

# Grass Valley

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## State lawmakers tour Nevada County

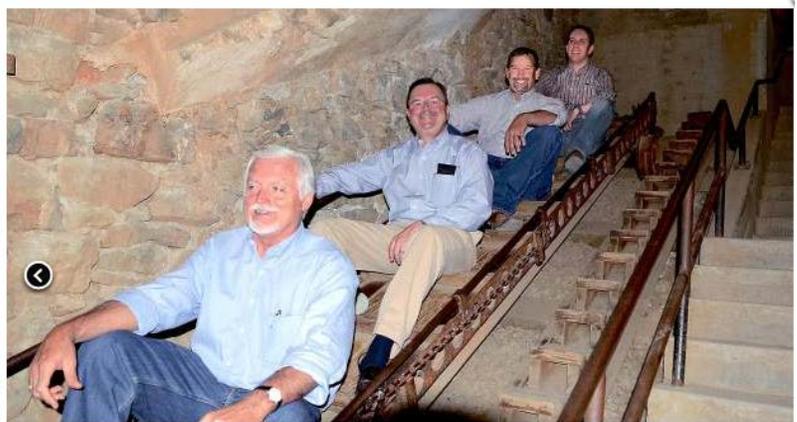
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Assemblyman Brian Dahle, who represents Nevada County in the lower house of the California legislature, brought a delegation of lawmakers to tour the county with an emphasis on understanding how the region plays a pivotal role in the entire state's past, present and future.

"Forestry, water and fire in the Sierras are things I'm educating them on," Dahle said of his fellow delegates. "This is great because we are not very far from the Capitol and they've taken the time to come out."

Dahle was accompanied by three other Assemblymen, including Wes Chesbro, Marc Levine and Richard Gordon, who took the time to become acquainted with



John R. Hart | The Union

Photo for The Union by John Hart (Left to Right) California Assemblyman Wesley Chesbro (Assembly District 2), Assemblyman Richard Gordon (District 24), Nevada County's representative Assemblyman Brian Dahle (District 1) and Assemblyman Marc Levine (District 10) line up on the skip down in the mine shaft at the Empire Mine State Historic Park Thursday afternoon during a tour of the park.



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Photo for The Union by John Hart Assemblyman Brian Dahle (right), who represents District 1 (including Nevada County) tours Empire Mine State Historic Park with Sierra Nevada Conservancy CEO Jim Branham Thursday afternoon.

environmental issues unique to Nevada County.

Izzy Martin and Carrie Monohan, of The Sierra Fund, demonstrated how much of Nevada County's environmental present is impacted by the heritage of gold mining.

Mercury that was used to bind to gold in the later half of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th has incrementally accumulated in Combie and Rollins reservoirs, said Monohan, who is the science director for The Sierra Fund.

Nevada Irrigation District, which operates the two downstream reservoirs, has undertaken a mercury removal process using innovative technology to remove metal from the accumulating sediment and replacing it with clean water.

Dahle came away impressed.

"I'm very excited about it," he said.

"It's a worthy project. When you talk about water storage and you talk about mercury in fish, these are true win-win situations. This is educational for me and my colleagues."

Dahle and his fellow assemblyman also toured Empire Mine State Historic Park, which provides another salient example of how long-defunct mining activities continue to influence current policies.

Empire Mine is the site of the Magenta Drain, a large water channeling device built by Newmont Mining Company to remove water from the approximately 370 miles of underground workings.

Magenta Drain flows into nearby Little Wolf Creek.

The last company to operate Empire Mine before California State Parks took over the site was Newmont. Newmont and the parks department are currently embroiled in a lawsuit over who should pay costs relating to the Magenta Drain filtration device, which is designed to remove heavy metals like arsenic and manganese from the siphoning water.

Gordon, who represents Palo Alto and the surrounding area, but maintains a second home in Nevada City, said it was important for legislators to get out of the Capitol building and find out "what is really happening on the ground."

Despite not directly representing Nevada County, Gordon said he and other lawmakers "clearly understand the value of the region" and how a place like Empire Mine is crucial to the public health and public safety of California.

Caleb Dardick, executive director of South Yuba River Citizens League, also attended the tour to advocate for Malakoff Diggins State Historic Park, which continues to operate only three days a week with a cloud of doubt hanging over its future.

Dardick also asked state legislators to bring repairs on the Bridgeport covered bridge.

“It should be open to pedestrians,” he said.

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