

*Statement to State Parks Commission
Re: Tesla Park*

9/25/25

Good morning/afternoon,

My name is David Fries. I am the Conservation Chair of the San Joaquin Audubon Society. We are part of the large Audubon network of regional societies and bird alliances calling for this Commission to fully protect Tesla as a State Reserve.

Our organization has advocated for preservation of Tesla's 3,100 acres since it was purchased by State Parks 25 years ago. Tesla, although located in eastern Alameda County, serves the Valley, and is ecologically connected to it.

Our community cares about protecting exceptional natural lands, such as Tesla. We also care about providing access to low-intensity outdoor recreation, that is appropriate to protect such resources. That is exactly what a Reserve does. Hiking trails with minimal impacts on the surrounding habitat are the best recreational use for the new Park. A good comparison is the Cosumnes River Ecological Preserve, which allows no camping, horseback riding, biking, or motorized activities, yet has more than 100,00 visitors each year.

The Biological Assessment and Scientist Consensus Statement which were discussed earlier provide irrefutable evidence of Tesla's exceptional natural resources of statewide significance. They show why Reserve classification is the best available statutory option to protect the resources, not even considering the public and Tribal input in support of a Reserve. This is why it is so disturbing to see the Concept Alternatives put forth by State Parks at the planning workshop last Saturday. They ignore the irrefutable scientific evidence. They place damaging uses and development, including vehicle traffic, campgrounds and facilities, within Tesla's core, instead of placing these high intensity uses and facilities on the more than 300 adjacent acres of already impacted State Parks land that has never been opened to the public.

Excuses, such as the 300 plus acres are steep, are simply not credible.

Tesla undeniably exceeds the requirements for a Reserve under PRC 5019.65. Yet State Parks is fighting the establishment of Tesla as a Reserve showing its bias. There are only 16 Natural Reserves in the State, and no Cultural Reserves. There are no Reserves in the Diablo Range where Tesla is located. There has been only

one Reserve established in over 40 years, and most were established well over 50 years ago. It is concerning that State Parks has not found any other locations in our state worthy of Reserve protection in decades.

State Parks is on the wrong track. The extensive scientific evidence documenting Tesla's natural resources of statewide significance and validated by dozens of scientific experts is unmatched. Public support for a Reserve is overwhelming. These facts cannot be ignored.

Tesla should be established as a State Reserve to protect its exceptional natural and cultural resources, while providing appropriate low-intensity outdoor recreation. Please use your decision-making role to make this happen.

Thank you,


David S. Fries, Ph. D.

Conservation Chair,

San Joaquin Audubon Society