

# Staff Report 43

## **APPLICANT:**

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John W. Ward Jr.; Edward B. Ward III; and Pamela C.W. Cooper

## **PROPOSED ACTION:**

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Issuance of a General Lease – Recreational Use

## **AREA, LAND TYPE, AND LOCATION:**

Sovereign land in Lake Tahoe, adjacent to 3300 Edgewater Drive, near Tahoe City, Placer County.

## **AUTHORIZED USE:**

Use and maintenance of two existing mooring buoys.

## **TERM:**

10 years; beginning February 22, 2023.

## **CONSIDERATION:**

\$546 per year, with an annual Consumer Price Index adjustment.

## **SPECIFIC LEASE PROVISIONS:**

- Liability insurance in an amount no less than \$1,000,000 per occurrence.
- Lessee expressly acknowledges that a permit from the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency (TRPA) is required for the Authorized Improvements and failure to obtain a permit from TRPA and maintain compliance with that permit may result in TRPA imposing civil penalties and will constitute a breach of this lease.
- Lessee shall not store any personal items or construct any improvements in the Public Trust easement which may impair the public's right of access for navigation, fishing, and public trust consistent recreational uses.
- Lessee agrees and acknowledges that the hazards associated with climate change may require additional maintenance or protection strategies regarding the improvements on the lease premises.

## **STAFF ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATION:**

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### **AUTHORITY:**

Public Resources Code sections 6005, 6216, 6301, 6501.1, 6503, 6503.5, and 6505.5; and California Code of Regulations, title 2, sections 2000 and 2003.

### **PUBLIC TRUST AND STATE'S BEST INTERESTS:**

On February 22, 2013, the Commission authorized a 10-year General Lease – Recreational Use to John W. Ward, as trustee of the Exemption Trust set forth in the Third Amended Trust Agreement of John W. Ward and Katherine Ward dated August 16, 1989; Michael J. Ward, Trustee of the Michael J. Ward Family Trust U/A dated October 31, 2007; and John W. Ward Jr., Edward B. Ward III, and Pamela C. W. Cooper, for use and maintenance of one existing mooring buoy previously authorized by the Commission and one existing mooring buoy not previously authorized by the Commission ([Item 15, February 22, 2013](#)). The expiration date is February 21, 2023.

On April 23, 2020, ownership interest in the upland property transferred from John W. Ward, Jr., Successor Trustee of The Exemption Trust established under The Third Amended Trust Agreement of John W. Ward and Katherine Ward Dated August 16, 1989, to John W. Ward, Jr., Edward B. Ward III, and Pamela C. W. Cooper. On May 13, 2020, additional ownership interest was transferred from the Bank of Stockton, Successor Trustee of the Michael J. Ward Family Trust U/A dated October 31, 2007 to Edward B. Ward III, John W. Ward, Jr., and Pamela C. W. Cooper.

The Applicant is now applying for a General Lease – Recreational Use, for the use and maintenance of the two existing mooring buoys.

The lease provisions regarding indemnity will apply from April 23, 2020, when the Applicant modified ownership of the upland, through February 27, 2023, the day before the beginning of the new lease.

The buoys have existed for many years at this location. The Applicant holds a current TRPA registration for the two mooring buoys, as obtained on February 21, 2022 (Registration No. 10612). The subject buoys are privately owned and maintained, used for the docking and mooring of boats, and facilitate recreational boating. Recreational boating is a water-dependent use that is generally consistent with the common law Public Trust Doctrine. The California Legislature has identified private recreational boating facilities as an authorized use of Public Trust land. (Pub. Resources Code, §6503.5.)

The proposed lease does not alienate the State's fee simple interest or permanently impair public rights. The lease is limited to a 10-year term, does not grant the lessee exclusive rights to the lease premises, and reserves an easement to the public for Public Trust-consistent uses. Upon termination of the proposed lease, the lessee may be required to remove all improvements from State land and restore the lease premises to their original condition.

The proposed lease requires the lessee to insure the lease premises and indemnify the State for any liability incurred as a result of the lessee's activities thereon. The lease also requires the payment of annual rent to compensate the people of the State for the occupation of the public land involved.

### **CLIMATE CHANGE:**

Climate change significantly affects inland non-tidal lakes such as Lake Tahoe. The frequency and severity of natural disasters like flooding, wildfire, drought, extreme heat, and storms are increasing throughout the state of California, including the Sierra Nevada mountains, and will continue to accelerate through the end of the century. Structures along the shores of inland lakes are particularly vulnerable to the more frequent and extreme weather events and shifts in seasonal characteristics.

According to California's Fourth Climate Change Assessment, released in 2018, the most significant impacts of climate change in the Sierra Nevada Region are more intense heat, precipitation extremes, declining snowpacks, and changes in streamflow timing. The long-term warming trend will lead to warmer and shorter winters, and longer and dryer summers. Successive dry and warm winters are resulting in minimal snowpack, increased winter streamflows and floods, and decreased spring and summer runoff. Prolonged low lake levels will become normal. Low lake level conditions can create more expansive beaches and increased shoreline access in dry months. However, these conditions interfere with boat launching and mooring facilities. This impact is most noticeable where the facilities are sited on shallow, low gradient lake bottom locations.

Dry winters will be punctuated with exceedingly wet years where prolonged and excessive precipitation can produce flash floods. High precipitation in these years will result in higher lake levels, causing beaches to narrow and reducing public access. Extra saturation of the soil can increase erosion, especially following intense wildfire seasons. Surface runoff water may carry more sediment into the lake, adversely impacting water quality and clarity.

Climate change may also lead to more intense and unpredictable storm events and winds. These storms may deviate from prevailing wind patterns for the region. These winds can accelerate shoreline erosion in some areas or cause erosion in areas not typically subject to erosion. Additionally, these winds can increase wave damage on structures and boats along the lake.

Improvements authorized under this lease may require more frequent inspection and maintenance to ensure they are not displaced during storm events. Watercraft moored to buoys, piers, or docks are also vulnerable to damage from high wind events and excessive waves.

**CONCLUSION:**

For all the reasons above, staff believes the issuance of this lease will not substantially interfere with Public Trust needs at this location, at this time, and for the foreseeable term of the proposed lease; is consistent with the common law Public Trust Doctrine; and is in the best interests of the State.

**OTHER PERTINENT INFORMATION:**

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1. Approval or denial of the application is a discretionary action by the Commission. Each time the Commission approves or rejects a use of sovereign land, it exercises legislatively delegated authority and responsibility as trustee of the State's Public Trust lands as authorized by law. If the Commission denies the application, the Applicant may be required to remove the two existing mooring buoys and restore the premises to their original condition. The lessee has no right to a new lease or to renewal of any previous lease.
2. This action is consistent with the "Leading Climate Activism" and "Meeting Evolving Public Trust Needs" Strategic Focus Areas of the Commission's 2021-2025 Strategic Plan.
3. Staff recommends that the Commission find that this activity is exempt from the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) as a categorically exempt project. The project is exempt under Class 1, Existing Facilities; California Code of Regulations, title 2, section 2905, subdivision (a)(2).

Authority: Public Resources Code section 21084 and California Code of Regulations, title 14, section 15300 and California Code of Regulations, title 2, section 2905.

**EXHIBITS:**

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- A. Land Description
- B. Site and Location Map

**RECOMMENDED ACTION:**

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It is recommended that the Commission:

**CEQA FINDING:**

Find that the activity is exempt from the requirements of CEQA pursuant to California Code of Regulations, title 14, section 15061 as a categorically exempt project, Class 1, Existing Facilities; California Code of Regulations, title 2, section 2905, subdivision (a)(2).

**PUBLIC TRUST AND STATE’S BEST INTERESTS:**

Find that the proposed lease will not substantially impair the public rights to navigation and fishing or substantially interfere with the Public Trust needs and values at this location, at this time, and for the foreseeable term of the lease; is consistent with the Public Trust Doctrine; and is in the best interests of the State.

**AUTHORIZATION:**

Authorize issuance of a General Lease – Recreational Use to the Applicant beginning February 22, 2023, for a term of 10 years, for the use and maintenance of two existing mooring buoys, as described in Exhibit A and shown on Exhibit B (for reference purposes only) attached and by this reference made a part hereof; annual rent in the amount of \$546, with an annual Consumer Price Index adjustment; and liability insurance in an amount no less than \$1,000,000 per occurrence.

**EXHIBIT A**

**LEASE 5356**

**LAND DESCRIPTION**

Two parcels of submerged lands situated in the bed of Lake Tahoe, lying adjacent to Lot 6 of fractional Section 33, Township 16 North, Range 17 East, M.D.B.&M., as shown on Official Government Township Plat approved November 10, 1865, County of Placer, State of California, more particularly described as follows:

Two circular parcels of land, each being 50 feet in diameter, underlying two existing buoys lying adjacent to those parcels described in Grant Deed recorded May 13, 2020, as Document Number 2020-0043953-00 in Official Records of said County.

Accompanying plat is hereby made part of this description.

**END OF DESCRIPTION**

Prepared 12/27/2022 by the California State Lands Commission Boundary Unit.



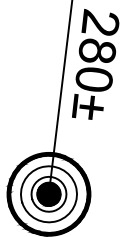
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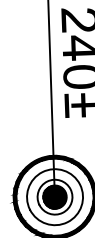
APNs 093-094-008, -033

APPROX.  
SHORELINE

6223'± LTD



EXISTING  
BUOYS (2)



LAKE TAHOE

EXHIBIT A

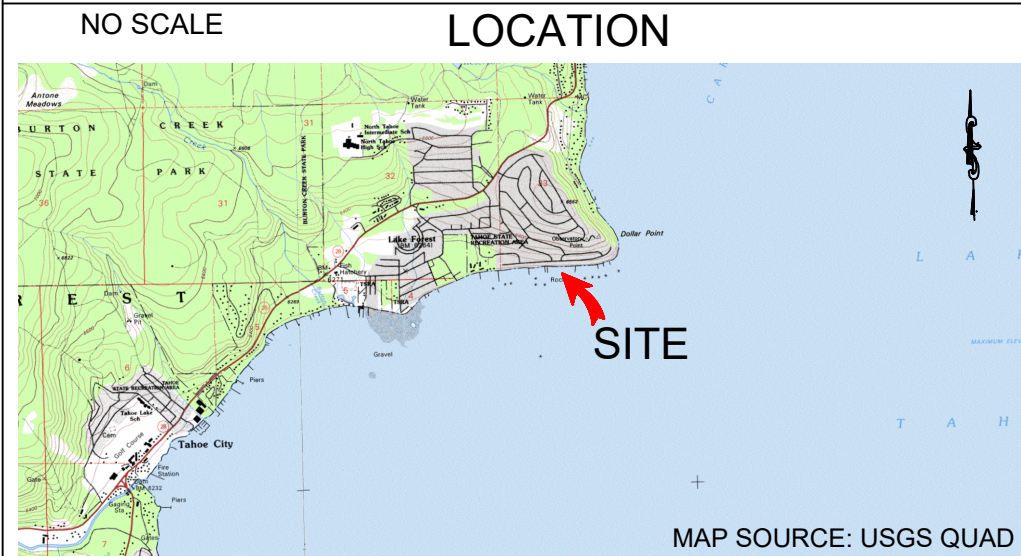
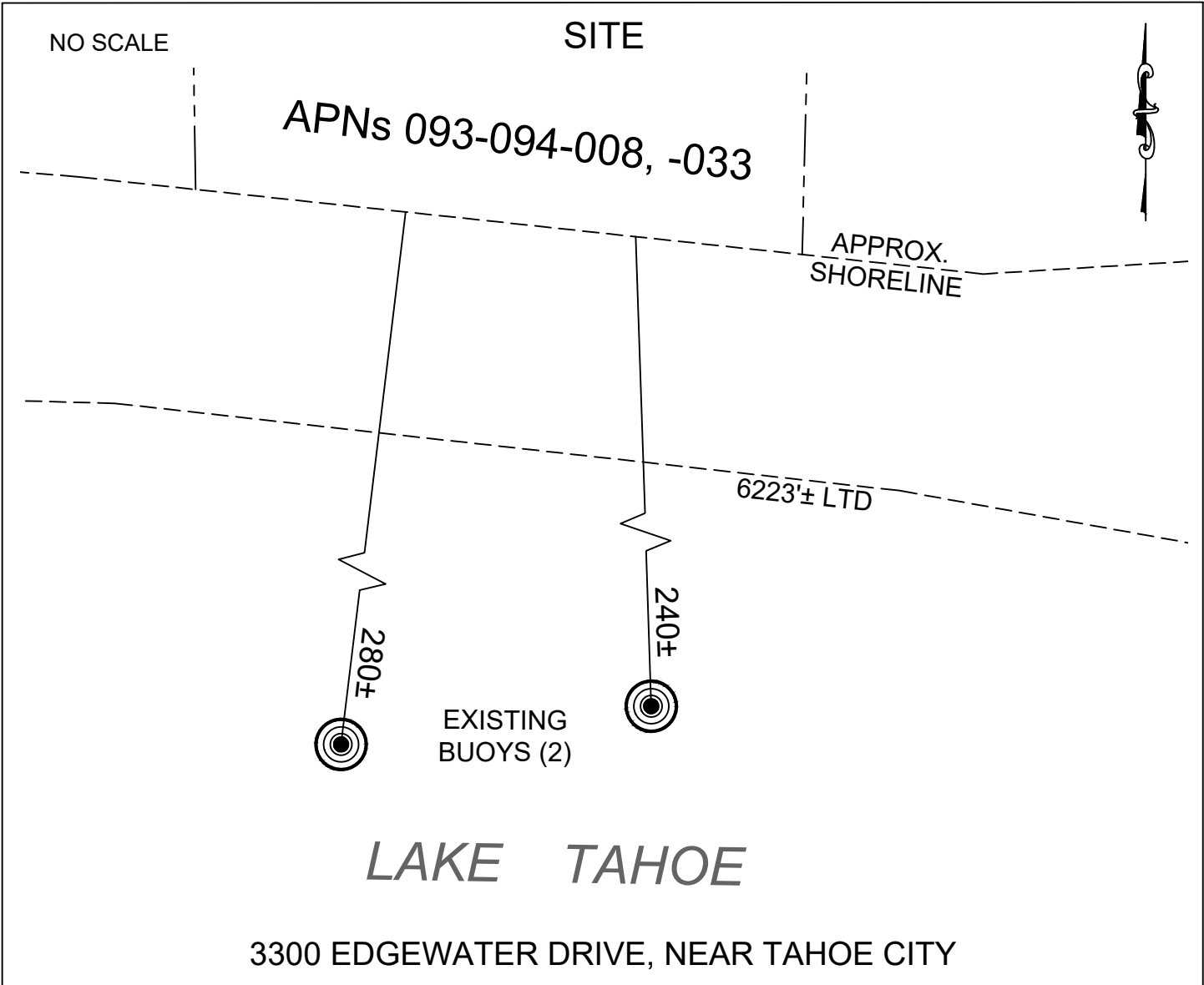
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DT 12/27/2022

LAND DESCRIPTION PLAT  
LEASE 5356, WARD & COOPER  
PLACER COUNTY

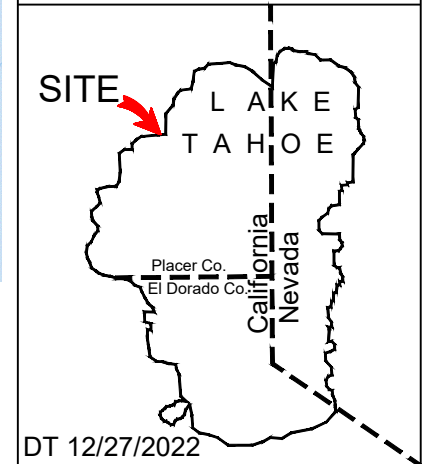
CALIFORNIA STATE  
LANDS COMMISSION





**EXHIBIT B**

LEASE 5356  
WARD & COOPER  
APNs 093-094-008, -033  
GENERAL LEASE -  
RECREATIONAL USE  
PLACER COUNTY



THIS EXHIBIT IS SOLELY FOR PURPOSES OF GENERALLY DEFINING THE LEASE PREMISES, IS BASED ON UNVERIFIED INFORMATION PROVIDED BY THE LESSEE OR OTHER PARTIES AND IS NOT INTENDED TO BE, NOR SHALL IT BE CONSTRUED AS, A WAIVER OR LIMITATION OF ANY STATE INTEREST IN THE SUBJECT OR ANY OTHER PROPERTY.