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**PLANNING COMMISSION
STAFF REPORT**

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CARSON CITY
PLANNING DIVISION

MEETING DATE: March 25, 2009

AGENDA ITEM NUMBER: MISC-09-014

APPLICANT: Lee Plemel, Planning Director
Juan F. Guzman, Open Space Manager



REQUEST: Action to accept and recommend to the Board of Supervisors acceptance of the recommendations of the "Silver Saddle Ranch and Carson River Charrette Summary, Creating a Community Vision," regarding the planning vision for public recreation and open space opportunities on the Silver Saddle Ranch, Prison Hill Recreation Area, and along the Carson River.

GENERAL DISCUSSION: Staff is very pleased to provide for your review and approval the attached document "Charrette Summary, Creating a Community Vision Silver for the Saddle Ranch and the Carson River." Please inform us if you wish to obtain a CD containing the entire document and appendices in pdf format.

This document was prepared through a grant obtained by the Friends of Silver Saddle Ranch in partnership with Carson City, the Bureau of Land Management, and the National Parks Service. The document summarizes an extensive citizen participation process that resulted in the creation of a community vision for the approximately 3,000 acres of public land located west and south of Deer Run Road Bridge to the southernmost portion of the Prison Hill Recreation Area. The vision for these areas call for the integrated management of public lands to be dedicated primarily for passive recreation and the continuation of pastoral uses. The commission is asked to review the document and validate all the hours of community input by recommending the approval and adoption of this document to the Board of Supervisors.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Move to accept and recommend to the Board of Supervisors acceptance of the recommendations of the "Silver Saddle Ranch and Carson River Charrette Summary, Creating a Community Vision," regarding the planning vision for public recreation and open space opportunities on the Silver Saddle Ranch, Prison Hill Recreation Area and along the Carson River.

CHARRETTE SUMMARY



CREATING A COMMUNITY VISION: SILVER SADDLE RANCH AND THE CARSON RIVER

A Community Design Charrette

Friends of Silver Saddle Ranch
in partnership with
Carson City, Bureau of Land Management & National Park Service



DECEMBER 5, 2008



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Friends of Silver Saddle Ranch would like to acknowledge and thank the following groups and individuals for their contributions to this community-wide planning effort.

Planning Team

Nancy Santos, Friends of Silver Saddle Ranch
Dan Jacquet, Bureau of Land Management
Juan Guzman, Carson City Parks and Recreation Department
Anne Dove, National Park Service-Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program

Friends of Silver Saddle Ranch

Michael Bish
Larry French
Kathryn Keever

Bureau of Land Management

Elayn Briggs
Arthur Callan
Bryant Smith

Carson City

Officials

Shelly Aldean, Board of Supervisors
Robin Williamson, Board of Supervisors
Donna Curtis, Carson City Parks and Recreation Commission
Mark Kimbrough, Planning Commission
Dan Greytak, Carson River Advisory Committee
Tricia Lincoln, Open Space Advisory Committee
Wayne Perock, Open Space Advisory Committee
Howard Riedl, Open Space Advisory Committee

Staff

Roger Mollendorf, Parks and Recreation Department
Vern Krahn, Parks and Recreation Department
Anne Bolinger, Parks and Recreation Department
Janice McIntosh, Carson City Community Senior Center
Lee Plemel, Development Services-Planning Division

National Park Service-Rivers, Trails and Conservation Program

Peg Henderson

Deb Reardon

Additional Charrette Participants

Valerie Andersen, Sierra Club Great Basin Group

Genie Azad, Carson River Coalition

Ron Blakemore, Blakemore Landscape Architects

Don Boebel, Disc Golf

Margie Evans, UNCE Weed Coalition

Chris Freeman, State Conservation Commission

Pat Fried, Western Nevada Resources, Conservation & Development

Jim Gaither, The Nature Conservancy

Larry Gorell, Neighboring resident

Lyndy Holton-Larson, Design Workshop

Dan Kaffer, Natural Resources Conservation Service

Karen Kish, Lahontan Audubon Society

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Sandra Wallin, University of Nevada Reno Extension

Rich Wontorski, Western Equestrian Alliance

Steve Woodbury, Nevada Commission on Tourism

Lastly, thank you to the members of the public who participated in the workshops and forums leading up to and following the charrette for their interest and thoughtful input.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Creating a Community Vision: Silver Saddle Ranch and the Carson River project began as an effort by the Friends of Silver Saddle Ranch to encourage community interest and participation in the development of a management plan for Silver Saddle Ranch. The 703-acre Silver Saddle Ranch is public (federal) land currently managed by the Bureau of Land Management.

The City of Carson City became interested in obtaining ownership of Silver Saddle Ranch, as a potential new park for Carson City in 2006, following the development of the Carson City Federal Lands Bill. In 2007, Silver Saddle Ranch and the adjacent Bureau of Land Management Prison Hill Recreation Area were included in the Carson City Lands Bill as Addendum A.

The Friends of Silver Saddle Ranch received an assistance grant from the National Park Service, Rivers Trails and Conservation Assistance Program in 2006. The grant was to be used to develop a management plan for Silver Saddle Ranch through a community involvement process. The planning team included a representative from each primary stakeholder including the Friends of Silver Saddle Ranch, Bureau of Land Management, and Carson City, with assistance from the National Park Service.

Once the planning team was developed and the kick-off meeting held it was agreed upon immediately that the planning area should include all public lands along the Carson River within Carson City. A charrette (planning and design) process was then developed for an area approximately 3,000 acres.

The planning process included three public workshops for which community members were encouraged to attend and provide input on what they would like to see in the planning area. The final 2-day workshop focused on incorporating the community ideas into a comprehensive plan that considers all the sites and the Carson River as one large planning area. Participants in attendance included individuals from numerous stakeholder groups including federal, state and local agencies; neighboring residents, environmental and recreational groups, and natural resource specialists.

Topics of importance determined for review and discussion as part of the Silver Saddle Ranch and the Carson River planning process included Natural Resources, Trails & Passive Recreation, and Silver Saddle Ranch & Prison Hill. Financial and Marketing Concepts were also considered.

The details and results of this community planning process are summarized in this report. This planning and design process and the Summary Report are intended as a guide to the future development of the Silver Saddle Ranch and Carson River Area, based on the desires of Carson City community members. Steps for Moving Towards the Future are identified in the final section of the report.

BACKGROUND: PURPOSE OF THE CHARRETTE

At the eastern edge of Eagle Valley in Carson City, Nevada, lies a unique series of sites linked by the Carson River. Over time, several areas along the river have been purchased and set aside for open space, conservation and recreation for the community and visitors alike. From the southern area of Carson City near Golden Eagle Road north toward Morgan Mill Road is a network of open spaces including Silver Saddle Ranch (SSR), Prison Hill Recreation Area and several sites recently acquired by Carson City and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). The result is a unique opportunity to envision the future for this contiguous series of open spaces together as a contiguous area.

A Public-Private Partnership

The Friends of Silver Saddle Ranch (FOSSR), in partnership with Carson City, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and with support from the National Park Service Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program (NPS) conducted a public process to define a community-wide vision for the planning area. Through a series of public workshops and an intensive 3-day "charrette" during spring of 2008, a community-based vision for the area was developed along with ideas for implementing it. The charrette was named: "Creating a Community Vision: Silver Saddle Ranch and the Carson River".

BLM, Carson City and FOSSR had been working together to develop a draft Cooperative Management Agreement (CMA) to jointly manage Silver Saddle Ranch, a BLM facility located in Carson City. The purposes of the CMA were to improve management of the area, protect and enhance the natural and cultural resources, and provide greater recreational and environmental education opportunities for the community to enjoy their public lands. As the CMA was being drafted, FOSSR submitted an application for technical assistance from the NPS to facilitate a community-based process to develop design and planning recommendations for Silver Saddle Ranch based on the existing BLM "Interdisciplinary Management Plan for the Silver Saddle Ranch and the Ambrose Carson River Natural Area" (2000). In September 2006, assistance for this planning effort was awarded to FOSSR.

In fall 2006, Carson City initiated consultations with US Senator Harry Reid's office to draft a federal lands bill that would result in transfer of some BLM and US Forest Service lands to Carson City and vice versa. Given this new effort, the scope of the community-based process for Silver Saddle Ranch was expanded to include public lands to the north and south of Silver Saddle Ranch along the Carson River Corridor in anticipation that these contiguous areas could eventually be managed primarily by the City. The result was a larger, redefined planning area that was described as

"Silver Saddle Ranch and Carson River Area" (Planning Area) for the purposes of the design workshop.

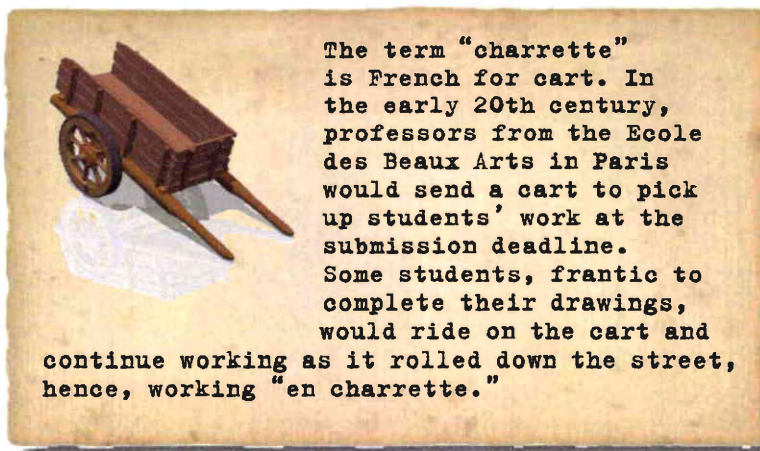
Recognizing this unique, historic opportunity to consider a larger network of open spaces at one time, FOSSR, BLM and Carson City agreed to partner and move forward with this expanded effort, the purpose of which is to work with the community to identify a vision and future desires for this area. To demonstrate commitment to this effort, the City's citizen advisory boards adopted a series of resolutions in support of the community 'charrette' process (*Appendix A: City Resolutions Supporting the Charrette Process*), the City provided substantial staff and production support, BLM committed a significant level of staff resources and FOSSR contributed countless volunteer hours to engage the community in this planning effort. Representatives from FOSSR, BLM, Carson City and NPS formed a planning team to develop and implement the outreach program, public workshops and charrette for the Planning Area.

Why a charrette? What is a charrette?

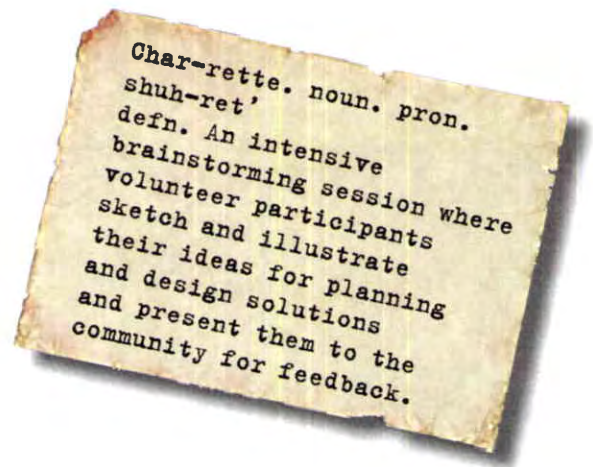
While a number of approaches to engaging the community in the planning and design of the area were possible, the planning team decided to proceed using a 'charrette' format. A charrette is an intensive brainstorming session where volunteer participants sketch and illustrate their ideas for planning and design solutions and present the results to the community for feedback. Charrettes bring together experts from multiple disciplines and community members to develop ideas on how to preserve and enhance natural and cultural resources and provide educational and recreational opportunities. Often the process facilitates the development of a common unified vision for a geographical area and management program. The outputs include maps and designs that offer solutions to issues such as preservation, access and use, interpretation, and development. For the purposes of this charrette, sev-

eral public forums were held to gather ideas and input to develop a common vision for the Planning Area. This vision was then used to guide the charrette participants' work as they explored planning and design ideas for making implementation a reality.

A series of desired outcomes for the charrette was developed early in the planning process to ensure that the outcomes would be met. These desired outcomes were to:



- Define a community-wide vision for the Silver Saddle Ranch and Carson River area
- Develop an integrated management plan
- Foster partnerships
- Build support and capacity for community-based stewardship
- Develop a vision for how to sustain the Carson River ecosystem over the long-term
- Identify sustainable management practices, including financial and implementation strategies



Orientation to Planning Area

The Planning Area spans the eastern side of Eagle Valley from approximately US-50 to the north, south along the Carson River to Golden Eagle Road south of Prison Hill. The Planning Area is approximately bound by South Edmonds/Fairview Drive to the west and Deer Run Road/Pinion Hills Road/Mexican Dam Road to the east (*Figure 1: Vicinity Map; Figure 2: Planning Area & Ownership*).

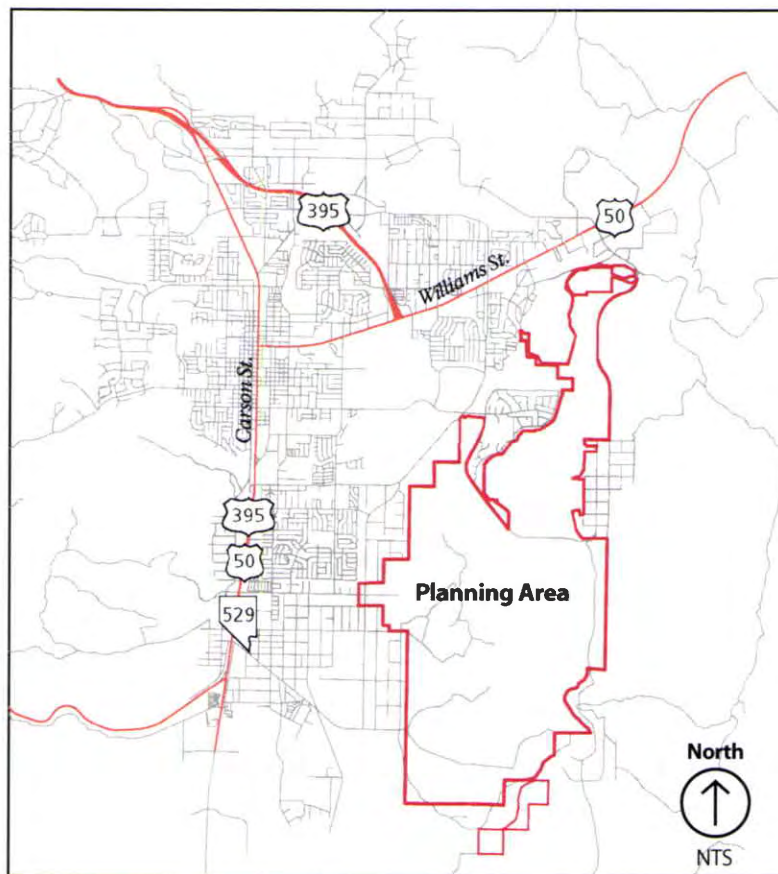
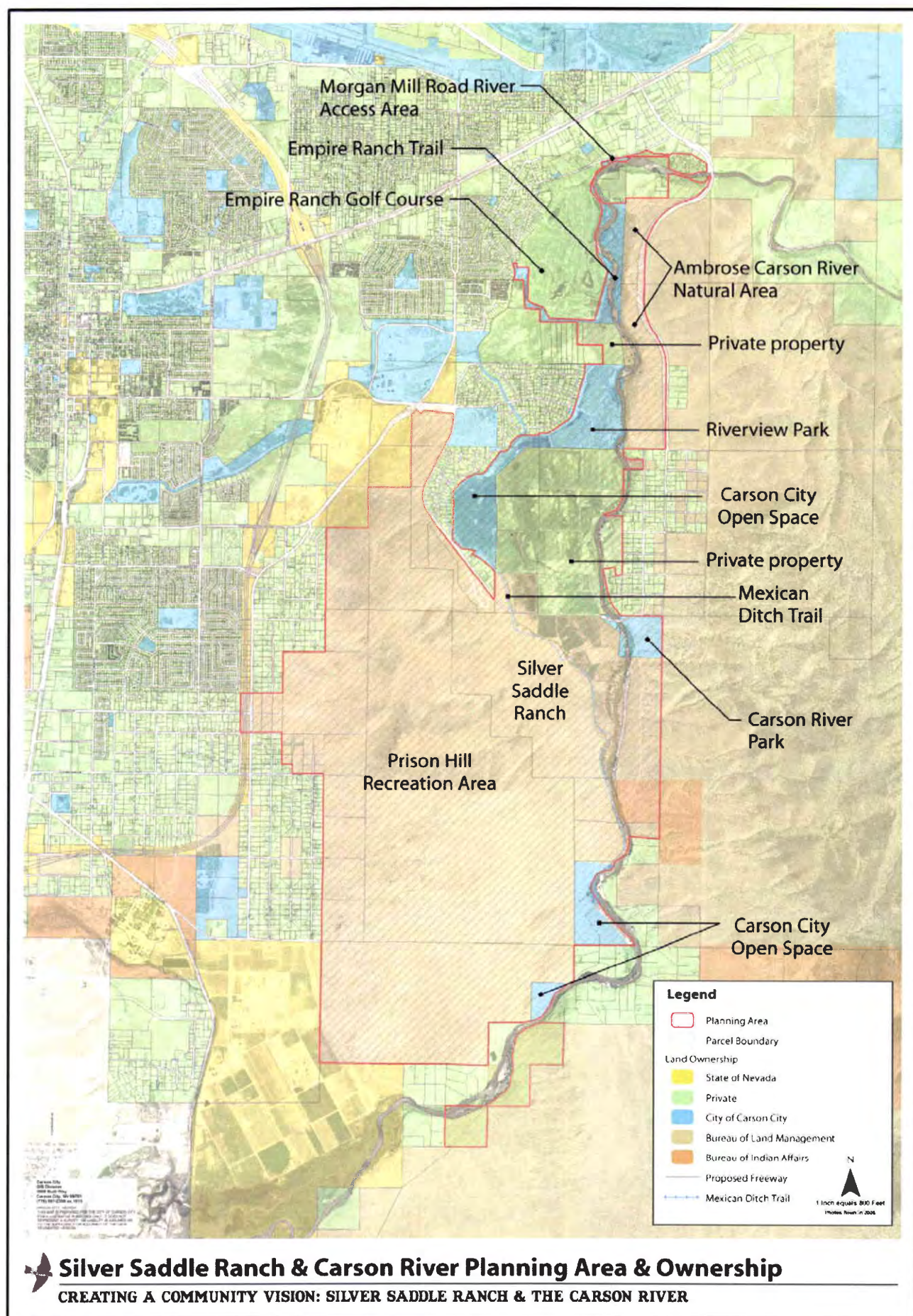


Figure 1. Planning Area Vicinity



Silver Saddle Ranch & Carson River Planning Area & Ownership
 CREATING A COMMUNITY VISION: SILVER SADDLE RANCH & THE CARSON RIVER

Figure 2. Silver Saddle Ranch & Carson River Planning Area & Ownership

Existing Open Spaces and Parks

Within the planning area is a series of publically-owned sites that range from city-owned parks and open space to BLM open spaces and natural areas. Several privately owned sites adjoin the Planning Area. Throughout the planning process, Carson City and BLM continued to aquire sites in the Planning Area, closing 'gaps' in public ownership. With the exception of these newly-acquired open properties, each publically-owned site in the planning area has separate guiding documents that describe the permitted uses allowed in each site (*Figure 3: Land Use Areas; Table 1: Current and Allowable Uses*). At this point, while several relevant overlapping plans and jurisdictions exist, no one plan guides the future of the entire planning area. The following are descriptions of the specific sites within the Planning Area from north to south.

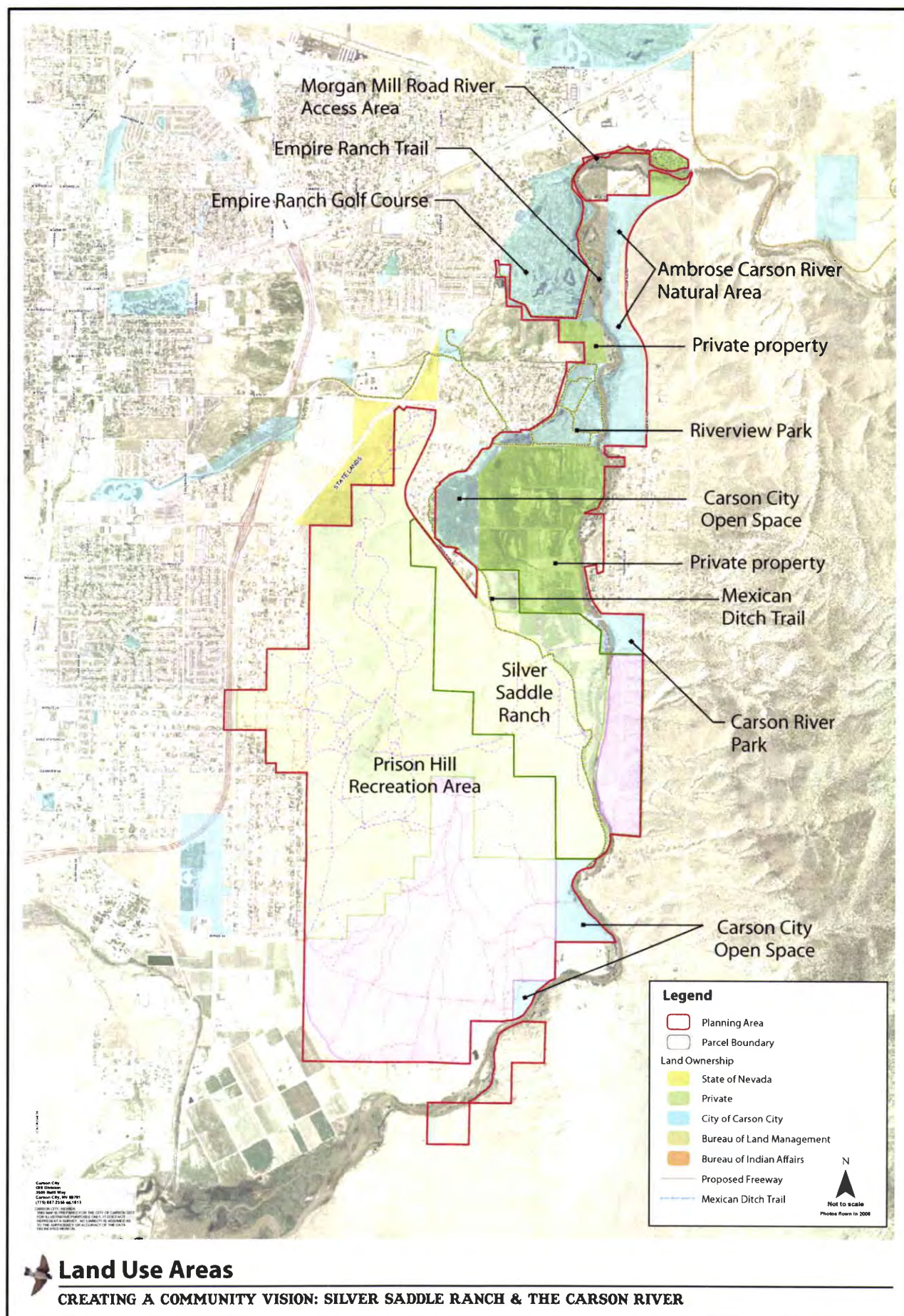


Table 1. Current and Allowable Land Uses

Land Use Area	Current Uses	Allowable Uses
Morgan Mill Road River Access Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nonmotorized use • Trailhead • River access put-in/take-out • Picnic facilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same as current
Ambrose Carson River Natural Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open space • Nonmotorized use • Environmental education • Riparian zone • Floodplain protection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same as current
Riverview Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nonmotorized use • Wetlands 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same as current
Carson City Open Space (aka "Andersen Property")	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agriculture • Nonmotorized use • Wetland and habitat protection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same as current
Mexican Ditch Trail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nonmotorized use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same as current
Carson River Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nonmotorized use • River access put-in/take-out • Picnic facilities handicapped access • Trailhead 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Picnic facility • Snow play area
Silver Saddle Ranch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open space • Nonmotorized use • Events • Environmental education • Agriculture • Wetlands and floodplain protection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visitor center • Events pavilion
Carson City Open Space (aka "Carson River/ Mexican Dam properties)-northern piece	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nonmotorized use • Riparian zone and floodplain protection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same as current
Carson City Open Space (aka "Carson River/ Mexican Dam properties)-southern piece	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nonmotorized use • Riparian zone and floodplain protection • Vehicular access on road 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same as current
BLM Open Space (aka "Howard/Dombrosky Properties)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open space • Riparian zone and floodplain protection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same as current
Prison Hill Recreation Area-North	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recreation and public purpose • Nonmotorized use • Trailhead 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developed recreation and public purpose use
Prison Hill Recreation Area-Central	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open space • Nonmotorized use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same as current
Prison Hill Recreation Area-West	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recreation and public purpose • Water tank • Trailhead • Nonmotorized use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developed recreation and public purpose use
Prison Hill Recreation Area-South	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Motorized use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nonmotorized

FUTURE IMPROVEMENTS AT MORGAN MILL ROAD RIVER ACCESS AREA

Proposed improvements in the Morgan Mill Road River Access Area include paved parking areas for vehicles with trailers, as well as a river access ramp with drop-off and pick-up areas, an enclosed portable toilet facility, and a river floodplain and bank stabilization area. There will be a handicapped fishing access pier and observation points. The facility will include and serve as a trailhead for the Empire Ranch Trail linking this site with Riverview Park and Silver Saddle Ranch to the south. As of this writing, the permitting process with the Army Corps of Engineers is underway. It is anticipated the project will be bid and constructed late in 2009 when river flows are at the low stage. The ultimate build out cost is expected at about \$900,000.

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AT AMBROSE CARSON RIVER NATURAL AREA

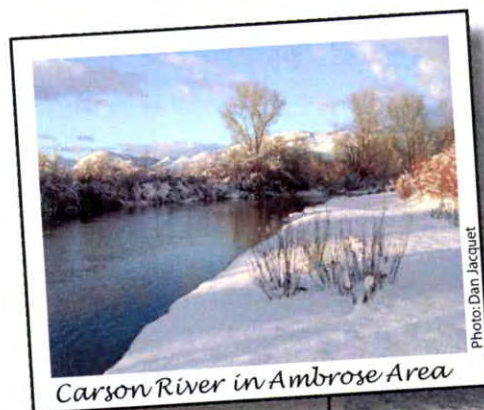
The Carson City High School Biology class has adopted the Ambrose Carson River Natural Area. They have created interpretation for approximately one mile of trail and have produced a brochure that can be used with descriptions of sites and points marked as you walk the trail.

Morgan Mill Road River Access Area

Located just south of US-50, the approximately 0.25-acre Morgan Mill Road River Access Area provides access to the Carson River from Morgan Mill Road. Access points are located along the east and south sides of Empire Ranch Golf Course to Empire Ranch Road. The natural setting is dominated by the river, its riparian corridor including cottonwood trees, and a thick understory. The river access area includes limited parking, northern access to the Empire Ranch Trail, a picnic area, and launch area for nonmotorized watercraft.

Ambrose Carson River Natural Area (ACRNA)

The 182-acre ACRNA is owned by BLM and jointly managed with Carson City. ACRNA provides access to the east side of the Carson River along Deer Run Road. Here the Carson River flows through stands of cottonwood trees and thick willow habitat. The majority of the river banks in the area are high and steep with river access limited to a stretch along the east side of the river during periods of low water. Recreational activities are nonmotorized and include walking, horseback riding, in addition to sightseeing, bird watching and water-based uses such as fishing and river rafting/canoeing. This site is also recognized as having exceptional environmental education opportunities.



Riverview Park

Consisting of 109 acres of natural area, Riverview Park is contiguous with the Korean War Veterans Memorial Park. The main entrance to Riverview Park is located at the east terminus of E. Fifth Street, with a trail from the nearby residential area connecting from northwest corner. The park is bordered on the east by the Carson River. A variety of habitats is located here, including upland sagebrush, wetlands, cottonwood trees and an understory along the river banks. Riverview Park includes trailheads, a 1.6-mile exercise course and a 0.4-mile nature trail. Additional amenities include abundant paved parking, vault restrooms, barbeques, and uncovered picnic areas. Within the Planning Area, this is one of the most heavily used sites.

Carson City Open Space (informally known as "Andersen Ranch" area)

In July 2008, Carson City announced that it would purchase the 86-acre Andersen Ranch property located just east of Carson River Road and Buzzy's Ranch Road. This site primarily consists of wetlands and wet meadows. The property will help connect Riverview Park with Silver Saddle Ranch to the south. The Mexican Ditch Trail runs along the west side of the property. The 397-acre private property known as Jarrard Ranch is located to the east of the Andersen Ranch and is also a target for acquisition by the City for open space.

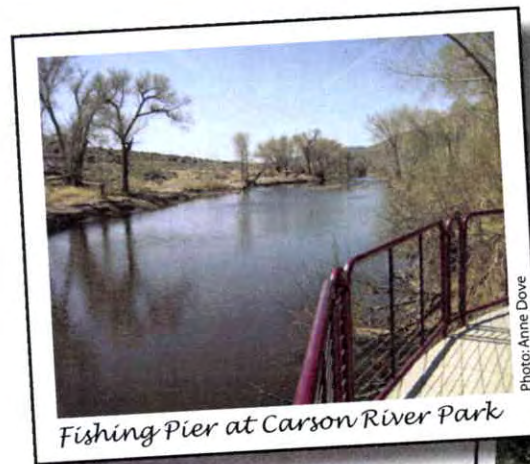
Mexican Ditch Trail Corridor

The approximately 3.5-mile, unpaved Mexican Ditch Trail parallels the Mexican Ditch from the Moffat Open Space site to the north, through Silver Saddle Ranch, and ending at Mexican Dam to the south. The Mexican Ditch was historically used to run the Mexican Mill in the 1860's and later used to provide agricultural irrigation. The ditch is still in operation today and contains enough water throughout the year to maintain willows along both sides. Trail uses include pedestrian, equestrian and cycling activities.



Carson River Park

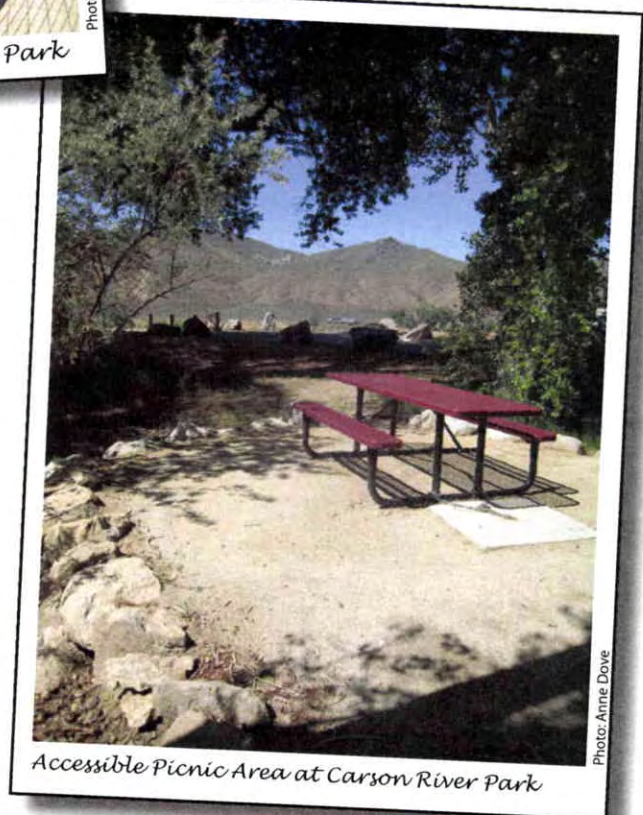
The 40-acre Carson River Park is located adjacent to the northeast corner of Silver Saddle Ranch, near the intersection of Carson River Road, Pinion Hills Drive and Sierra Vista Lane, more commonly known as Mexican Dam Road. The park includes a large paved parking area, an enclosed portable toilet, a river access ramp for nonmotorized watercraft and decomposed granite walking paths leading to picnic areas and a handicap-accessible fishing pier. With the exception of the paved parking area, the park is natural with cottonwood trees providing shade, while the river's edges are dense with willow thickets.



Fishing Pier at Carson River Park

PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS FOR CARSON RIVER PARK

Throughout 2009, Carson River Park will be improved and enlarged. The proposal calls for adding deciduous shade trees and a fruit tree orchard, open space area, group barbeque, a play area, additional paved parking improvements, and a trailhead entrance into the Mexican Ditch Trail. The budget for this project is approximately \$225,000.



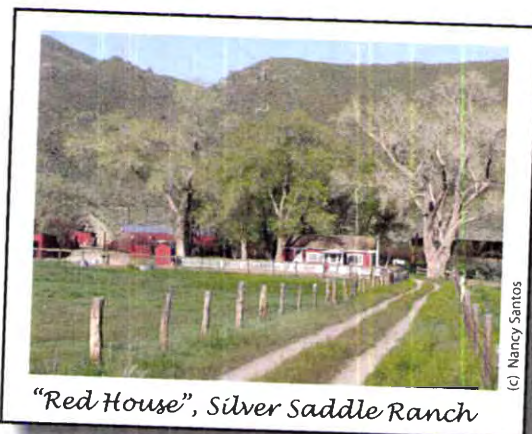
Accessible Picnic Area at Carson River Park

Silver Saddle Ranch

The 703-acre SSR contains some of the last undeveloped open space along the Carson River in Eagle Valley. The ranch was acquired by BLM in 1997 for its combination of recreation potential, unique natural resources and its strategic location between the Pine Nut Mountains and the Prison Hill Recreation Area (PHRA), both of which are BLM properties. Natural resources on the ranch vary from the cottonwood trees, willows and dense understory along the river corridor to the agricultural field, and the uplands adjacent to the PHRA. Approximately 80 acres of the ranch are irrigated, cultivated fields. Original ranch facilities include barns, corrals, horse stables, and the original ranch house. Visitor amenities include abundant parking, trailheads leading to a variety of locations, picnic areas and vault restrooms. The ranch is also used for group activities and events.



Birdwatching at Silver Saddle Ranch



"Red House", Silver Saddle Ranch



CARSON CITY AND BLM OPEN SPACE (informally known as "Carson River/Mexican Dam/Howard/Debrowski properties")

One of the most important features of the Mexican Dam properties consists of a mixed-age cottonwood forest in an area where during high flows the river meanders and creates islands. These parcels will accommodate the continuation of a proposed trail around the entire perimeter of Prison Hill. Mexican Dam is geographically located within the northern end of these parcels; however, the dam itself is owned by the Mexican Ditch Association, not exclusively by Carson City or BLM.

The BLM has during the past five years purchased properties on both sides of the Carson River such as Howard and Dombrowski, Foerschler, and Stein. These properties were purchased with funding through the Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act (SNPLMA) environmentally sensitive lands program. All of the properties possess riparian values along the shores of the Carson River as well as prominent rock outcroppings and dramatic elevation and topographic features making them particularly scenic.

Carson City and BLM Open Space (informally known as "Carson River/Mexican Dam/Howard/Debrowski properties")

Carson City and BLM have recently acquired several properties along the Carson River upstream of SSR for river corridor protection and public access. These acquisitions include the Desormier, Foerschler, Crosby, Rikalo, Howard and Dombrowski properties, totaling more than 300 acres.

Prison Hill Recreation Area

This BLM PHRA occupies a prominent north-south trending range known as Prison Hill which covers 2,430 acres of rugged terrain located west of SSR. Prison Hill represents important wildlife habitat and consists of upland plant species such as sagebrush, bitterbrush and scattered pinyon pine. The landscape includes rolling and sandy hills, and steep and rocky slopes containing recreational and offers a 360-degree range of scenic resources. Uses include hiking, mountain biking, and equestrian trail use. The southern area of Prison Hill is designated for off-highway vehicle (OHV) use.

The Carson River

The thread that connects the individual public use sites is the Carson River. As a major 15.6-mile long hydrologic feature in western Nevada, the Carson River originates in California within the Sierra Nevadas of California. From there the river passes through California before reaching Nevada, where it extends 125 miles through Douglas County and Carson City, then turns east through Lyon County into the Lahontan Reservoir in Churchill County. The river is heavily used for irrigation purposes. Within the Planning Area between Prison Hill and the Pine Nut Mountains, the river corridor consists of irrigated floodplain with grasses, wetlands, and uplands dominated by sagebrush. Along the river's edges in the riparian zone, willows and cottonwoods provide woodland vegetation and quality bird habitat. The river is also used for recreation purposes including bird watching, fishing and nonmotorized boating including rafting, canoeing and kayaking.

Water Resources

The Carson River, is the primary natural source of water in the planning area. By 1861, the Mexican Dam and Ditch were

constructed to divert water from the river to the Mexican Mill located approximately ¼-mile from the Carson River Ambrose Natural Area. The Mexican Ditch today provides water to Silver Saddle Ranch and other downstream users north of Silver Saddle Ranch.

Natural Resources

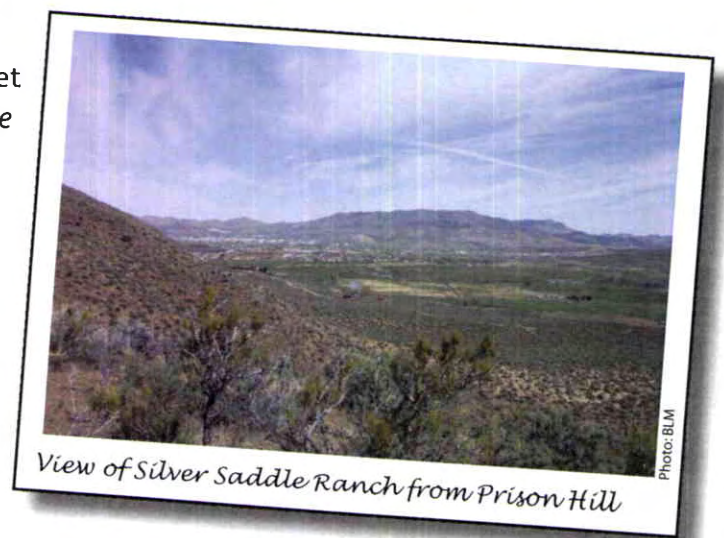
The Planning Area contains a broad range of natural resources. The river corridor includes largely contiguous riparian vegetation with adjacent emergent wetlands within the Carson River floodplain (*Figure 4: Floodplains; Figure 5: Natural Resources*). Upland areas of the Planning Area are characterized by sagebrush and rocky outcrops. Irrigated pastures also function as habitat. The Planning Area provides habitat for a wide range of animal species including at least 57 bird species and 12 mammalian species that are known to either be present or expected to occur within the Planning Area.

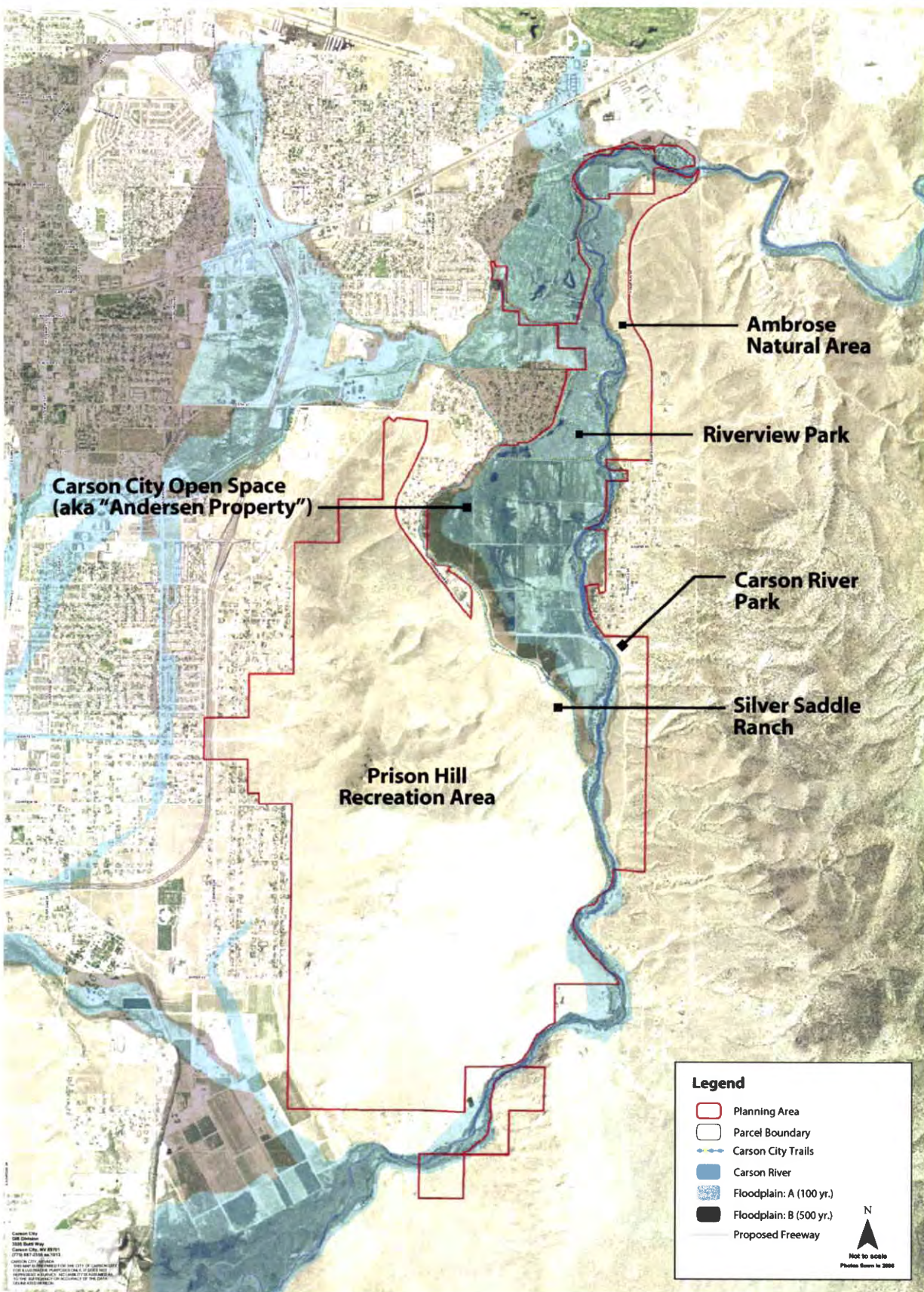
Cultural/Historic Resources

The Planning Area was traditionally home to the Washoe people, with a long oral history and occupation of the area prior to the arrival of European-Americans in the mid-1800s. The Washoe primarily used the area for gathering plants and hunting. The first known agricultural development of the Silver Saddle Ranch area dates to 1862. After 1864, Silver Saddle Ranch was divided into five blocks of land. In 1956 the Chartz-Herlax Ranch and the Bird-Urich Ranch were joined and became Silver Saddle Ranch. The descendants of the owners Mr. and Mrs. Merchant sold the property to BLM in 1997. SSR today retains 13 ranch-related buildings dated from the 1920-1980s.

Visual Resources

Prison Hill provides a visual backdrop to much of Carson City with hills that extend as high as 700 feet above the surrounding areas (*Figure 6: Silver Saddle Ranch & Prison Hill Topography*). From the top of Prison Hill and its west-facing slopes, outstanding views of the Sierra Nevada range reward trail users. The valley in which Silver Saddle Ranch is located is bordered by Prison Hill to the west and the Pine Nut Mountains to the east, providing a largely rural/natural landscape. Views to the north and south of this valley are expansive and include the river corridor and its mature riparian vegetation. Prison Hill is one of the elements which provides Carson City with a sense of place.





Floodplains (FEMA)

CREATING A COMMUNITY VISION: SILVER SADDLE RANCH & THE CARSON RIVER

Figure 4. Floodplains

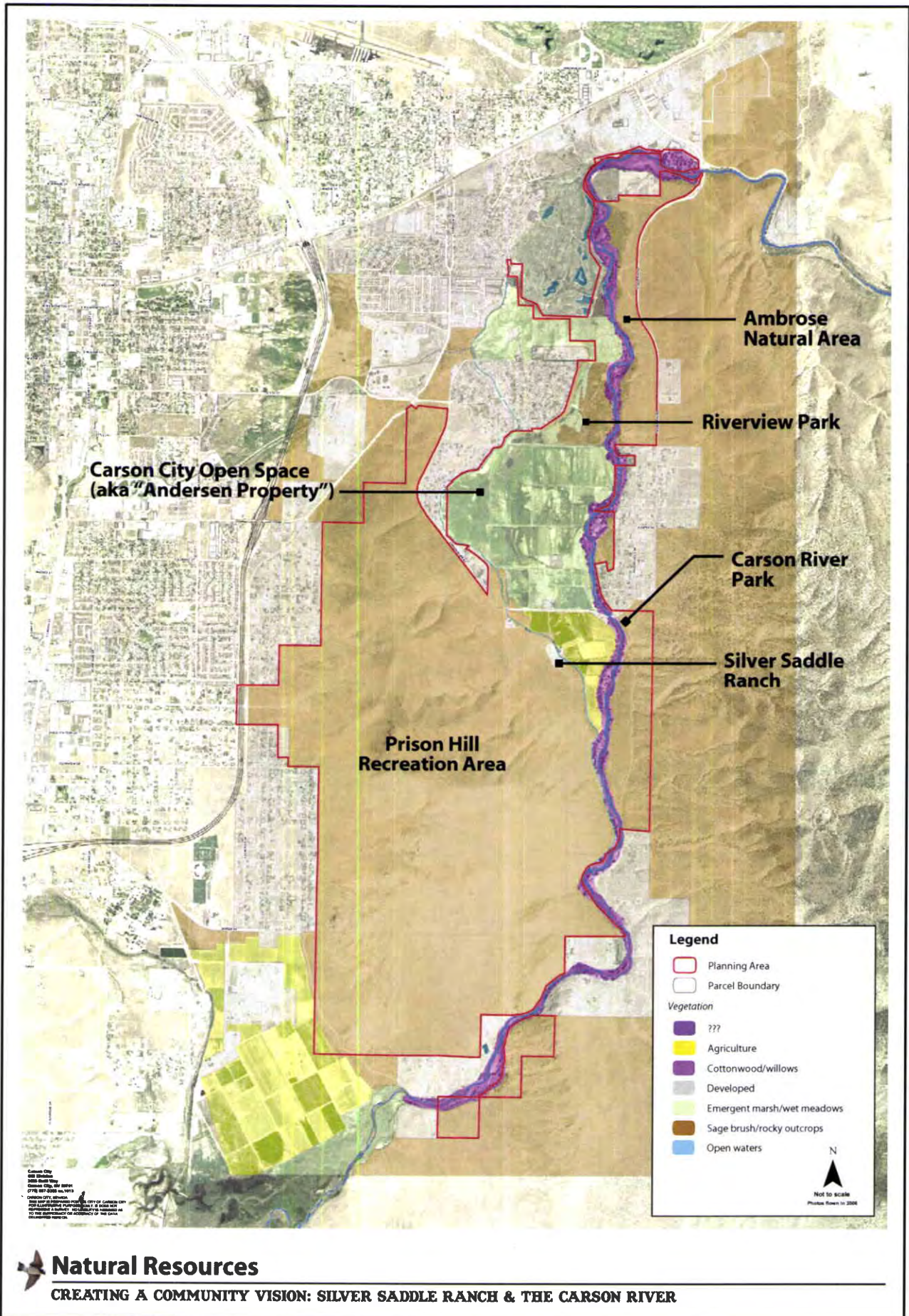
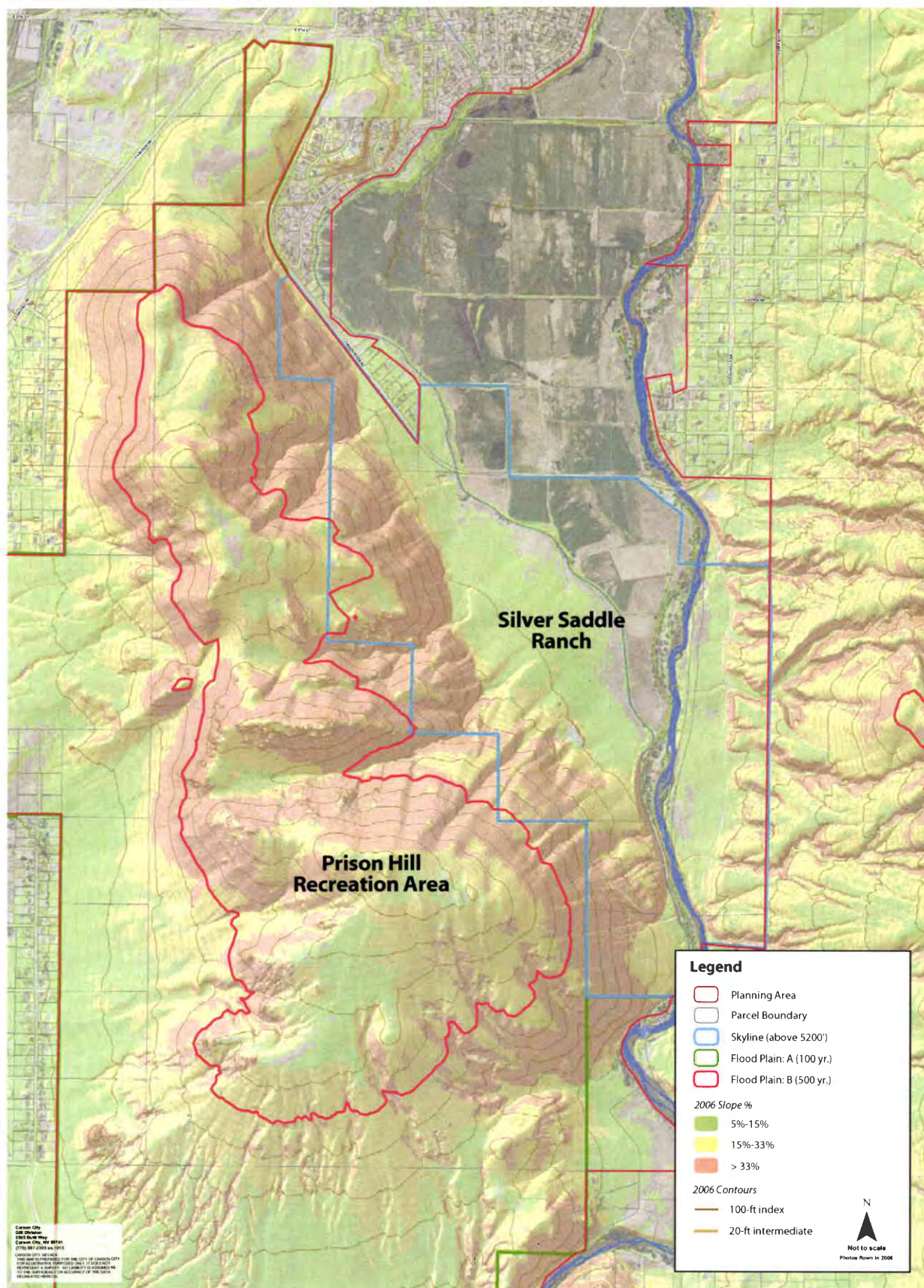


Figure 5. Natural Resources



Prison Hill & Silver Saddle Ranch Topography

CREATING A COMMUNITY VISION: SILVER SADDLE RANCH & THE CARSON RIVER

Figure 6. Prison Hill & Silver Saddle Ranch Topography

Planning Framework

Carson City and BLM have undertaken a number of past planning efforts that affect the Silver Saddle Ranch and Carson River planning area. However, no one plan encompasses the entire Planning Area. There is a need to have a central plan, particularly given the anticipated changes in land ownership and management responsibilities. The planning team identified the relevant planning documents, goals and objectives from the wide array of existing plans that affect this area (*Appendix B: Silver Saddle Ranch and Carson River Area Planning Framework*). Relevant plans include but are not limited to:

Carson City:

- ***Carson City Comprehensive Master Plan (2006)***: The Master Plan is an officially adopted policy document that outlines Carson City's vision and goals for the future and provides guidance for elected and appointed officials in making decisions regarding the long-range needs of the community. The written goals and guiding principles, policies, and recommended actions, in combination with the Land Use Map, provide a basis for decisions affecting growth, the use and development of land, preservation of open space and the expansion of public facilities and services.
- ***Carson City Parks and Recreation Master Plan (2006)***. The purpose of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan is to identify the recreation needs of today's residents, to anticipate those of tomorrow, and to assure they will be met through proper planning.
- ***Unified Pathways Master Plan (2006)***. This document is a comprehensive plan for non-automobile travel routes in and around Carson City. The title "Pathways" refers to the many different types of routes that are included: trails, sidewalks, bike lanes, off-street multi-use trails and even an "aquatic trail" along the Carson River which was added to a revised version of the plan in 2007.
- ***Carson City Open Space Plan (2000)***. In 1996, the citizens of Carson City approved a ballot question entitled "#18: Quality of Life Initiative" that authorized a ¼ -cent sales tax to fund open space, parks and trails. This open space plan was developed to guide the use of these funds and to identify other means to preserve open space.

- ***Carson River Master Plan (1996)***. The master plan represents a starting point that guides the implementation of policy and development of improvement projects for the Carson River area.

Bureau of Land Management:

- ***Interdisciplinary Management Plan for Silver Saddle Ranch and the Ambrose Carson River Natural Area (2000)***. This purpose of this plan is to identify issues and outline goals, objectives and management actions that are ecologically sound, economically feasible and socially acceptable. The intent is for this plan to resolve issues and problems through specific on-the-ground actions that do not require additional analysis or planning.
- ***Carson City Urban Interface Plan Amendment (1996)***. This document was prepared jointly with the City of Carson City and provides an amendment to the existing Walker Resource Management Plan to provide for improved management of public lands adjacent to the community of Carson City. This plan provided for the withdrawal of mining uses from the interface lands on the Pinyon Hills and Virginia Range surrounding the Eagle Valley.

OVERVIEW OF PROCESS

The primary goal of this design and planning effort was to ensure the process was driven by the community's vision, goals and desires for the area. As such, the planning steps were designed as a series of feedback loops between the community, the planning team and the charrette participants in order that each successive step in the process would build from the previous one. The primary mechanism for obtaining input was a series of four public workshops to gather ideas and input on a vision for the Planning Area. After each workshop, the planning team consolidated this information and then presented it back to the community for further discussion and additional input (*Figure 7: Public Input Process*). The vision, goals and recommendations from these workshops were then used to guide the charrette participants' work as they explored planning and design ideas for making that vision a reality.



Public Input Process

CREATING A COMMUNITY VISION:
SILVER SADDLE RANCH AND THE CARSON RIVER
A Community Design Charrette

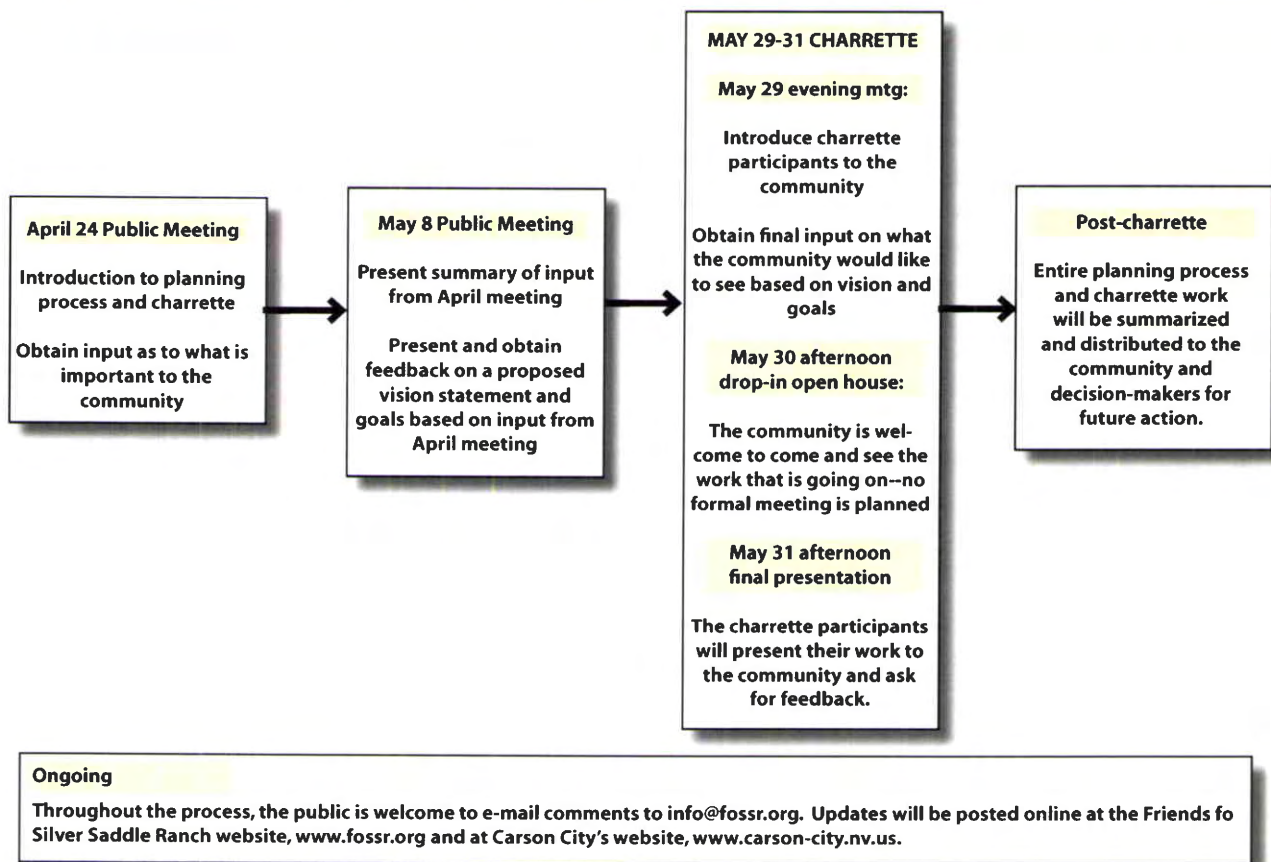


Figure 7. Public Input Process

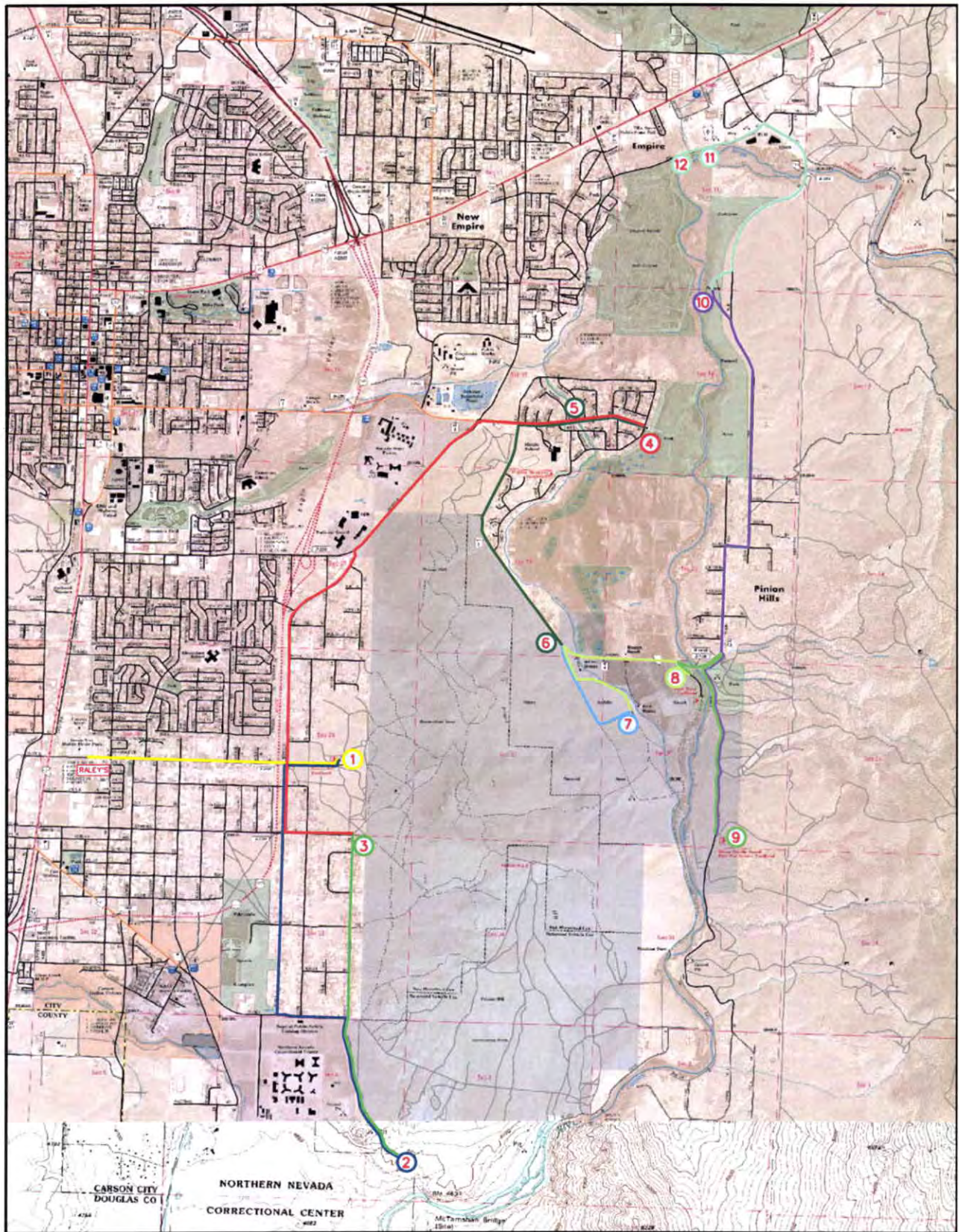


Figure 8: Self Guided Tour Route

In preparation for the series of public workshops, a self-guided tour of the Planning Area was created, distributed around the community, and posted on the Internet (*Figure 8: Self Guided Tour Route; Appendix C: Self Guided Tour Brochure*). The tour guide provided a chance for people to experience the area in new ways and reflect on their ideas about what they would like to see in the future. Information about the workshops and how to submit comments was included in the self-guided tour brochure. The charrette planning team and a cadre of participants were able to share knowledge and become familiar with issues firsthand through the charrette tour of the Planning Area.

Additional outreach about the planning effort was communicated through press releases, direct mailing, informational brochures distributed at a variety of public places around the city, presentations to numerous City advisory boards, televised on the local access channel, and posted on Carson City's, BLM's and Friends of Silver Saddle Ranch's websites (*Appendix D: Charrette Informational Brochures*). Media coverage was provided by NewsCarsonCity.com, Reno Gazette-Journal, and Nevada Appeal. In addition, a panel discussion that included Carson City, BLM and Friends of Silver Saddle Ranch was aired on KUNR public radio's, "High Desert Forum". The primary goals of the outreach effort were to raise awareness about the planning area and to encourage people to engage in the process.

Public Workshops: Setting the Stage

Workshop 1, conducted on April 24, 2008, provided an opportunity to introduce and orient the community to the charrette process and the Planning Area. Participants were invited to share their long-term visions for Silver Saddle Ranch and the Carson River area. The last portion of the workshop was spent brainstorming ideas about important issues and other considerations for the planning of this area.

Based on input from Workshop 1, a vision statement and supporting goals reflecting the common themes identified by the community were presented for feedback at Workshop 2, which occurred on May 8, 2008. Participants were given an opportunity to suggest any revisions. In the end, the following vision and goals were developed based on this input.

Vision. noun. pron. vizh'en
defn. In planning and design, a description of a desired long term, future condition or outcome.

Goal. noun. pron. gōl.
defn. Result or achievement toward which an effort is directed. Shorter term outcome that supports achievement of a long-term vision.

Vision

The Silver Saddle Ranch and Carson River area provides close-to-home, natural, open space that contributes to quality of life for residents and visitors. This historic landscape helps to preserve Carson City's rural heritage while providing a variety of passive recreation and trail uses that are balanced with existing agricultural uses and protection of the Carson River ecosystem and its associated values.

Goals

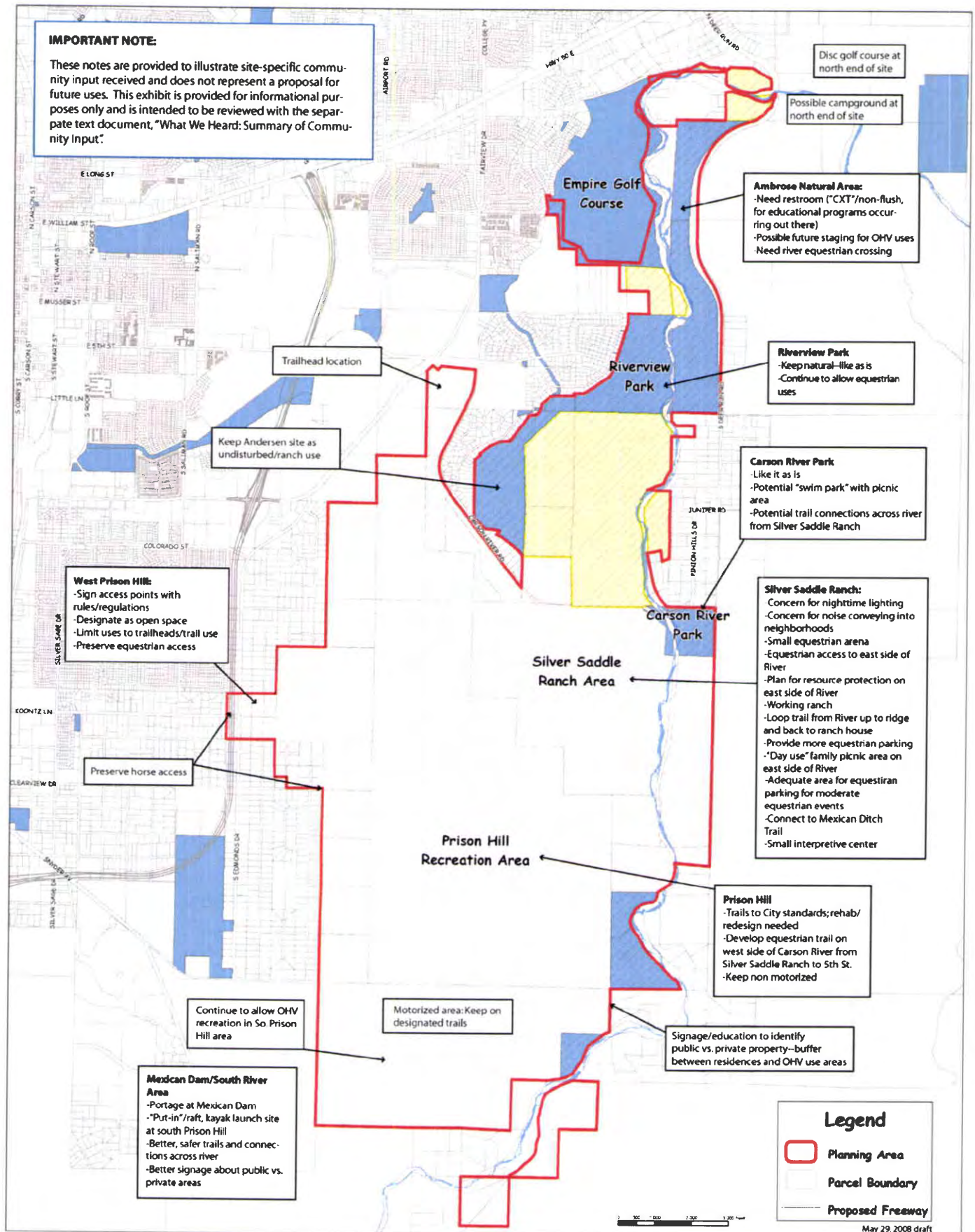
1. Preserve and enhance the area's scenic, natural, undeveloped character.
2. Protect and enhance the Carson River ecosystem including associated upland areas.
3. Provide for a variety of trail uses, passive recreation opportunities and events that are compatible with preserving the character of the area and protecting natural resources.
4. Enhance access to the Silver Saddle Ranch and Carson River area, including Prison Hill.
5. Preserve the area's cultural heritage and resources.
6. Improve on-site educational and interpretive opportunities.
7. Manage the area for improved safety, resource and private property protection.

Once there was agreement on a vision and goals, another round of brainstorming produced more specific ideas for how to achieve the vision and goals.

Following is a summary of the key concepts and ideas received from the community during the two public workshops and through direct correspondence with the planning team (*Figure 9: Site-Specific Community Comments*). A complete list of the workshop notes and other comments received is included as *Appendix E: 4/24/08 Public Workshop Summary* and *Appendix F: 5/8/08 Public Workshop Summary*.

Character of Planning Area:

- Undisturbed, quiet, open space character is what makes many people like Carson City
- Planning Area is "hidden, protected" open space but close to town at the same time
- Concerns about impacts of overly-developed park and recreation facilities
- Open spaces are contiguous and provide opportunities for connections.



Creating a Community Vision: Site-Specific Community Input

Figure 9. Site Specific Community Comments

- Scenic value is high and should be preserved
- Dark sky appreciated
- Maintain working ranch—would like to see successful, sustainable agricultural operation

Quality of Life, Social, Psychological Benefits

- Quality of life—access to river, wildlife habitat
- Release/escape area for community—psychological “safety valve”
- Opportunities to engage those alienated from nature
- Source of community image and pride

Economic Impacts

- Potential for positive economic impacts from tourism and over all quality of life improvements
- Some business activities in area, specifically equestrian-related services, dependent on trail system

Natural Resources

- Healthy, functional ecosystem including habitat connectivity/corridors
- Protect and enhance diverse natural resources
- Minimize new land/resource disturbance—make any development (trails, recreation) as environmentally-sensitive as possible
- Designate wildlife protection areas and riparian protection area
- Noise/air quality concerns from motorized uses
- Manage invasive species

River, Floodplain & Water Resources

- Carson River is the only river in the city which makes it unique
- The river is suitable for seasonal water-based recreation (including rafting, kayaking, etc.)
- People want access to the river but how without impacting it
- Watershed as a whole, including undeveloped floodplain, is important for habitat, water resources, etc.
- Water quality is a concern (erosion, livestock, effluent spreading)



City staff provide background information at April 24, 2008 community workshop.

- Keep river natural and enhance habitat/vegetation—limit recreation development
- Continue irrigation of agricultural areas as part of a working ranch (explore obtaining water rights or access to reclaimed water)

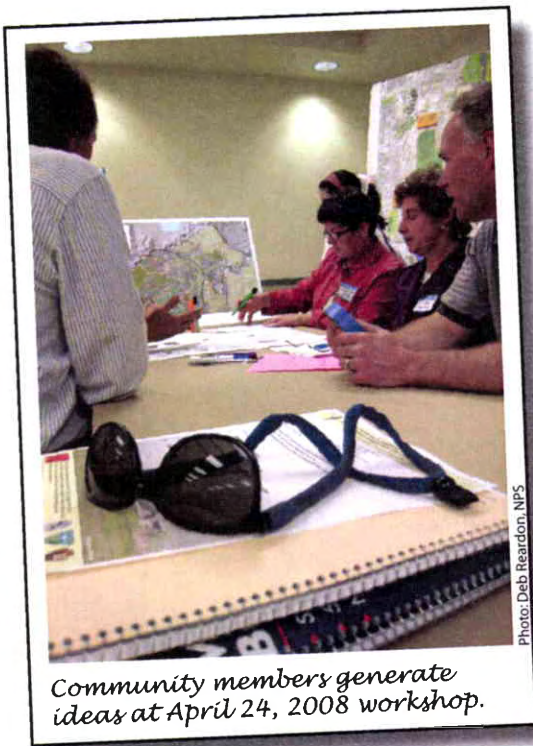
Historic/Cultural Resources

- Ranch and surrounding areas a historic landscape and part of area's heritage
- Preserve Silver Saddle Ranch as a cultural resource

Trails

- Concerns about user conflicts. Some want to see trails multiple uses, others would prefer separated uses
- Trail planning and uses should be linked to resource protection goals
- Existing facilities at Silver Saddle Ranch support equestrian uses and should remain. Opportunity to demonstrate ranching practices
- Concern about restricting/eliminating equestrian uses. Users feel that impacts are over-exaggerated (i.e. manure, river access to water horses) and that horses are part of the area's heritage
- Need to clarify through signage and education appropriate access points, trail routes, private vs. public property, motorized/OHV vs. nonmotorized areas, river access, etc.
- Want to see better integration and connectivity of trail systems, including connections to bike trails in developed areas and loop trails including proposed access across future highway
- Keep OHV uses at south end of Prison Hill but with better signage, enforcement
- Preference is for natural surfaced trails to preserve natural character
- Bridge crossings at river and Mexican Ditch for multiple trail users are needed
- Create buffers between trails and residential areas
- Variety of trail experiences (i.e. singletrack, multiuse, elevations, etc.)
- Access to adjacent residences/neighborhoods
- Ensure Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance and universal accessibility
- Need staging areas (including for horse trailers)
- Potential wagon-carriage driving trail use





Recreation Uses

- Passive recreation uses preferred to maintain character of area; development intensity should relate to recreational experience
- Any recreation should be consistent with resource protection goals
- Low impact river recreation
- Bird and wildlife watching—high quality birdwatching area—potential for wildlife observation platforms
- Potential camping
- Improve fishing
- Some would like to explore hunting, while others do not want it in the planning area
- Potential for disc golf course
- Consider how recreation (including trail) uses are distributed throughout the planning area—it is large and diverse enough for many uses and different forms of recreation
- Some like the idea of extending the V&T rail with a wagon road from the V&T terminal to Silver Saddle Ranch while others think it would be too obtrusive

Education/Interpretation

- Opportunities for outdoor environmental education, including school programs—potential interpretive river rafting trips
- Potential interpretive themes/topics: watershed, history, environment
- Small/modest interpretive/nature center at Silver Saddle Ranch
- Unobtrusive signs and interpretive features needed including trail etiquette, regulations/rules, directional information

Community Engagement

- Outreach important—need a plan
- Reengage neighbors
- Foster public ownership
- Important to engage the public in planning process

Management

- Important to communicate rules and regulations (trail etiquette, dog policies, motorized vs. nonmotorized areas, etc.) and safety information
- Limit/prohibit commercial activities

- Organized events: keep relatively small and consistent with character of site and resource protection
- Funding concerns: where will the funding come from for improvements, operations and maintenance
- Partnership opportunities
- Engage the community in maintenance--opportunities for volunteer work
- Fire/fuel management important
- Monitoring, patrols and enforcement needed (i.e. rangers, on-site supervisor, neighborhood watch, etc.)

Health & Safety

- Safety is a concern (issues with drug use, homeless camps, etc.)
- Sanitation/health issues with lack of restrooms

Workshop 3, held on May 29, 2008, provided an opportunity for the community to view and comment on a summary of their ideas, which were provided in written and map formats. This workshop also marked the kick-off of the charrette with all participants invited to the event. This provided an opportunity for the charrette participants to meet community members and share any final thoughts before the core of the charrette began on Friday morning.

The Charrette

Commencing with the May 29 public workshop and kick-off celebration, the charrette began in earnest on Friday, May 30 at the Carson City Senior Citizens Center. Charrette invitees representing a cross-section of stakeholders, community members and technical experts were identified and recruited to participate. Approximately 45 people participated in the charrette.

Charrette Team Focus Areas

Given the range of sites, issues and opportunities throughout the Planning Area, charrette participants were formed into three teams, each with a separate focus area (*Appendix G: Charrette Teams*). The first team focused on natural resources including the Carson River ecosystem and natural resource issues. The second team explored trails and passive recreation considering trail networks for the whole Planning Area as well as other types of compatible recreation. Anticipating that Silver Saddle Ranch and Prison Hill would be focal areas, the third team was tasked with developing site plans and ideas for managing these sites.

While each team focused on a different area of emphasis, participants were encouraged to check-in with each other and seek counsel/advice from other teams

to feed into their work. To facilitate coordination and integration of ideas, formal check-in times provided a chance for all of the teams to reconvene and hear updates from each other.

All teams were reminded that the vision and goals developed by the community would be the foundation from which they would work. Participants were also provided with the other input obtained through the public workshops.

Charrette Process

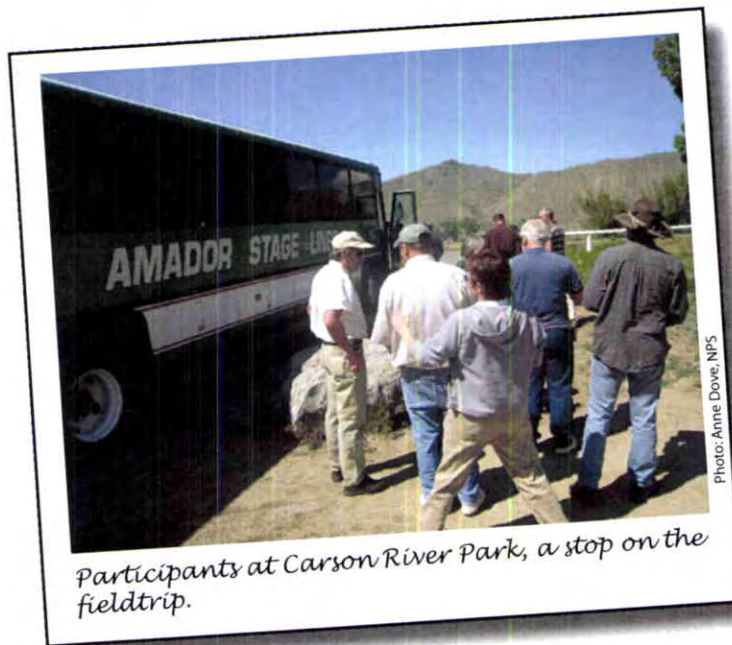
Friday morning, the charrette participants received a brief orientation to the agenda and process for the two-day event and then quickly boarded a bus to tour the Planning Area. The purpose of the fieldtrip was to orient participants and provide an opportunity to gather information and photos of the sites that would later be used to develop planning and design recommendations. The tour route was the same as that in the Self-Guided Tour Brochure made available to the public in the months leading up to the charrette (*Appendix C: Self Guided Tour Brochure*). Participants were asked to think about how the vision and goals developed through the community input process could be implemented through planning and design.

Specific questions to spur participants' thinking included:

- Look at surrounding areas—what does the interface between uses look like? How do adjacent uses affect the site and vice versa?
- What do you see that contributes to the "rural and open space character" of the area that people want to see preserved?
- What is the topography like? How steep are the slopes and how does that affect uses?
- Vegetation patterns—what are the patterns you see and how do those relate to topography and uses of the site?
- How does water move through the site? Are there wetland areas or other areas that would limit recreation uses?
- What issues you see? Are there any opportunities? Challenges?
- What is this area as a whole? A "natural area"? A natural "regional park"? An "open space" area?



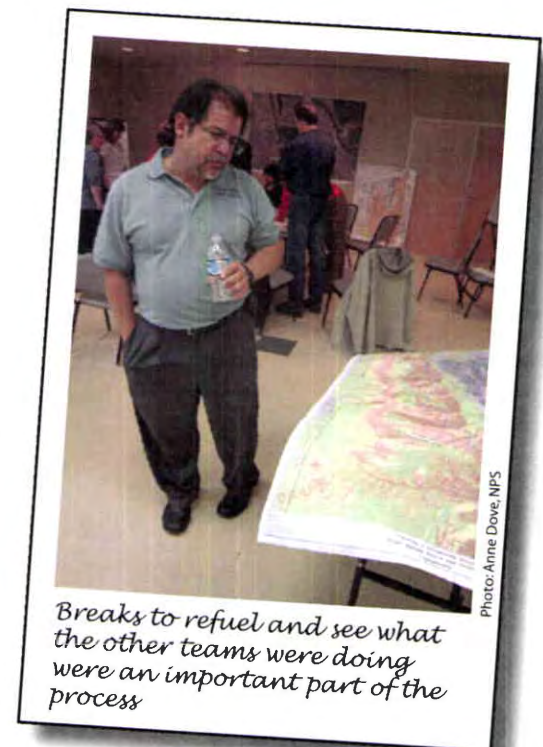
Tour guide, Juan Guzman with Carson City, describes area to participants



Upon returning to the Senior Center, the group discussed their impressions of the planning area and any issues, opportunities or constraints observed (*Appendix H: Field Trip Observations*). Teams then convened to develop a simple conceptual plan for different uses. Once each team had developed an overall land use plan, the groups reconvened to share what they had developed.

Using these overall land use plans, each team then set out to develop a common understanding of the existing conditions, opportunities and constraints relative to their area(s) of focus. Based on this analysis and their observations from the field trip, each team then began generating ideas for meeting the community's long-term vision and goals for the planning area. Throughout Friday afternoon, the public was invited to "drop-in" and observe the charrette process and offer any input. At the end of the day, each team presented their progress to the others before adjourning after a long day's work.

Saturday morning, the teams reconvened to identify the tasks they wanted to complete before the public presentation that afternoon. The teams worked furiously through lunch to complete their drawings and recommendations. At 2:00 p.m. Saturday afternoon, the public was invited to hear a summary of the work that was completed over the two days and offer feedback.



CHARRETTE RESULTS

Each of the three teams received some guidance regarding potential topics upon which to focus and potential products for them to generate over the two days. Since some of the participants were not as familiar with the planning area as others and the charrette took place within a compressed time period, the recommendations developed will require further evaluation prior to implementation. For each team, the following is a summary of the guidance and ideas they generated.

Natural Resources Team

The Natural Resources Team was asked to focus on the Carson River ecosystem and natural resource issues. Their recommendations provided the baseline data for managing the Planning Area and included parameters for integrating uses of the area (i.e. recreation, use areas, etc.). Additional issues they were asked to consider included:

- Strategies to sustain the Carson River
- Water resource management
- Vegetation management
- Agricultural uses
- Invasive species
- Disturbance (i.e. flooding, fire, etc.)

Based on this guidance, the Natural Resources Team focused on generating recommendations around the themes of sustaining the river, water, vegetation and wildlife (*Appendix I: Natural Resources Team Original Notes and Drawings*). The group started by considering the overall concept of “sustainability” which would guide recommendations for these four themes described in the following sections.

Sustainability

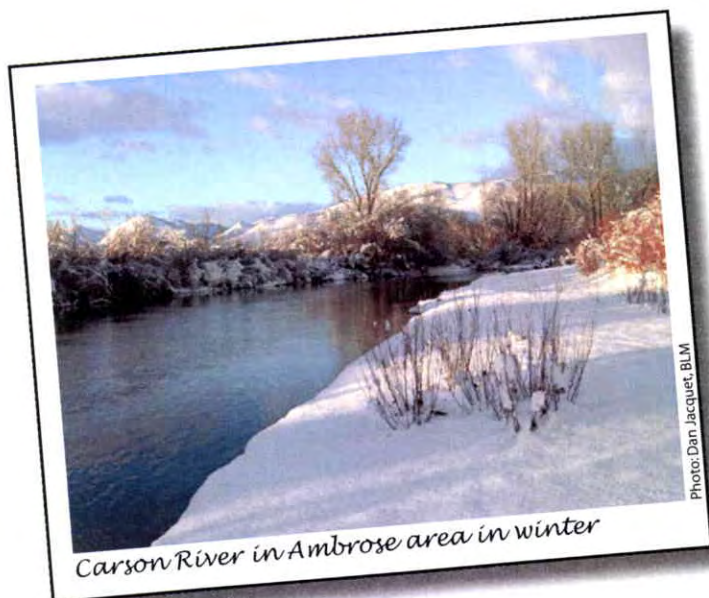
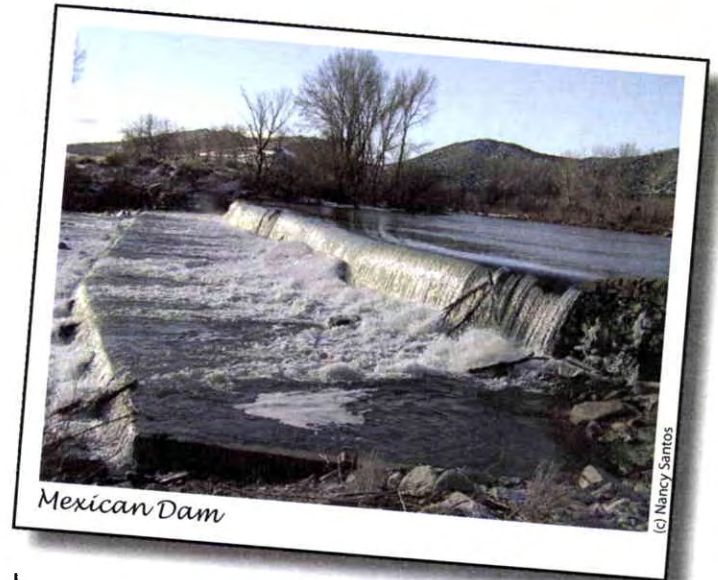
- The existing conditions do not necessarily represent what should be achieved to be sustainable
- Important #1 focus/place to start is defining floodplains and 100-year flood zone
- Define a special flood hazard area
- Within this area, there should be no permanent structures or major capital improvements with the following exceptions:
 - Agriculture
 - Recreational activities/amenities (that are appropriate/compatible)
 - Grazing: a management plan is needed to determine what is and is not appropriate
 - Define best management practices (BMPs) for uses within these areas
- Riparian corridor protection



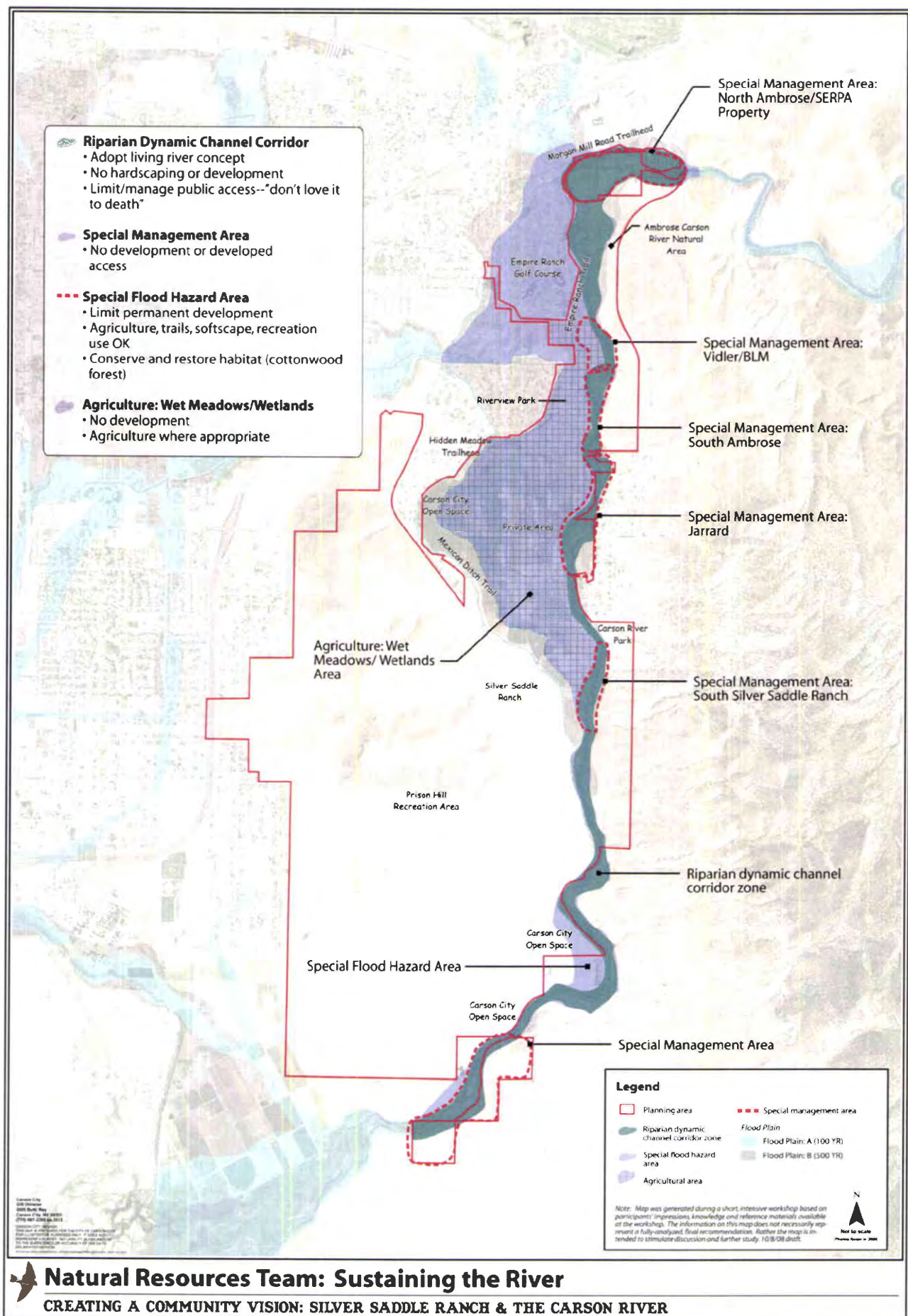
Carson River

Recognizing that the Carson River is one of the key components of the ecosystem, the group developed the overarching concept of "Sustaining the Carson River" as an organizing principle (*Figure 10: Natural Resources Team-Sustaining the River*). Specific strategies for defining the river's existing condition and monitoring future conditions include but are not limited to those identified below:

- Conduct a resource/soils assessment
- Adopt the Living River concept for future management
- Ensure that floodplains remain undeveloped
- Encourage agricultural land uses in the floodplains
- Restore and connect wetlands and oxbows to the river
- Acquire water to improve baseline flows in late summer and fall
- Maintain grade controls at the Andersen diversion and Mexican Dam
- Decommission/reclaim trails with grade in excess of a X% (recommended slope to be determined in the future based on more detailed analysis) to manage erosion and water quality



- Follow the City's *Carson River Master Plan*, including trail setbacks from river
- Comply with federal Clean Water Act
- Determine and plan/design within the river's carrying capacity
- Develop guidelines for flood resistant design that does not impair river floodplain function



Water Resources Management

Recognizing that water management is a key issue that relates to sustaining the river as well as supporting the agricultural uses that contribute to the rural character of the area, the team also generated recommendations for how to manage water resources in the Planning Area (*Figure 11: Natural Resources Team-Water Management*).

Specific recommendations addressed issues related to:

- Water quality issues related to storm water management, erosion, and specific sources of contamination
- Water supply and availability, including use of water for wetlands and the river as well as potential uses of effluent

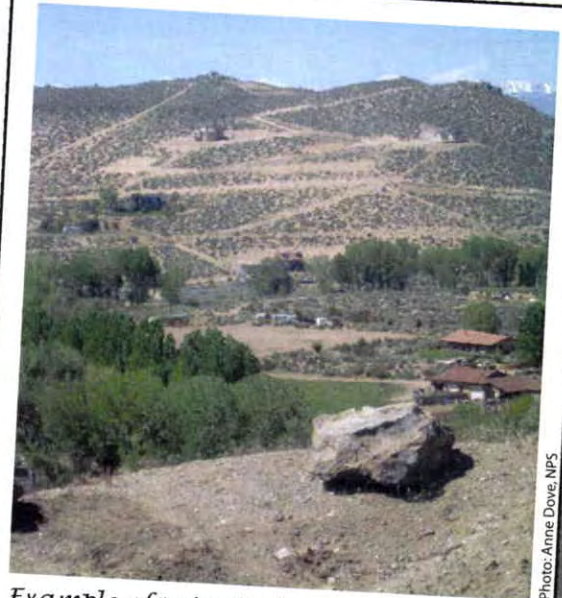


Photo: Anne Dove, NPS

Example of potential erosion from hillside vehicular use

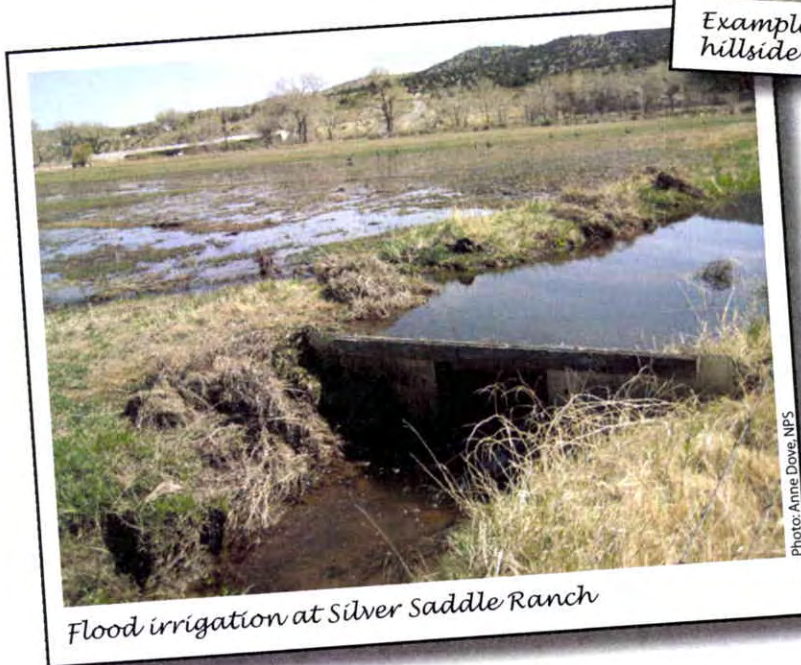
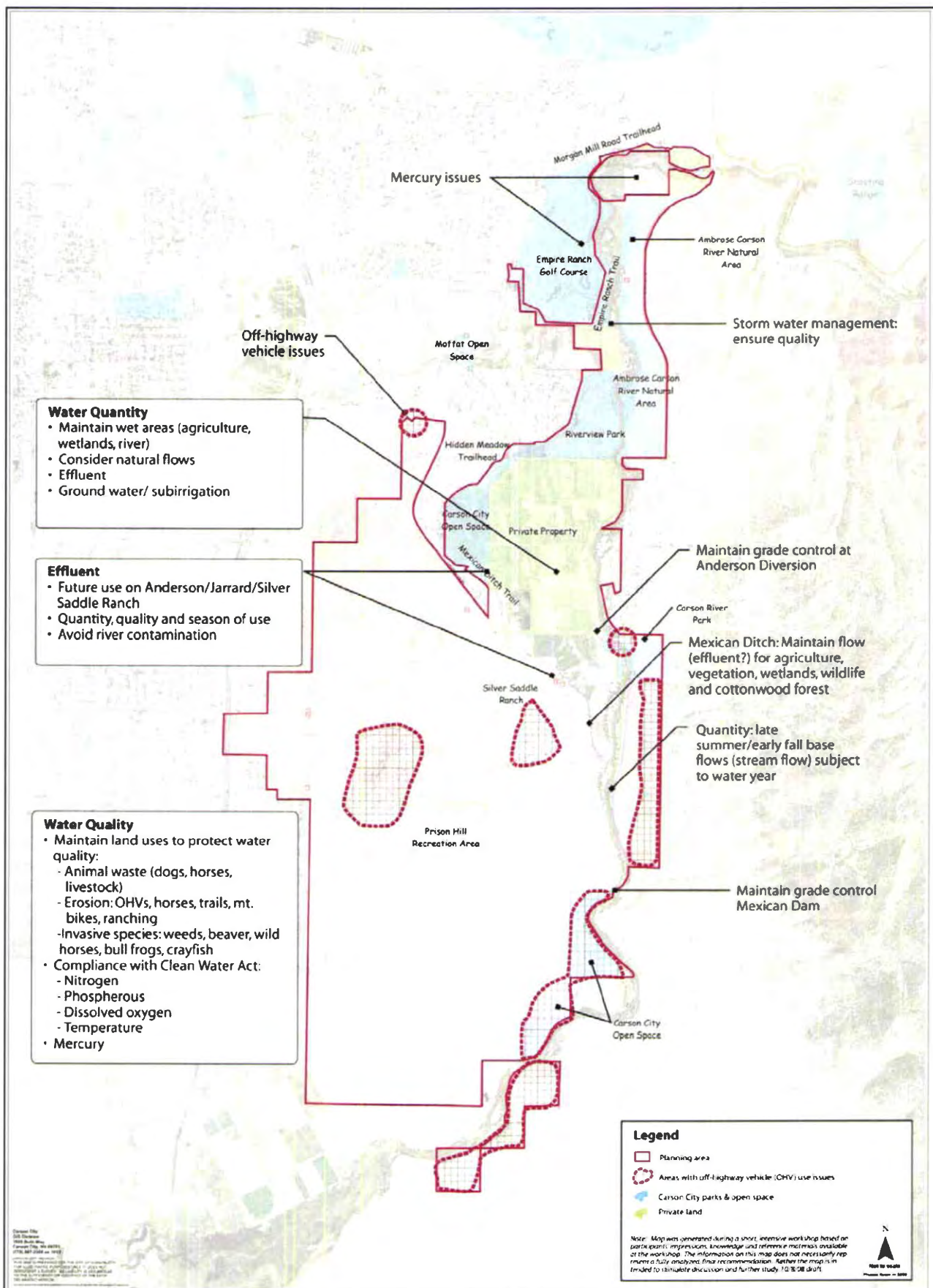


Photo: Anne Dove, NPS

Flood irrigation at Silver Saddle Ranch



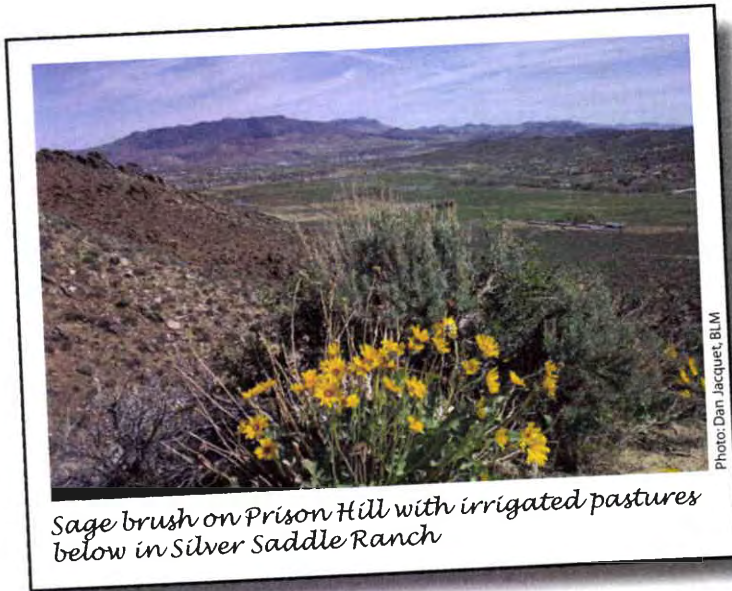
Natural Resources Team: Water Management

CREATING A COMMUNITY VISION: SILVER SADDLE RANCH & THE CARSON RIVER

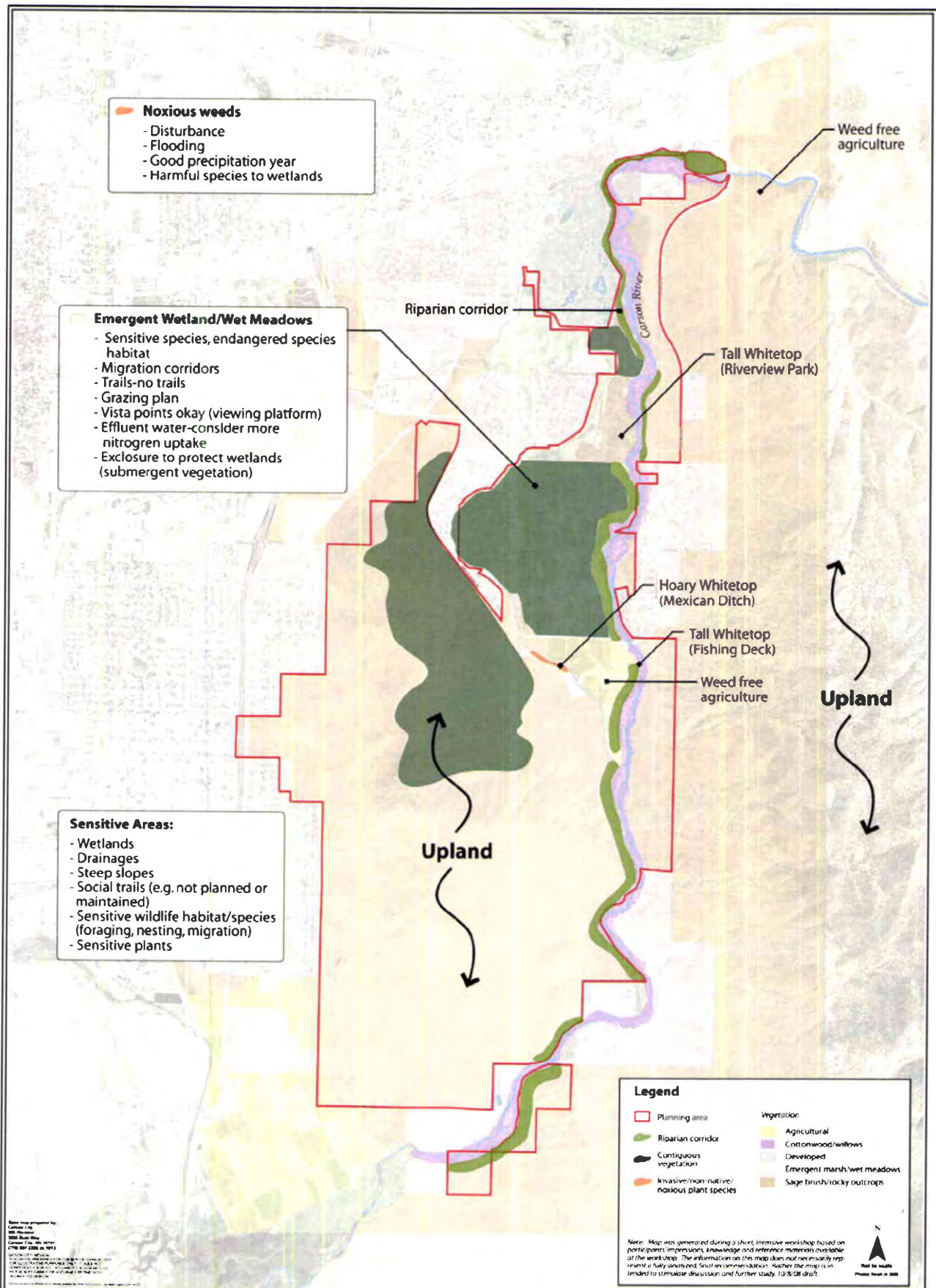
Figure 11. Natural Resources Team: Water Management

Vegetation

Based on the concept of sustaining the Carson River ecosystem the following list of recommendations for vegetation protection, management and revegetation were identified (*Figure 12: Natural Resources Team-Vegetation*). The list is not necessarily complete but identifies those ideas considered during the planning process.



1. Protection of desirable (non-invasive, native) species
 - Various successional stages (ex. understory vegetation)
 - Contiguous (unfragmented) vegetation
 - Soils: survey to determine carrying capacity (appropriate activities)
2. Management of invasive/non-native/noxious plant species
 - Identify, monitor and remove weed populations, especially in disturbed (designated trails, social trails, construction) and developed areas
 - Outreach, community education, stewardship
 - Regulatory authority, comply with
3. Revegetation of desirable species (restoration)
 - Cottonwood regeneration—riparian corridor
 - Establish/succession vegetation stages (ex. understory)
 - Reclamation/revegetation of disturbed sites



Natural Resources Team: Vegetation

CREATING A COMMUNITY VISION: SILVER SADDLE RANCH & THE CARSON RIVER

Figure 12. Natural Resources Team: Vegetation

Wildlife

Based on the concept of sustaining the Carson River ecosystem the following list of recommendations for wildlife protection, management, and habitat conservation were identified (*Figure 13: Natural Resources Team-Wildlife*). The list is not necessarily complete but identifies those ideas considered during the planning process.



1. Protection of special-status/sensitive species and their habitat including nesting, foraging, denning and migration
 - Regulatory authority: federal/state/local
 - Riparian corridor: no disturbance within 150-foot buffer from edge of corridor. No development except at designated sites
 - Wildlife movement/migration corridor
2. Management of special status/sensitive species and their habitat
 - Avoid/minimize habitat fragmentation (ex. existing trails, proposed trails)
 - Utilize existing BLM Interdisciplinary Management Plan for the Silver Saddle Ranch and the Ambrose Carson River Natural Area and Carson River Master Plan pending development of new planning area management plan.
 - Invasive/nonnative species, impacts of
3. Develop habitat conservation plan
 - Develop Planning Area conservation plan
 - Consider impacts (noise and disturbance) to wildlife
 - Consider activity levels (ex. number of participants, time of day/year, frequency)

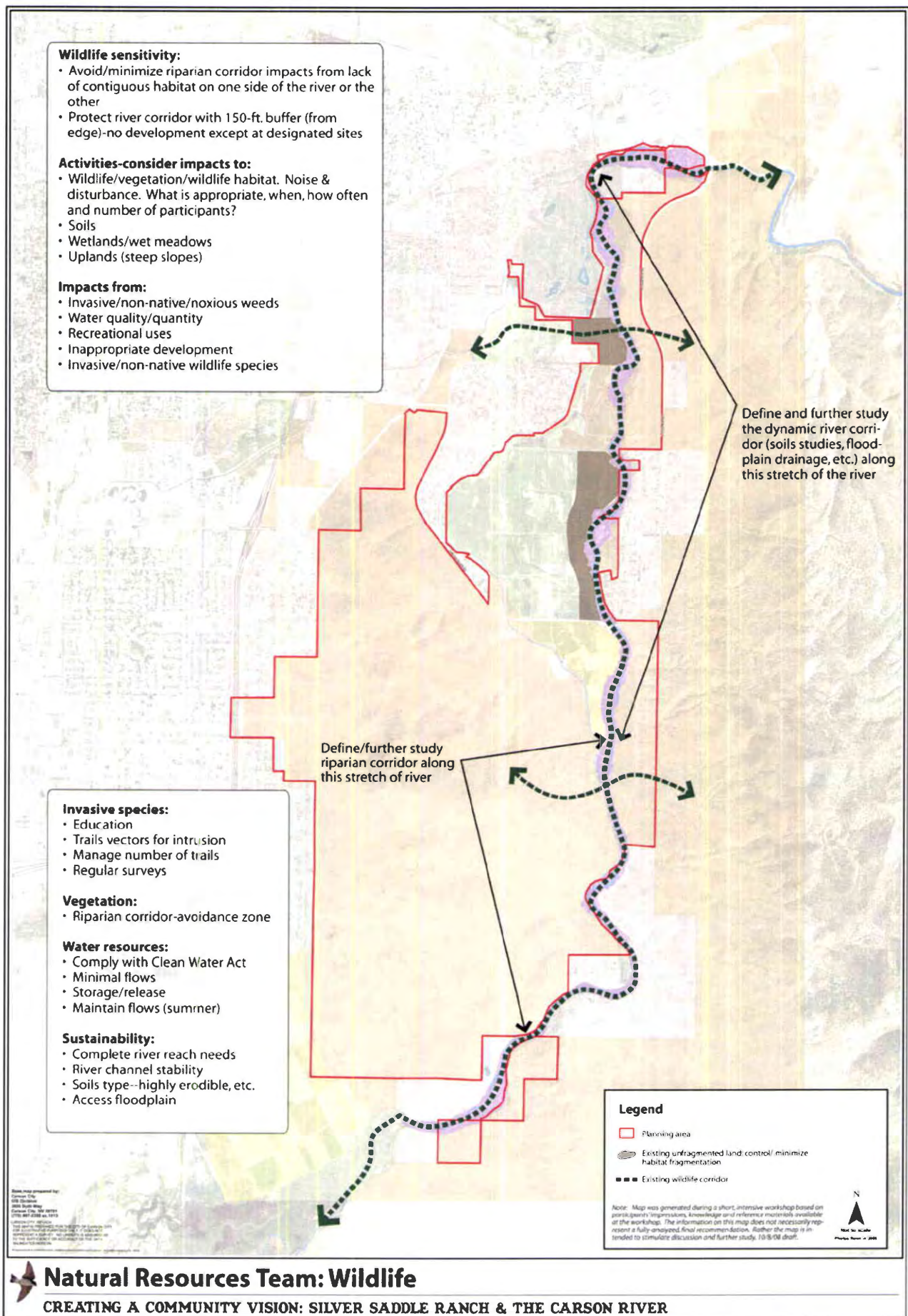


Figure 13. Natural Resources Team: Wildlife

Trails & Passive Recreation Team

This group was tasked with focusing on a trail network (including water/aquatic trails) and additional passive recreation uses that would tie the whole Planning Area together. Specific issues that the group was asked to consider included:

- Trail connectivity
- Public access points and staging areas
- Public/ private land interface
- OHV use
- Recommendations for specific use areas
- Trail and passive recreation management and policy
- Education/ interpretation/ signage

The group consolidated recommendations for these topics into two maps, *Figure 14: Trails & Passive Recreation Team-Proposed Recreation*; and *Figure 15: Trails & Passive Recreation Team-Potential Signage*. The team also generated general recommendations (*Appendix J: Trails & Passive Recreation Team Original Notes and Drawings*).



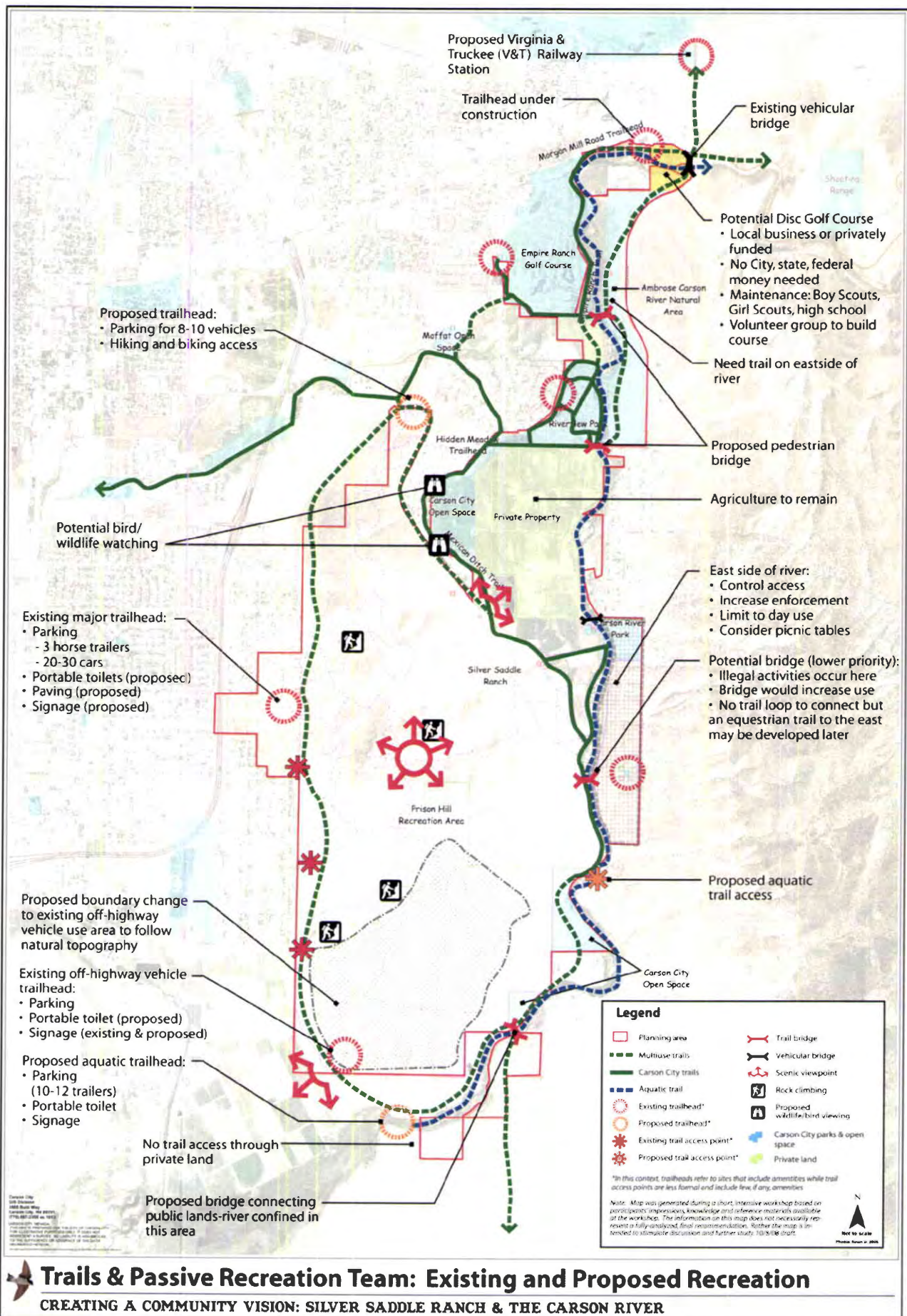
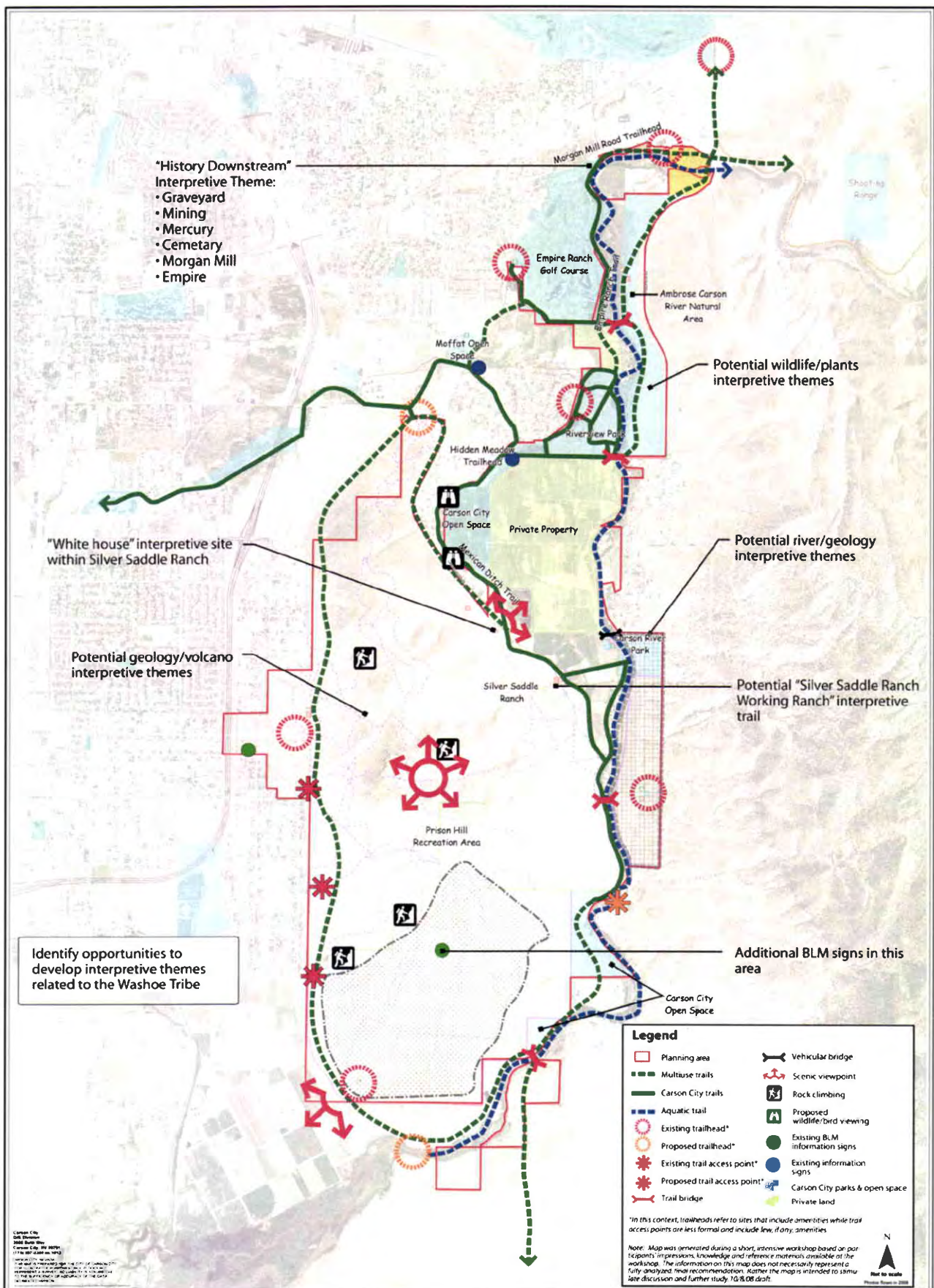


Figure 14. Trails & Passive Recreation Team: Existing and Proposed Recreation



Trails & Passive Recreation Team: Potential Interpretation

CREATING A COMMUNITY VISION: SILVER SADDLE RANCH & THE CARSON RIVER

Figure 15. Trails & Passive Recreation Team: Potential Interpretation

Trail Connectivity, Access and Trailheads

Given the new challenges associated with conceptualizing the whole Planning Area as one contiguous series of parks and open spaces, the team spent some time exploring opportunities for greater trail connectivity. They reviewed the City's existing "Unified Pathways Master Plan" (2007) and brainstormed potential connections to the newly acquired areas. Connecting people in Carson City to the Planning Area with trails and beyond the planning area into adjacent counties were also goals of this group.

The group developed a number of specific recommendations that would facilitate greater trail connectivity, including:

- Use natural resource data to avoid impacting sensitive areas
- Connect trails across new open space areas as they are acquired
- Acquisition of the open space east of the newly-purchased "Buzzy's Ranch" site would help provide greater connectivity because of its location
- After Highway 395 is constructed, need to ensure there are trail connections to Prison Hill.
- A trail connection from the western Prison Hill trailhead (by the water tank) to the Carson River could function as a major east-west connector
- Reduce the number of trails—there are many that were informally created that are redundant; conduct a new inventory as needed
- Consider a loop trail that would encircle the Prison Hill area and connect to Silver Saddle Ranch
- Explore potential for a trail surrounding all of Carson City
- Potential river crossings needed at the south end of the Planning Area

Recommendations related to trail access points and trailheads included:

- Add an access point to the river at the south end of the Planning Area
- Develop guidelines for trailheads including size, amenities, surface materials, etc.

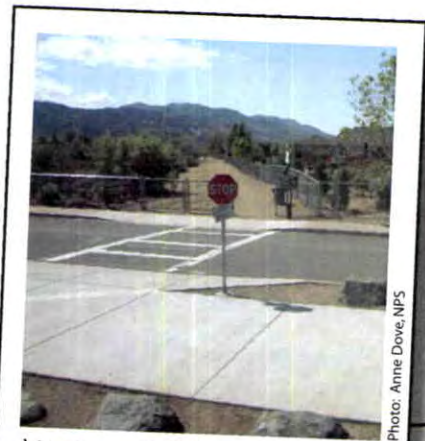
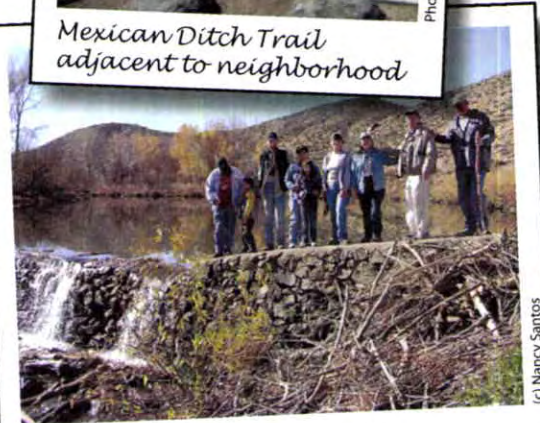


Photo: Anne Dove, NPS

Mexican Ditch Trail adjacent to neighborhood



(c) Nancy Santos

Group hike to Mexican Dam



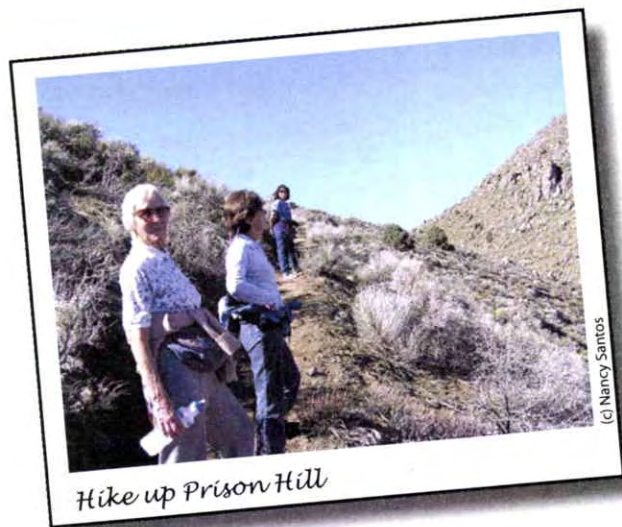
Photo: Anne Dove, NPS

Aquatic Trail access point in Carson River Park



Photo: Anne Dove, NPS

Walkers using trails at Silver Saddle Ranch



Hike up Prison Hill

- Identify 1-2 appropriate parking sites for trailers. Identify 1-2 sites for parking.
- Use natural resource data (including any river setback recommendations) to avoid impacting sensitive areas
- Access by adjacent homes

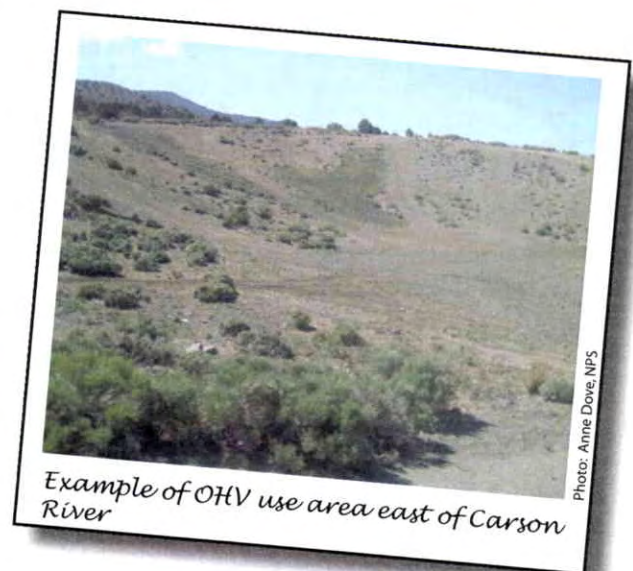
Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) Use

Another issue that was raised in the public workshops was management of OHV use in the Planning Area. While there were concerns about trail user conflicts and confining OHV use to

designated areas, there was no proposal to entirely exclude this use in the Planning Area. Within this context, the team developed several recommendations.

The team agreed that there is a need to encourage OHV users to stay within the designated OHV area in the Prison Hill Recreation Area. Some ideas to facilitate this included increasing education through programs and signage, and developing an “adopt an OHV area” for better user group self-management. The trail system design was also cited as a potential obstacle for retaining use within the designated area. It was noted that the trail system should be enhanced to be “smarter” so that features such as “dead ends” at the OHV boundary are eliminated. Part of reconsidering the trail network within the OHV area might also necessitate decommissioning and revegetating some trails that have poor alignment or that lack durability. Funding for such efforts could be generated through a permitting or fee system.

Overall, the group felt that there is much to be learned from other communities—the east side of the Tahoe Rim Trail has addressed similar issues—and that local ordinances and/or regulations could be developed to help implement these ideas.



Example of OHV use area east of Carson River



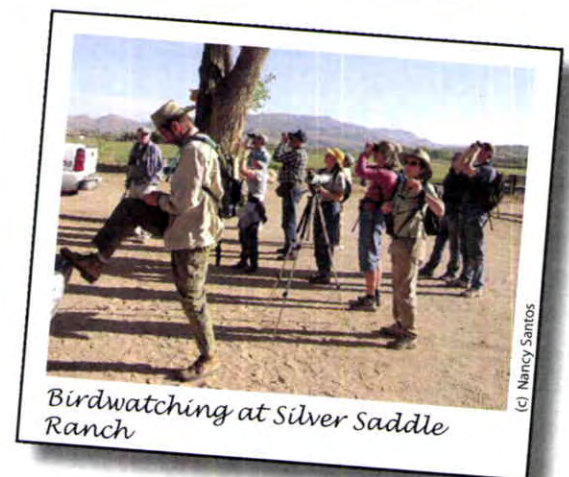
Passive Recreation – Other Uses

In addition to trail uses, the team was asked to identify and explore other types of passive recreation that would be appropriate within the Planning Area. The team recommended that areas transferred to or acquired by the City be designated as open space rather than as parks to be consistent with the vision and goals generated through the public workshops. Passive recreation would be compatible with this land use designation.

The group started by identifying existing passive recreation including hiking, dog walking, horseback riding, biking, geo-caching, fishing, rock climbing, birding, rafting, canoeing, kayaking, stargazing, picnicking, hanging out, meditating, par course/fitness trail, environmental education programs, and cultural heritage programs. Additional potential passive recreation uses were identified as including:

- Community garden
- 10k marathons
- Disc golf – brings tournaments, money and people to the area
- Senior Center outings ("going back in time" for seniors)
- Boy and girl scouts – bird box building events/outings
- 4H, public groups, elder hostel, weddings
- Mexican Dam – keep it open for water based recreation
- RV park
- Training facility for Sheriff's office

Overall, the group felt that it will be important to define what "passive recreation" means for this area and to further determine the number of people that will use each activity/amenity to form a basis for future development.



Public-Private Land Interface

One concern that emerged from the public workshops leading up to the charrette related to the issue of trespassing over private land by recreation users, particularly where residences interface with the Prison Hill area. The team developed some recommendations related to this issue:

- Fencing of private land should be up to the landowner. Agencies should not be responsible for installing fences
- Standard demarcation (fences) should be maintained by landowners
- Issue is likely related to not knowing where boundaries exist. Most people want to respect private property but cannot without adequate signs/fencing
- Educate public with signs on both public and private lands

Management and Policy

The team agreed that while management and policy considerations are very important in the long term, they are also among the more difficult issues to address. A key issue they struggled with is who is going to manage this area and how will those resources be generated. Many of the ideas involved partnership between agencies and with non-governmental organizations and groups, including:

- Pursue mutual agreement between the BLM and Carson City Parks and Recreation Dept.
- Develop a volunteer program
- Start a trails association
- Create an "adopt a trail/resource/area/etc." program
- Partner with the neighboring prison to contract labor.
- Develop a sponsorship program
- Generate a donation program and encourage neighboring communities to contribute
- Ask people to include donations to the Ranch in their wills



Marketing & Outreach

One major issue that arose during the public workshops was that many were used to thinking about the Planning Area as a series of discrete, individual areas rather than as a network of interconnected spaces. This team spent some time thinking about how to alter peoples' thinking about this area. To begin, they considered what the "big idea" was that would capture the essence of the area. The river emerged as a key feature and a concept of, "A Living River: Lifeblood of the Community" was developed, in recognition that the river is a common thread that is part of a living, dynamic system that represents the interface between people and the environment.

Using this overarching concept, the group then explored what they felt would be a major outreach focus, education and environmental interaction. The group developed topics that relate to this focus area:

- Yesterday: prehistory, Native American occupation, settlement including mining, V&T Railroad, ranching, etc.
- Today: Urbanism, education, mechanized and motorized recreation, non-motorized recreation, return to environmental concern for environmental participation/interaction
- Tomorrow: sustainable design, green building prototypes, solar/electric transportation system onsite, living laboratory, prototype demonstrations of solar/wind/water harvesting/other scientific/reclaimed water. Enhanced educational opportunities for outreach and tourism

In order to sustain the "Living River: Lifeblood of the Community" concept, the group generated some recommendations:

- Develop an advisory committee that would work with the administrator/manager(s) of the area
- Draft a marketing plan that addresses outreach, grant writing, and funding, including partnerships. Include local education leaders in the process
- Develop a storyline: who, what, where, why-yesterday, today, tomorrow that would tie into interpretation and education

FINANCIAL, MARKETING & MANAGEMENT CONCEPTS*

1. **Administration:** day-to-day operations required to develop public programs, manage the program, maintain the Master Plan and fulfill the mission.

2. **Marketing:** capitalize on financial opportunities by identifying opportunities to create and sell the products and services produced by the program.

3. **User Services:** a full range of programs intended to foster public support and give back value to all segments of the community served.

4. **Capital Improvement Program:** combination of facility-driven and conservation/preservation-driven facilities

5. **Operation and maintenance:** necessary for the care of facilities and protection of the resources, user safety and security, upkeep and repair, and incentives to attract public participation.

6. **Planning and design standards and guidelines:** resolve inconsistencies among regional systems/adjacent jurisdictions, develop seamless transitions.

*A complete list of financial, marketing and management ideas appears in Appendix K

- Identify programs that will engage the community and define program scope
- Natural resource management will need to be a component of sustaining this concept

An additional summary of financial, marketing and management concepts and potential programs was generated by a member of the team that provides a wide range of ideas for consideration (*Appendix K: Financial and Marketing Concepts*).

Specific Use Areas

While another team focused on the Silver Saddle Ranch and Prison Hill areas, this team was asked to consider any other specific use areas they deemed appropriate. The team chose to explore opportunities for the newly-acquired “Buzzy’s Ranch” area in addition to the open space to the east of there that the City is actively trying to purchase. Ideas for this area included:

- Wetlands integrated with passive uses such as trails, horses and pastures.
- Use site for education about water resource issues including use of reclaimed/effluent water
- Identify a small facility for meetings
- Use “Green” design standards, may enhance grant/funding opportunities
- Include history, cultural information, and trail maps at the interpretive center

The group also identified a few uses that they would like to see sited somewhere within the Planning Area, including:

- A small amphitheater
- Potential disc golf in the Morgan Hill /Deer Run area
- Designate safe swimming areas

Education, Interpretation & Signage

Using the “big idea” concept for the area, “A Living River: Lifeblood of the Community”, the group identified potential interpretive and education themes for the site including: history (mining, ranching, Native American—natural and human histories); geology; biology and ecology; and the river corridor and its influence on the Planning Area. These themes could be used in identifying interpretive trails, signs, programs and educational materials.

Some specific recommendations related to interpretation included:

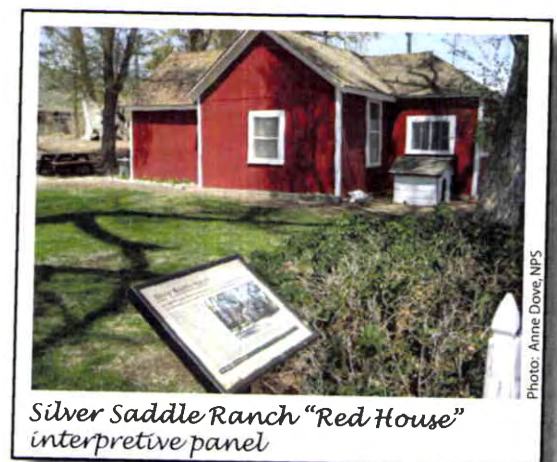
- Divide the area into subsections, determine history, wildlife and interpretation for each

- Develop a system of interpretive information including signs and a parallel website. Provide other features on the site such as platforms with views that can be used to tell stories at each viewing area
- Further define interpretive themes, which could potentially change over time. Specific ideas for themes include:
 - o River is a key element, it is the reason that everything in our area is there.
 - o Role of ranches in the history and development of the area—Silver Saddle Ranch
 - o Geological features
 - o History of Prison Hill
 - o Ambrose Natural Area – wildlife

The group also spent time brainstorming about signage systems. They identified several functions for signs beyond interpretation, including signs that would communicate regulatory and directional information and contain elements such as maps and mileage markers.

Potential design guidelines for signs include:

- Unify the signs through design and conceptual themes
- Make the signs long-lasting
- Transparency within overall look that is repeated across multiple signs
- Use silhouette photos or some subtle images in the background.
- Keep signs out of the 150' river setback
- Signs should be low maintenance; difficult to destroy, easy to change elements (i.e. panels, mileage markers) later
- Get others involved in sign design (i.e. kids, NV history classes, school groups). In Virginia City, signs were created by high school students
- Signs need to be tied to something physical
- "Overall" signs at beginning of the trails--include these at all official access/entry points. Concept – hit people right away when they enter the area; provide a picture of the



entire trails system; locate where you area on the system (e.g. 'welcome, you are here'); allowed uses

- Include directional signs where trails intersect
- Develop trail names and loops that help identify locations. Tie to interpretive themes
- Signs should describe what people can expect on the trails. An example of a US Forest Service sign that meets this criterion was provided
- People know what to look for; use the same signs used in other parts of Carson City
- Use all recycled materials (TREX) which are more expensive but reduce operations and maintenance costs later
- Public education would unify users. What do people expect for each segment of the trail? Disperse uses and direct people to appropriate locations to recreate



Team develops trail concept plan

Photo: Anne Dove, NPS

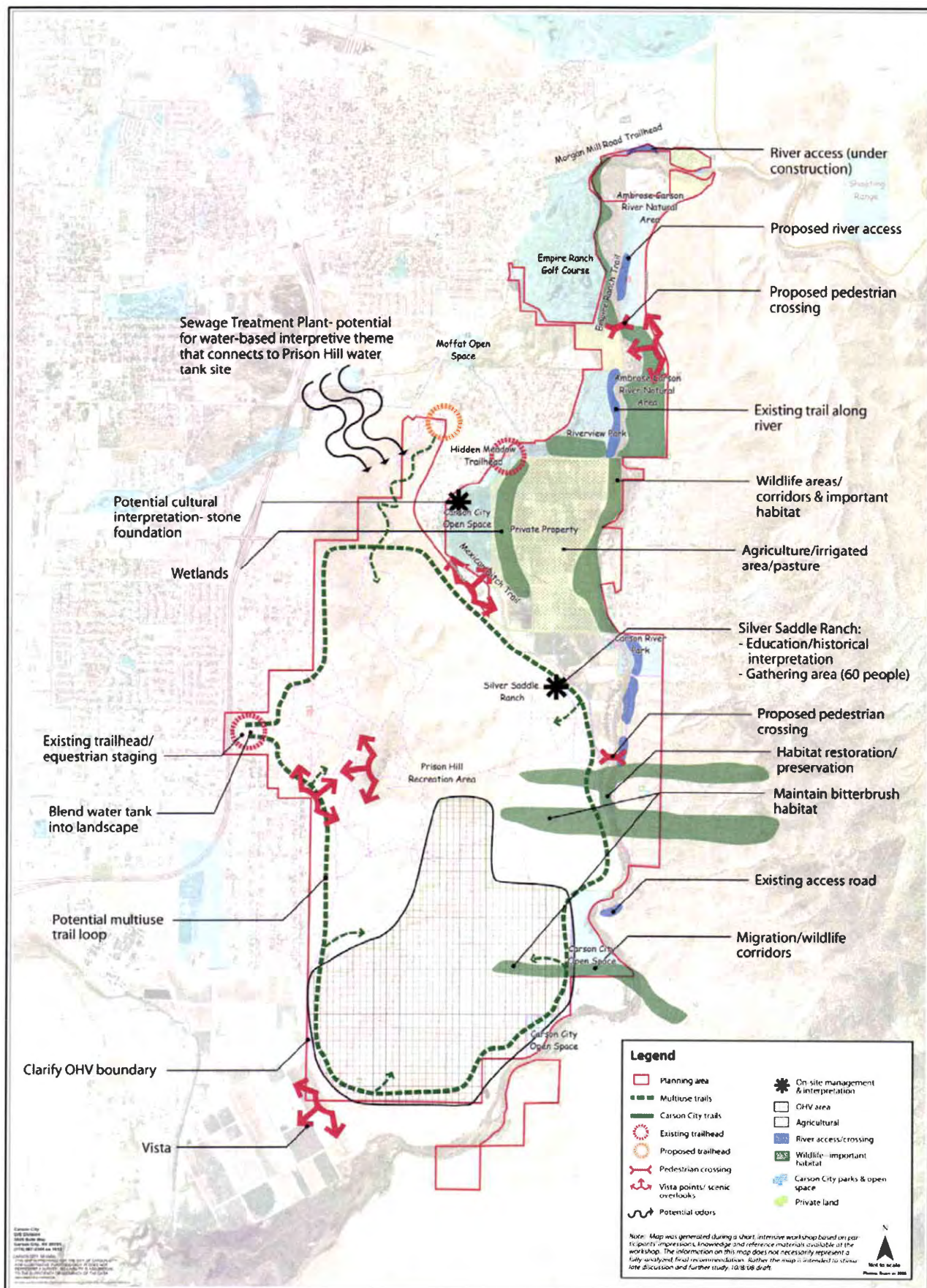
Silver Saddle Ranch & Prison Hill Team

Because Silver Saddle Ranch and the adjacent Prison Hill emerged through the public workshops as focal areas, one team at the charrette was tasked with focusing just on these areas. Specifically, the team was asked to explore:

- How Silver Saddle Ranch could function as a hub for passive recreation, education and interpretation in the context of the site as an historic ranch
- Options for developing a nature center at Silver Saddle Ranch
- Prison Hill uses, particularly the west and south side where recreation/trail uses interface with residences
- Management/policy considerations
- How to connect these sites into the broader Planning Area



The group spent Friday generating an analysis of the existing conditions, opportunities and constraints for these areas (*Figure 16: Silver Saddle Ranch & Prison Hill Team-Site Analysis*). Based on this analysis, the group explored each of the five topics assigned to them (*Appendix L: Silver Saddle Ranch & Prison Hill Team Original Notes and Drawings*).



Silver Saddle Ranch & Prison Hill Team: Site Analysis

CREATING A COMMUNITY VISION: SILVER SADDLE RANCH & THE CARSON RIVER

Figure 16. Silver Saddle Ranch & Prison Hill Team: Site Analysis

Silver Saddle Ranch

Once the group had a common understanding of the Planning Area, they explored what it would mean for Silver Saddle Ranch to be a “hub” and concluded that the ranch could be a focal point for passive recreation, education, and interpretation. As an overall concept for the ranch, the group felt that preserving it as a “family working ranch” would help to demonstrate and interpret Carson City’s heritage while providing opportunities for recreation.

To achieve this, the team recommended designating a “ranch bubble” within which ranch-related uses and events would take place. Any non-ranch related uses, including parking, would be excluded from this “bubble” and take place around the perimeter of the ranch (*Figure 17: Silver Saddle Ranch & Prison Hill Team: Silver Saddle Ranch Area Uses*). In addition, under the topics listed and described below, the group identified numerous recommendations:

Planning Considerations:

- Silver Saddle Ranch should be used as a “headquarters” for the whole Planning Area. Possibly site any “headquarter” facilities near intersection of 5th Street and Carson River Road rather than on the ranch
- The context of the ranch is as important as what happens inside the ranch “bubble” for preserving its character
- Each site in the Planning Area does not have to provide all types of recreation uses—too many access points—possibly one Carson River Park access—look at globally
- Use charrette as springboard to development plans for all resources/management areas to use day to day
- Agricultural uses that are consistent with the ranch’s history should be considered
- Look at a new name to encompass the entire Planning Area that is the subject of the charrette
- Develop standards for consistent signage throughout the Planning Area

“Family Ranch” Character



(c) Nancy Santos

Pole barn at Silver Saddle Ranch sheltering hay



(c) Nancy Santos

Burros at Silver Saddle Ranch



Photo: Anne Dove, NPS

Charrette participants view pasture area of Silver Saddle Ranch from Carson River Park

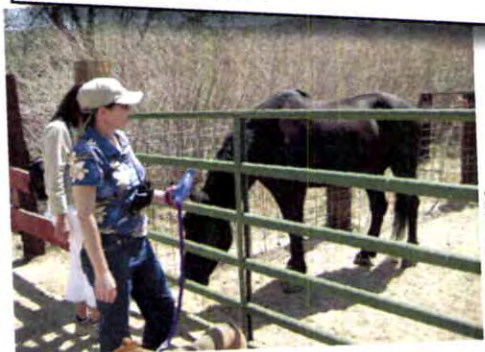
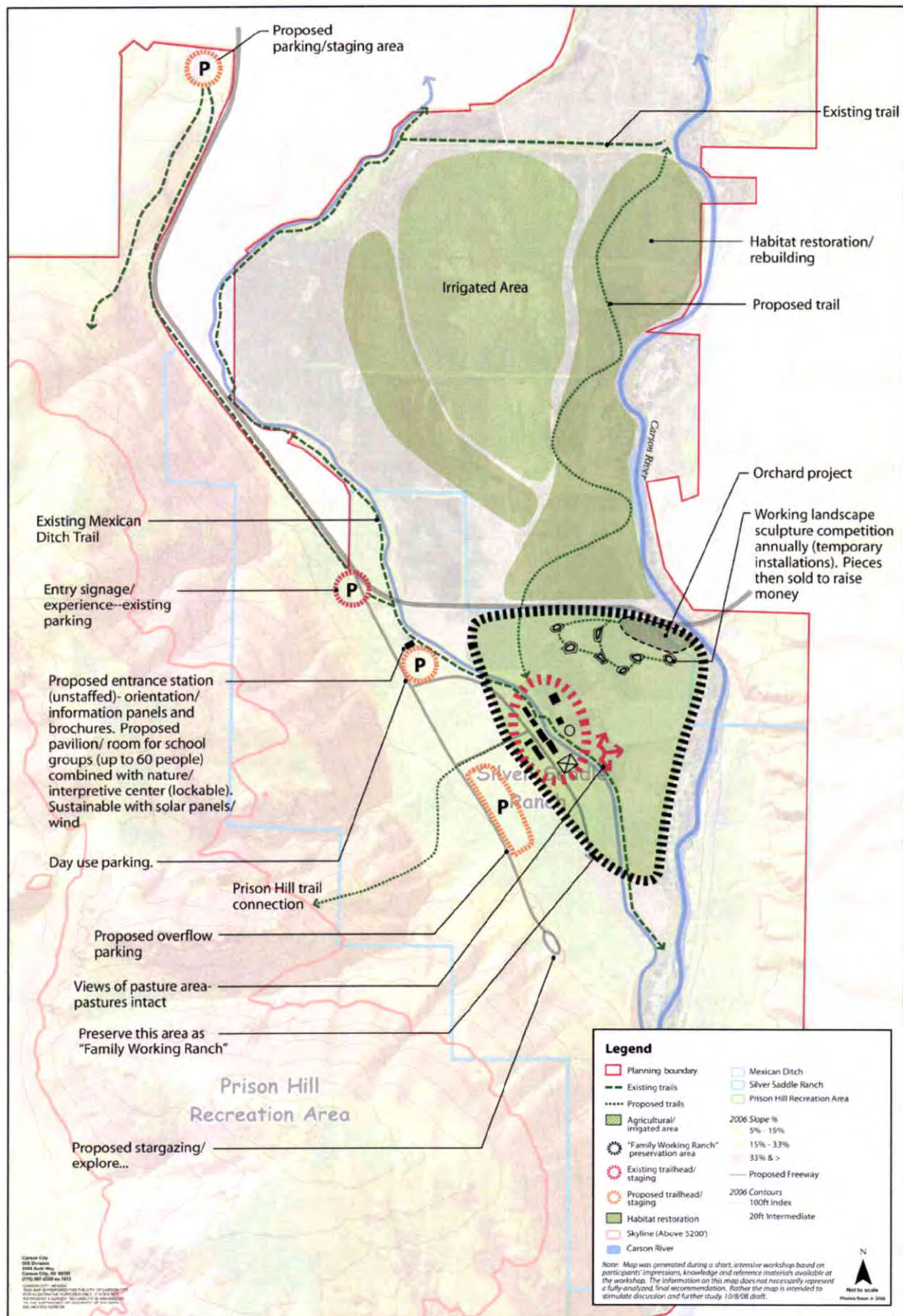


Photo: Anne Dove, NPS

Horse at Silver Saddle Ranch



Silver Saddle Ranch & Prison Hill Team: Silver Saddle Ranch Area Uses **CREATING A COMMUNITY VISION: SILVER SADDLE RANCH & THE CARSON RIVER**

Figure 17. Silver Saddle Ranch & Prison Hill Team: Silver Saddle Ranch Area Uses

Recreation & Access:

- Explore providing recreational experiences that are consistent with the site as a ranch but that do not impact the character of the ranch (e.g. equestrian use, trail rides, tractor/wagon rides, etc.)
- Access to the ranch, especially for youth, is lacking and could be enhanced
- Equestrian activities could include use of an arena, using the ranch for trail trials and trail riding/staging
- The "sandpit" area could be used for stargazing
- Nature-based recreation such as birdwatching would be consistent with the ranch concept
- Youth group activities such as 4-H and scout groups could be planned for the site
- Archaeology and cultural uses fit with the overarching concept for the ranch

Interpretation & Education:

- Develop an interpretive plan that addresses themes, appropriate stories, support materials, programs, etc.
- Consider Carson River as a key overarching theme that ties together other themes including cultural, historic and environmental
- Working with the schools, develop an environmental education plan based on an understanding of needs and how the ranch could be used as a site to meet those needs



Photo: Anne Dove, NPS

Equestrian trail use is a popular activity at Silver Saddle Ranch



(c) Nancy Santos

Young birder enjoying wildlife viewing at Silver Saddle Ranch



(c) Nancy Santos

Interpretation of area's ranching heritage is an opportunity



Photo: Anne Dove, NPS

Mexican Ditch interpretive panel