfully lead the development and implementation of a Walker Basin Destination concept and plan. The Conservancy knows the region, and also provides direct impact to local youth, expanding their interest of their backyards through our Environmental Education program. The Yerington Main Street Committee (YMSC), our organizational supporter of the concept, shares similar values in promoting the region for authentic experiences and identifies this proposed project as key to driving more tourism, business, and recognition of Yerington and the surrounding communities along the Walker River in their effort to improve quality of life for area residents. The Walker River carves a course connecting these communities, and sharing that journey with visitors will help this region tap the growing recreation and tourism segments in the Eastern Sierra and the expanding Reno market to the north. A trip along the Walker brings people to experience unexpected history, pioneer and native cultures, miles of wide open space, and unexpected richness and lushness along Nevada's flowing oasis. The Walker River Corridor's Community Economics Development Strategy (CEDS) identifies recreation and tourism as key areas for investment. There have been significant improvements in recreation access and quality throughout the basin, however there remain critical opportunities to connect local towns and businesses to this potential economic impact. From the creation of the Walker River State Recreation Area in 2019 to the expansion of Mason Valley Wildlife Management Area, planned OHV trail connections and improvements, and new river trails and singletrack planned for the East Walker River, there has been significant movement in physically connecting communities with natural resources. Economic diversification is essential for the long-term success of these communities. Led by the Conservancy with support from the YMSC and our network of supporting partners, the proposed Walker Basin Destination concept will bring together partners to tell the exciting story of the region to the cultural traveler, the outdoor recreationalist, and the unexpected experience enthusiast. This proposal meets Travel Nevada's Brand Pillars of uninhabited space, inspiring discoveries, unexpected diversity, and rewarding adventure.

## Friends of Sutro Tunnel

Feedback from the Working Group: This project could be instrumental in helping the community of Dayton develop a sense of place and community pride. The project has important historical significance and the potential to elevate the Dayton part of the historic Comstock region and establish stronger ties between Dayton and Virginia City for visitors. This project could generate tourism revenue in Lyon County and build support and opportunity for local businesses while also establishing/enhancing outdoor recreation resources that can be enjoyed by residents and visitors alike. The working group is excited at the long-term possibilities that exist at the site and is impressed at the work that has already been accomplished by the organization.

### **Project Summary (from Friends of Sutro Tunnel's application):**

The Friends of Sutro Tunnel Charity (Charity) formed 2019 with representatives from local businesses and history enthusiasts, and became a 501c3 in 2020. The purpose of the Charity is to protect, preserve, and share the history and Historic Property of the Sutro Tunnel Site with the public. The site is in the Virginia City National Historic Landmark District and Comstock Historic District. From 2019 to present, in-kind contractor work and volunteers transformed the site from a hidden gem buried overgrown brush and uninhabitable buildings to a site with cleaned and accessible buildings, cleared grounds, a museum, and access in the tunnel. The Charity has the vision of transforming the Historic Sutro Tunnel & Site into a fully operational historic park with guided, school, private, and self-guided tours as well as events, small-scale concerts, and site rentals for parties, weddings, etc. The site offers a living history experience of a historic self-contained operation that developed a 3.8 mile tunnel at a 1.2% grade between Dayton and Virginia City mines. The site includes six original buildings from the Sutro era, remanent of a 1920's addition to an original building, a 1930's rebuilt original building, a Carson City historic home moved to the site, and two buildings built onsite in the 1980's. The engineering of the tunnel stands alone on the guided tours, which visitors now can experience the tunnel 100 feet inside. The uniqueness of the use of mules inside the tunnel also has its story in the history as does the magnificent Sutro Mansion that unfortunately no longer exists. Since 2020, significant work has occurred restoring the six original historic buildings from the Adolph Sutro operations, a 1930s renovated original building, and the tunnel portal that now offers visitors access 100 feet inside. Work on the Site Caretaker house is completed so to provide livable accommodations and work on an historic building is currently underway for the location of the nonprofit office. The Charity envisions the site 100% publicly accessible, full time staff onsite, daily guided tours, a self-guided tour that includes signs or cell phone virtual tours, regular events and site rentals, and outdoor recreation such as trails and campground. Dayton is a rural community with many residents who work in surrounding communities. According to the US Census, Dayton's population in 15,153 with 67.3% in the labor workforce, the median property value of \$361,700, and the poverty rate is 4.1%. Dayton has come a long way in the last decade from predominantly low-income residents, but Dayton still needs much to become a town with many amenities tourists are attracted to. It is the hope the Charity will influence more demand in the area for cultural heritage tourism to justify motels/hotels in Dayton with improved dining and shopping options. The Charity's proposal aligns with Travel Nevada's initiatives by focusing on increasing overnight stays and spending, helping showcase rural destinations, preserving and sharing Nevada's history and heritage, and the Site has the potential to create a new attraction for Travel Nevada.