



MILESTONES OF NORTHWESTERN NEVADA

10,000 BCE

Washoe ancestors have lived in the Lake Tahoe Basin and surrounding valleys, including Washoe Valley, since the end of the last Ice Age. Archaeological evidence and Washoe oral histories describe a long, continuous relationship with the land based on hunting, fishing, and gathering.

1844

In January of 1844 Explorer John C. Frémont documented encounters with Washoe people during his expedition through the region.

1848

The California Gold Rush began in 1848, bringing mass migration through Washoe Valley and accelerating displacement, resource loss, and conflict.

1859

By 1859 the discovery of the Comstock Lode intensifies settlement and industrial development, dramatically impacting Washoe land use and lifeways.

1934

The Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 restores limited self-governance and federal recognition, allowing the Washoe Tribe to reestablish a political structure.

1970

In 1970 Resolution of the Washoe land claim acknowledges historic land loss and represents a major legal milestone, despite limited restitution.

A RICH HISTORY

The story of Northwestern Nevada spans millennia, beginning with the indigenous Washoe people, who seasonally utilized the valley and Lake Tahoe for resources like tules for baskets and pine nuts, shifting to a major supply hub during the 1859 Comstock Lode mining boom, fueling Virginia City with timber and food, leading to towns like Washoe City, and eventually transitioning to ranching and farming after the mining peak, while facing significant environmental changes like floods and cultural shifts from European settlement.



AMERICA



Washoe Valley Alliance partners with eighteen government agencies and community service organizations. Visit washoevalleyalliance.org to learn more.

“Protecting Washoe Valley’s Unique Qualities through Education and Stewardship”

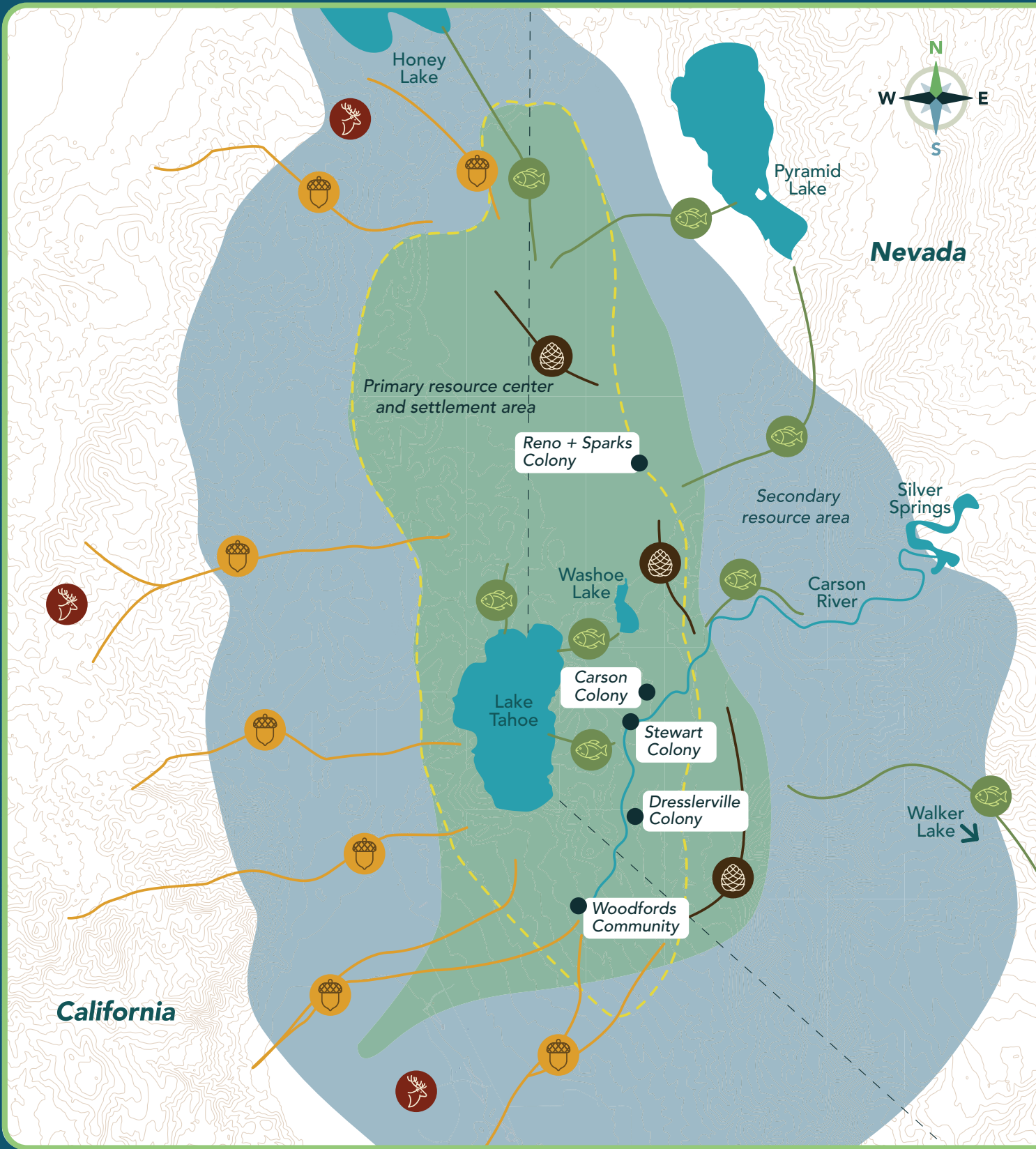
Washoe Valley Alliance is a Nevada nonprofit 501(c)(3) incorporated March 2013.

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WASHOE VALLEY, NEVADA PROVISION ROUTES



Photo From Western Mining History



KEY AREAS OF THE PROVISION ROUTES



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THE ROUTES OF THE WASHOE PEOPLE

The Washoe people organized their seasonal movements around a landscape that stretched from the Great Basin valleys to the high Sierra Nevada and the shores of Da ow aga (Lake Tahoe). This territory offered two very different ecosystems, each providing vital foods at different times of year. As families moved between valleys, mountain forests, and alpine lakes, they followed well-established resource routes shaped by plant cycles, animal migrations, and water systems. These routes were not random travel paths but carefully timed food corridors that sustained Washoe life for generations.



ACORNS
 Acorns were a major fall and winter staple and shaped westward movement into the Sierra foothills. In late summer and fall, some Washoe families crossed the mountains to harvest Black Oak acorns as they ripened. These journeys also allowed them to trade with Miwok and other California tribes and to gather shells from the Pacific coast. Acorns were processed by removing the shells, drying the meat, grinding it into flour, and leaching out bitterness. The flour could be stored for months and cooked into soups, mush, or small cakes through winter.



PINE NUTS
 Pine Nuts were the most important food harvest of the year and the centerpiece of Washoe seasonal life. When the piñon pines ripened in late fall, runners were sent to camps across Washoe territory to announce the gathering. Families came together for the goom sa bye ceremony, a multi day event of prayer, dancing, and food sharing. Pine cones were knocked down with long poles, and the nuts were roasted and stored in caves, rock structures, and lined pits for winter.



LARGE GAME
 Large game followed predictable routes through valleys, mountains, and watering areas, and Washoe hunters built their movements around these patterns. Deer, antelope, bighorn sheep, rabbits, birds, and small mammals provided meat, hides, and tools. Rabbit drives in the eastern valleys brought hundreds of people together, using woven sagebrush nets to catch large numbers of animals at once. Deer and antelope were hunted through stalking and communal drives, while mountain hunters sought bighorn sheep in high terrain. Nothing was wasted, and dried meat was stored for winter or mixed with nut flours to create nourishing stews.



FISH
 Fish created one of the most important seasonal migration routes centered on Lake Tahoe and the alpine lakes of the Sierra. In spring and early summer, Washoe families traveled to the lake as massive spawning runs filled the shallow waters. People caught fish by hand, basket, spear, and net, then dried or smoked them for long-term storage. As summer continued, families moved into higher mountain lakes, carefully harvesting fish while leaving enough to reproduce. These waterways formed a living network of food corridors that connected winter valleys, summer mountains, and the sacred lake at the heart of Washoe territory.

TERRITORIES

- Primary resource and settlement area
- Secondary resource area
- Modern Washoe communities
- Area claimed in Indian Claims Commission (ICC) Docket No. 288