

Staff Report 26

APPLICANT:

Eric P. Wentz, Trustee of the Christine and Roland von Metzsch 2012 Irrevocable Trust

PROPOSED ACTION:

Issuance of a General Lease – Recreational Use

AREA, LAND TYPE, AND LOCATION:

Sovereign land in Lake Tahoe, adjacent to 2220 Sunnyside Lane, near Tahoe City, Placer County (as shown in Figure 1).

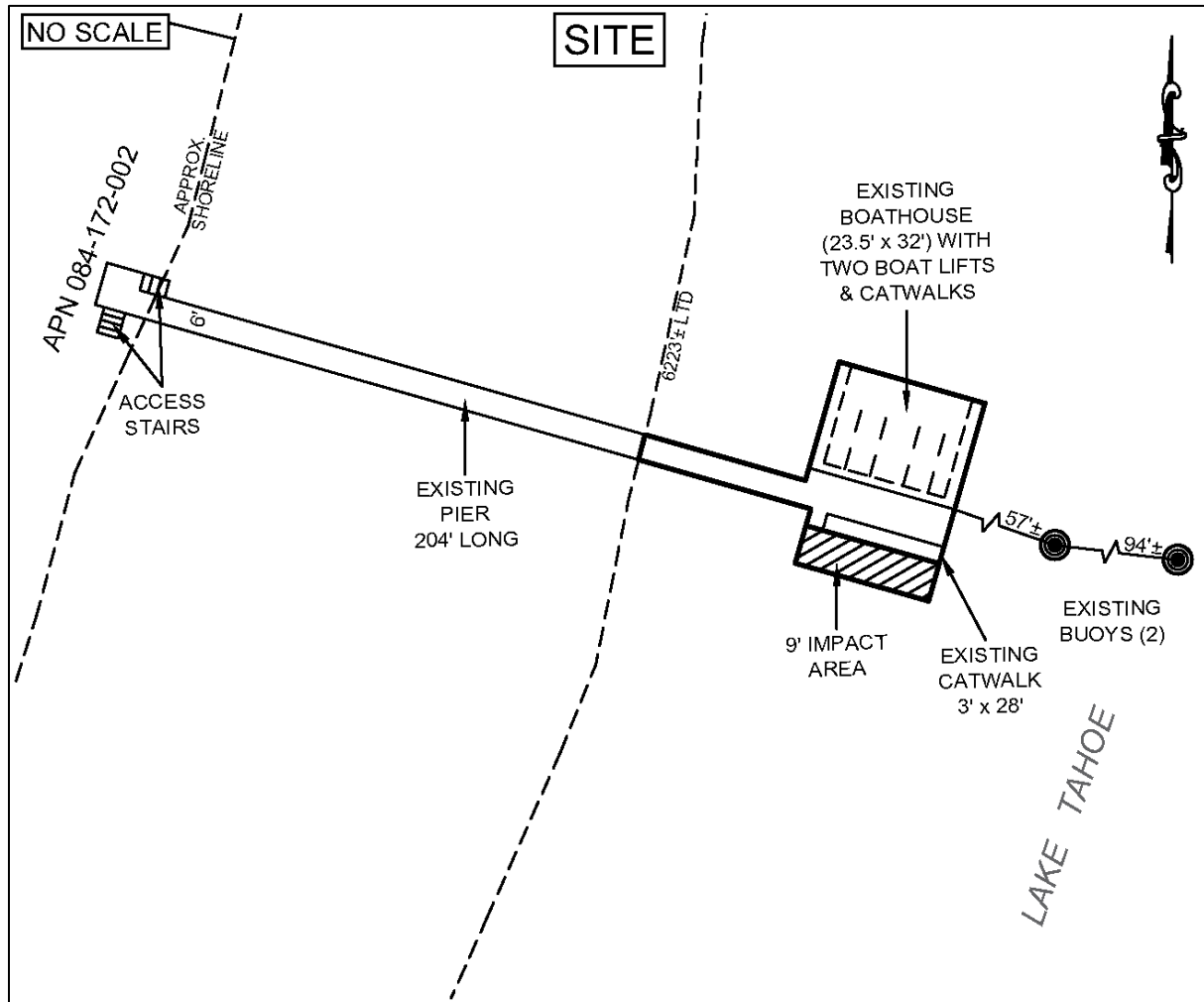
Figure 1. Location



AUTHORIZED USE:

Use and maintenance of an existing pier, open-sided boathouse, two boat lifts, and two mooring buoys (as shown in Figure 2).

Figure 2. Site Map



NOTE: This depiction of the lease premises is based on unverified information provided by the applicant or other parties and is not a waiver or limitation of any State interest in the subject or any other property.

TERM:

10 years, beginning May 1, 2023.

CONSIDERATION:

\$1,992 per year, with an annual Consumer Price Index adjustment and \$1,158 compensation for unauthorized occupation of State Land for the period of October 1, 2022 to April 30, 2023.

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 the 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.
- Lessee agrees the provisions of Section 3, Paragraph 8 shall also extend to the period of Lessee's unauthorized occupation of state-owned land, from October 1, 2022 to April 30, 2023.

STAFF ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATION:

AUTHORITY:

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

PUBLIC TRUST AND STATE'S BEST INTERESTS:

On December 2, 2013, the Commission authorized the issuance of a General Lease – Recreational Use to Roland A. von Metzsch and Christine Wente von Metzsch, Trustees of the Christine and Roland von Metzsch Family Trust dated October 11, 2010, and Eric P. Wente, Trustee of the Christine and Roland von Metzsch 2012 Irrevocable Trust, for use and maintenance of a pier, open-sided boathouse, two mooring buoys, and two boat hoists ([Item 42, December 2, 2013](#)).

On June 29, 2015, the Commission authorized an amendment of lease to revise the annual rent from \$2,800 per year to \$1,926 per year, and to replace the lease's Exhibit A, Exhibit B, Land Description, and Site and Location Map. This change was due to a revision to the impact area surrounding the pier, per the applicant's request and validation by staff.

On February 8, 2021, ownership interest in the upland property was transferred from Roland von Metzsch and Christine Wente von Metzsch, as Trustees of the Christine and Roland von Metzsch Family Trust dated October 11, 2010 to Eric P. Wente as

Trustee of the Christine and Roland von Metzsch 2012 Irrevocable Trust. The lease expired on September 31, 2022.

The Applicant is now applying for a General Lease – Recreational Use, for the use and maintenance of the existing pier, open-sided boathouse, two boat hoists, and two mooring buoys. On January 15, 2023, the applicant registered the two boat hoists and two mooring buoys with the TRPA (Registration No. 10305).

The Applicant will pay \$1,158 in compensation for the unauthorized occupation of State land by the existing pier, open-sided boathouse, two boat lifts, and two mooring buoys for the period of October 1, 2022 through April 30, 2023. The proposed lease will require the Applicant to indemnify the State for the entire period of unauthorized occupation, ensuring the State is protected.

The improvements are privately owned and maintained 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 buoys are located directly lakeward of the upland property and occupy a relatively small area of the lake. The proposed lease does not alienate the State's fee simple interest or permanently impair public rights.

The pier and boat lifts are built on pilings with the immediate upland area of the pier being relatively flat and rocky. The upland end of the pier lies flush against the shoreline making public access for pedestrians and lake-related activities available at varying water levels by passing through the upland parcel within the Public Trust easement.

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 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 stream flows 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:

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 existing pier, open-sided boathouse, two boat lifts, and two 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.

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

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 Public Trust needs and values at this location, at this time, and for the foreseeable term of the lease; is consistent with the common law Public Trust Doctrine; and is in the best interests of the State.

AUTHORIZATION:

1. Authorize acceptance of compensation from the Applicant in the amount of \$1,158 for unauthorized occupation of State land for the period beginning October 1, 2022 through April 30, 2023.
2. Authorize issuance of a General Lease – Recreational Use to the Applicant beginning May 1, 2023, for a term of 10 years, for the use and maintenance of an existing pier, open-sided boathouse, two boat lifts, and two mooring buoys; annual rent in the amount of \$1,992, with an annual Consumer Price Index adjustment; and liability insurance in an amount no less than \$1,000,000 per occurrence.