

**OPEN SPACE ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
STAFF REPORT**

**MEETING DATE:** October 21, 2013

**AGENDA ITEM NUMBER:** 3D

**STAFF:** Ann Bollinger, Natural Resource Specialist *AB*

**REQUEST:** To solicit public nominations for the naming of two open space properties within the vicinity of the Carson River and Deer Run Road.

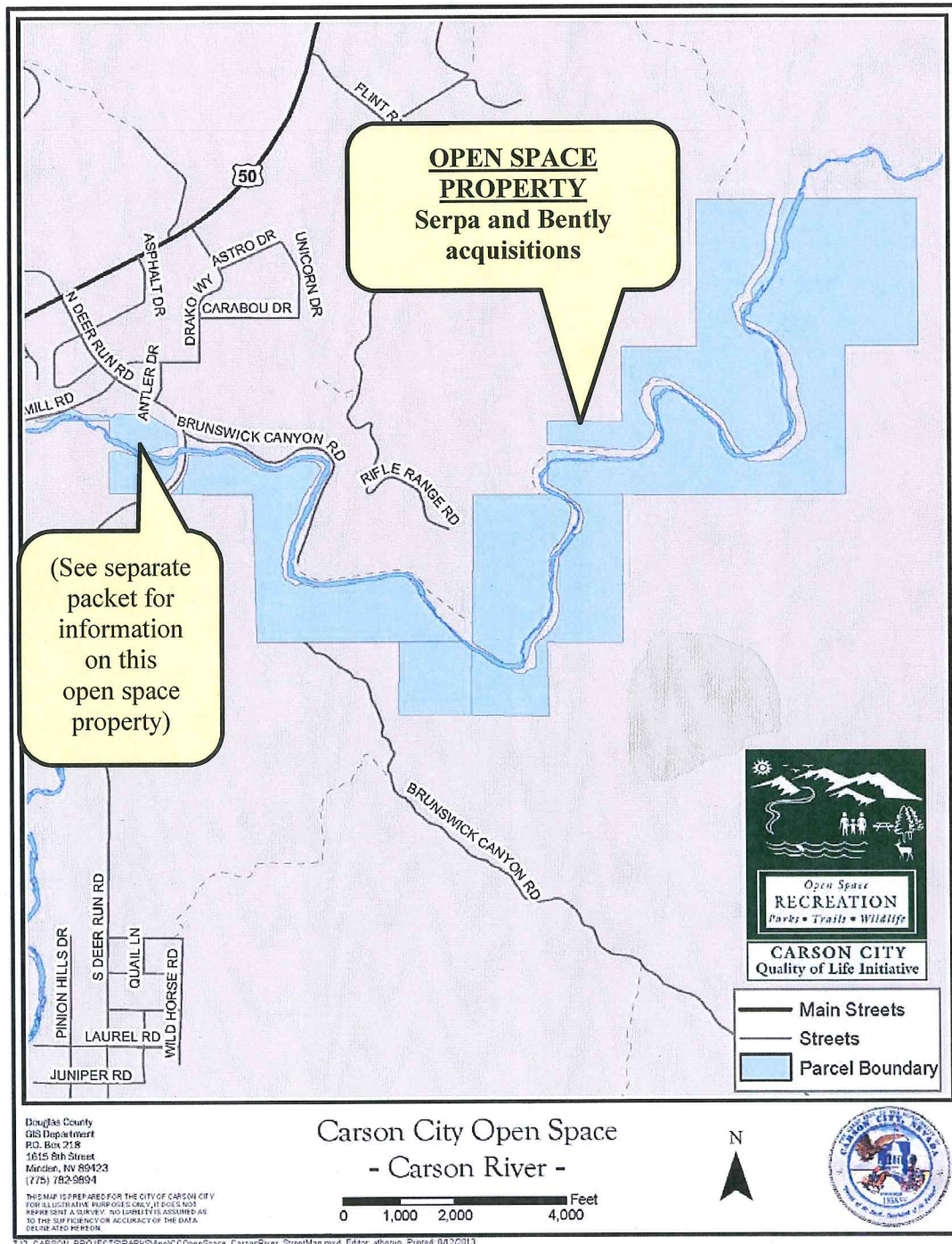
**GENERAL DISCUSSION:** At the previous meeting, the committee members expressed appreciation towards the first packets developed for naming of open space properties. Staff followed this format and has developed packets for the second group of properties. Under consideration are two acquisitions located near the vicinity of Deer Run Road and also along the Carson River, or known to the committee as the Serpa and Bently property acquisitions.

Pending recommendations and changes from the committee, a press release will be issued to the Nevada Appeal and a message will be posted on the Parks and Recreation Department Facebook page to invite the public to submit nominations. The public will be directed to our website to review the materials and obtain the application (also attached). We anticipate the submittal period to be open for 30 days.

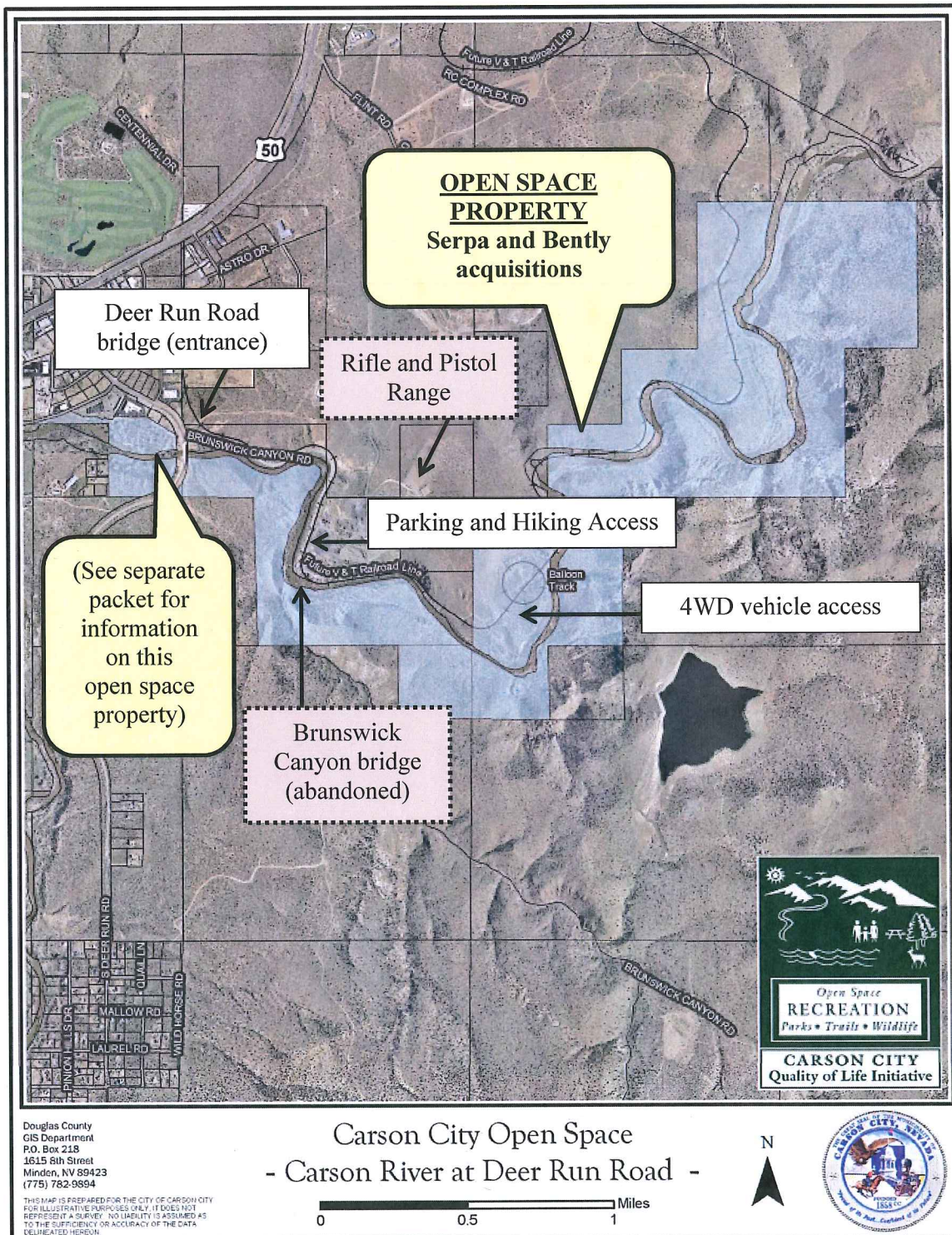
The Open Space Advisory Committee will review the nominations at the next regularly scheduled meeting and provide a recommendation to the Board of Supervisors.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION:** I move to solicit public nominations for the naming of two open space properties within the vicinity of the Carson River and Deer Run Road.

**Carson City Open Space  
Serpa and Bently Property Acquisitions, east of Deer Run Road bridge  
871 acres (approximate total)**







## Location

There are several parcels under consideration within this one nomination. The subject property(ies) is located on the east side of Carson City, along the Carson River. The property is bordered to the west by Deer Run Road; to the north by one private parcel (Bertagnolli gravel pit), Carson City lands including the Rifle and Pistol Range and the Landfill; to the east by private lands; and to the south by public lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management.

## Access

From the Deer Run Road bridge, the subject property can be seen on the southeast corner, though generally inaccessible. Most of the property lies further downriver into the Carson River Canyon (commonly referred to as Brunswick Canyon). The most common access is from the northeast corner of the Deer Run Road bridge, turning east onto Brunswick Canyon Road. The following mile markers provide various references to the property:

Mile 0.0 – The start of Brunswick Canyon Road at Deer Run Road.

Mile 1.0 – Up to the first mile, the road surface is a graded dirt road and accessible with a two-wheel drive vehicle. At the Bertagnolli gravel pit and Brunswick bridge (abandoned), the road is not maintained and a high clearance, four-wheel drive vehicle is recommended. At this point, visitors may park near the bridge and continue to follow the road by alternative methods (hike, mountain bike, or horseback riding).

Mile 1.3 – The start of the subject property and recognized with an Open Space sign.

Mile 1.7 – In the distance, an old entrance to a bunker can be seen. The road continues toward the entrance, and then turns left through a narrow gap between the rocks.

Mile 1.8 – Remnants of the old Merrimac Mill can be seen on the left. The road continues straight on the old railroad bed and follows the river. From this point, the road becomes very narrow and rough.

Mile 4.0 – The road ends and meets the reconstructed V&T Railway.

To access the property on the south side of the river, drive approximately two miles south from the Deer Run Road bridge to Sedge Road. Turn east and stay on the main road for 1.5 miles. Turn left and travel downhill towards the river for  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile, following the wash. The entrance of the property is recognized with an Open Space sign. The road is not maintained and a high clearance, four-wheel drive vehicle is recommended.

The roads are open to non-motorized and motorized users.

## **Background**

Purchase Date: January 2011  
Purchased From: John C. Serpa / Sierra Clouds LLC  
Funding Source: 1) Carson City Open Space, Quality of Life Sales and Use Tax Funds  
2) Nevada Division of State Lands, Question 1 Program

Purchase Date: January 2012  
Purchased From: Bently Family Ltd Partnership  
Funding Source: 1) Carson City Open Space, Quality of Life Sales and Use Tax Funds  
2) Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act

## **Physical Characteristics**

**Historic / Cultural:** These properties may contain the most historic activity and artifacts of all the open space properties. Beginning just upriver, this section of the Carson River played a prominent role during the mining days of the Comstock Era. After ore was mined in Virginia City, it was transferred to any of the great number of stamp mills located along the river. The Carson River provided a water source which was necessary in the ore extraction process. Four stamp mills were located in this area: Merrimac Mill, Copper Canyon Mill, Vivian Mill, and the Santiago Mill. Today, the most visible artifact from the stamp mills is a wall from the Merrimac Mill.

As a consequence of the ore extraction process and widespread occurrence of mercury, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) declared much of this area as a federally listed Superfund site in August 1990. Referred to as the Carson River Mercury Superfund Site, the primary concerns reside in contaminated soils and waterways at or near former mill sites. Along the Carson River, the site extends from the Empire Ranch Golf Course in Carson City and continues downstream for 50 miles to the Lahontan Valley. The Carson City Parks and Recreation Department has conducted sampling at select areas to determine whether the lands are suitable for general recreation use. The development of recreational facilities, such as picnic sites for the Carson River Aquatic Trail, may require additional sampling.

In addition to the mining history, the historic Virginia & Truckee (V&T) Railway operated along the existing roadbed from 1869 to 1951. The roadbed itself also contains visible retaining walls and other components of historic significance. In 1993, the state legislature recognized the unique opportunity to restore this "iron horse" and created the Nevada Commission for the Reconstruction of the V&T Railway. Thus far, the V&T Railway has been reconstructed up to the north end of the subject property. The Commission has an easement on the northern parcel (Bently acquisition) for reconstruction. The right-of-way on southern parcel(s) is still privately-owned by Mr. Serpa; however, it is anticipated this right-of-way will be sold to the Commission for the railway reconstruction. It should be noted that the railway reconstruction will occur on the historic railway alignment and the existing roadbed, thereby closing road access beyond the Bertagnolli gravel pit.

Landform / scenic quality: Located on both sides of the Carson River, the property is dominated by steep, rocky slopes. The most level terrain is found in the alluvial fans and sandy bars along the river corridor. The elevations range from 4,500' to 5,500'.

Plant communities: The primary vegetation composition is sagebrush uplands and includes ephedra (Mormon Tea), desert peach, rabbitbrush, and others. Along the river corridor, cottonwoods, coyote willow, and Wood's rose are common. The upper elevations contain sparse concentrations of pinyon pine and juniper. Two small wetland areas contain cattails. Beautiful wildflowers have also been observed around the property including blanketflower, blazing star, columbine, paintbrush, primrose, and globemallow.

Water Resources: The Carson River flows through the center of the property. Additionally two small wetlands are present, one of which is result of leaking water from the Brunswick Reservoir located above.

Wildlife: The Carson River and diverse plant communities should provide habitat for many species of wildlife. The Carson River Master Plan, dated 1996, identifies fish, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, and birds throughout the river corridor, but not specific to this property. With that said, not much has been observed by staff nor biologists involved with V&T Environmental Assessment (EA). The V&T Supplemental EA identified the following species in the survey areas:

- Red-tailed hawk
- California quail
- Turkey vulture
- Western rattlesnake
- Wild horse
- Jackrabbit
- Skunk
- Western fence lizard
- Squirrel
- Mountain cottontail rabbit
- Side-blotched lizard

Additionally, Ms. Nancy Santos informed staff that pinyon jay is a unique species to our area. They are seen in large flocks along the river in Carson primarily in winter and they breed in colonies in the Pine Nut Mountains. There is currently research being done to find out more about their breeding habitats.



Photo 1: Scenic views of the landscape are dominated by steep topography with the river below. The property contains a diverse vegetation composition with riparian near the river's edge, sagebrush uplands and pinyon-juniper woodlands.



Photo 2: The only Class III whitewater rapids on the middle section of the Carson River flow through this section of the canyon.





Photo 3: Paintbrush and purple sage are just two of the wildflowers found throughout the canyon.



Photo 4: From the north side of the river and located approximately 1.0 mile from Deer Run Road, limited parking is available near the abandoned Brunswick Canyon bridge.





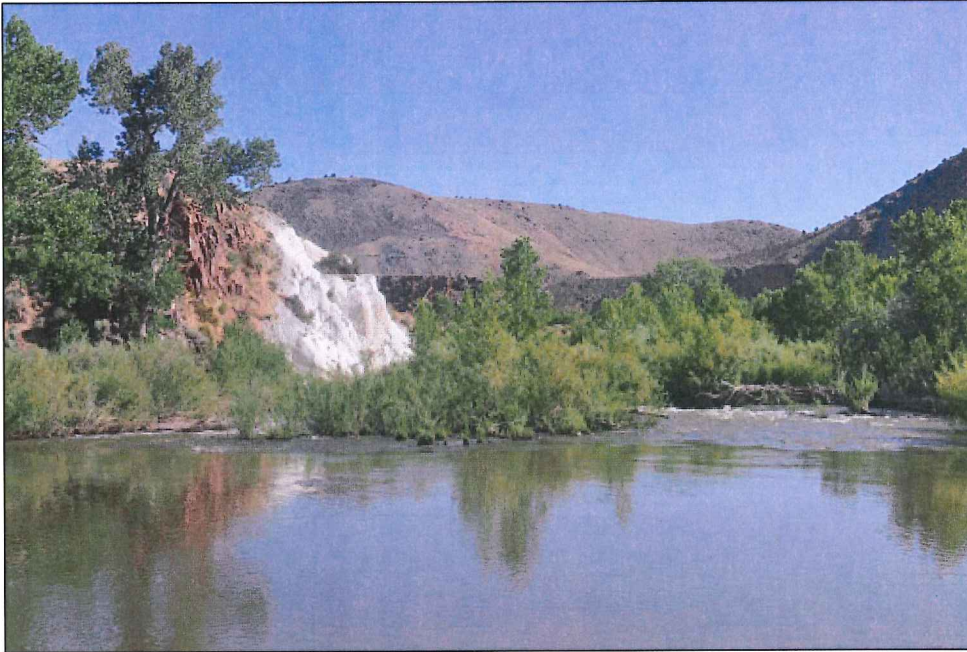
Photo 5: From the north side of the river and located approximately 1.3 miles from Deer Run Road, an Open Space signs designates the entrance to the open space property.



Photo 6: From the north side of the river and located approximately 1.8 miles from Deer Run Road, one wall is the remaining artifact of the Merrimac Mill.



Photo 7: From the south side of the river, unique white cliffs can be observed across the river.

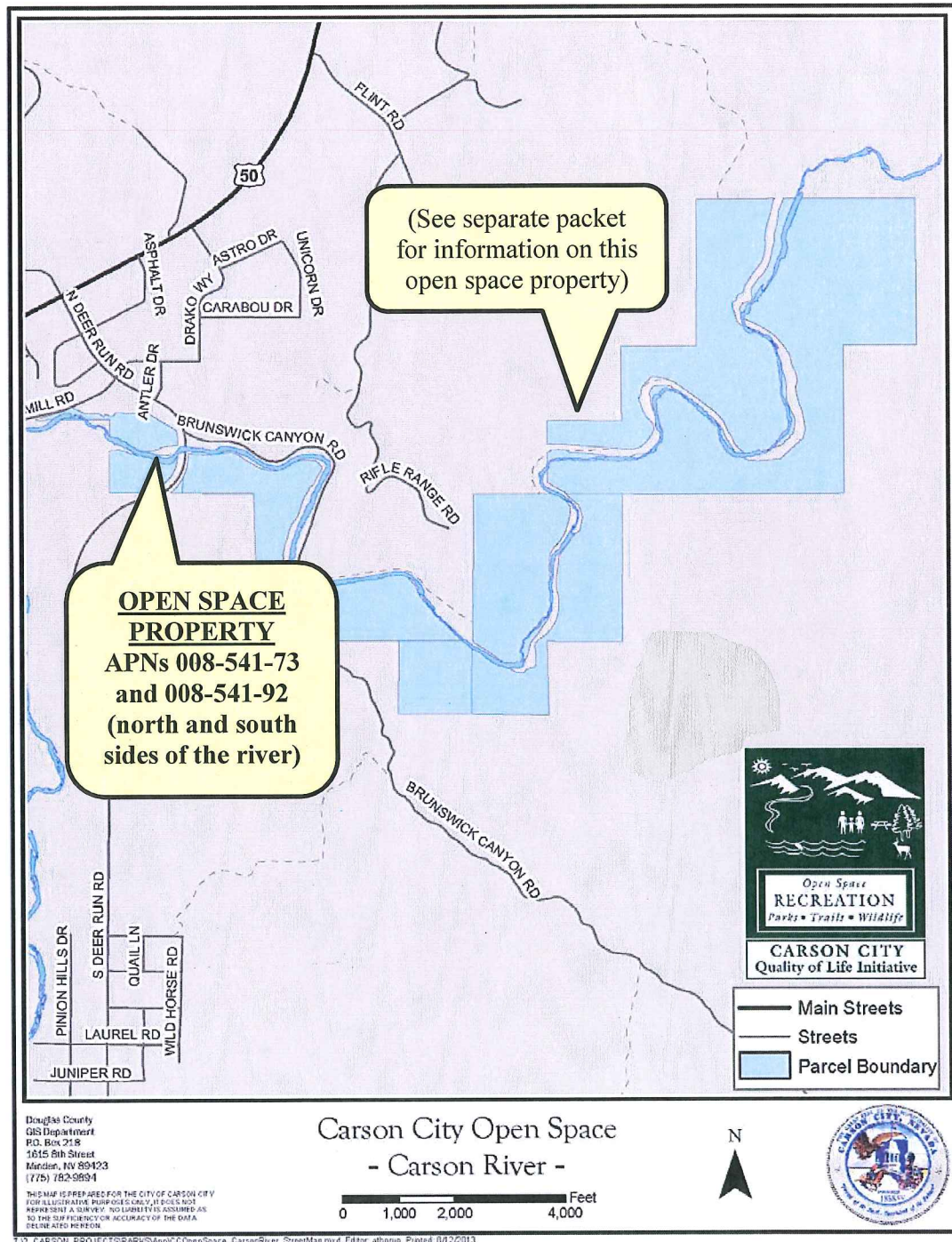




## Carson City Open Space

APNs 008-541-73 and 008-541-92, west of Deer Run Road bridge

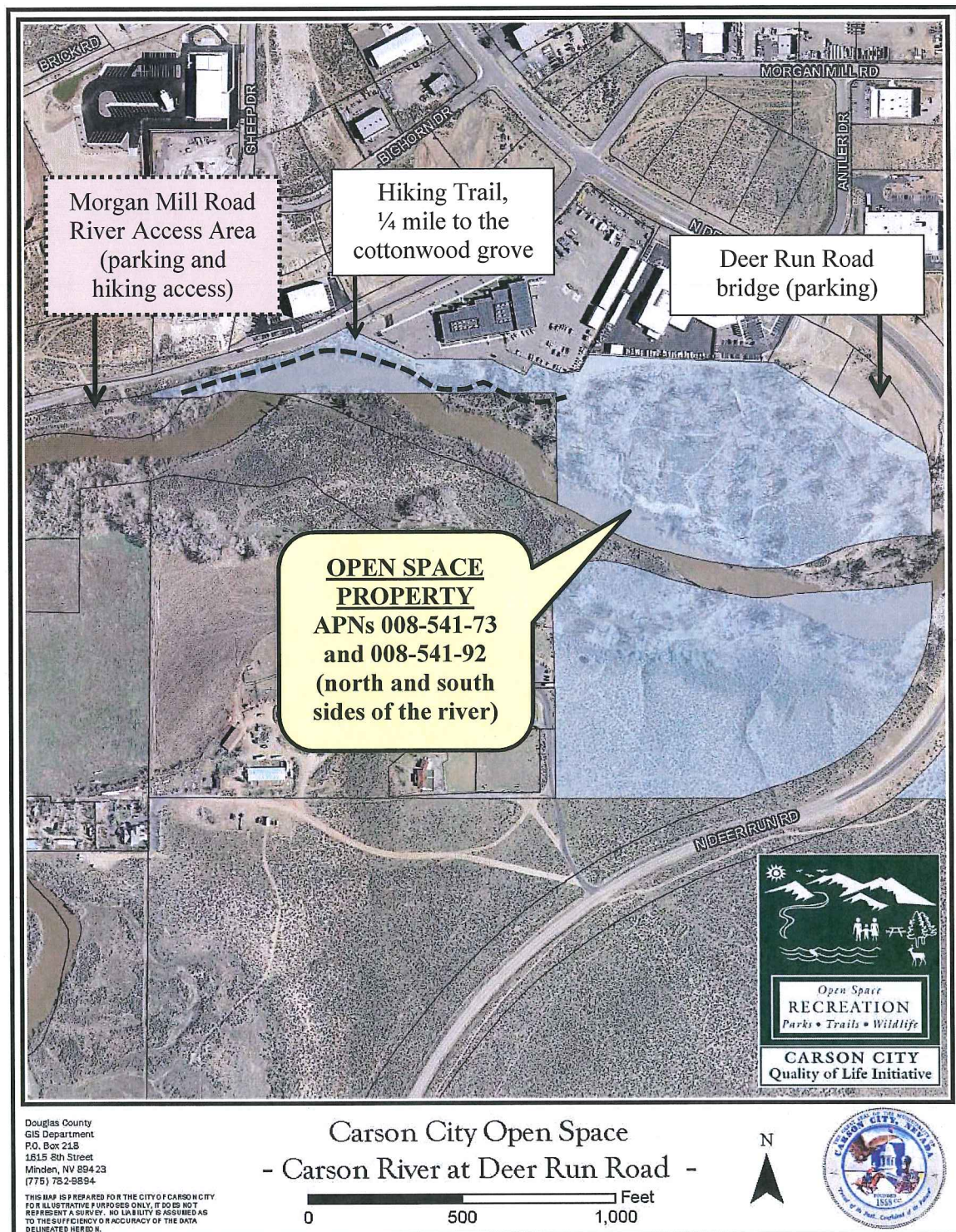
32 acres



Carson City Open Space

APNs 008-541-73 and 008-541-92, west of Deer Run Road bridge





*Carson City Open Space  
APNs 008-541-73 and 008-541-92, west of Deer Run Road bridge*



## **Location**

There are two parcels under consideration within this one nomination. The subject property(ies) is located on the east side of Carson City, along the Carson River. The property is bordered to the east by Deer Run Road; to the north by federal offices (Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Reclamation, and U.S. Geological Survey) and vacant industrial parcels; to the west by the Carson City Morgan Mill Road River Access Area; and to the south by public lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management.

## **Access**

From the Deer Run Road bridge, the subject property can be seen on the northwest and southwest corners. The large cottonwood grove on the northwest corner is the most accessible and popular area. To access this parcel, visitors can park at the Carson City Morgan Mill Road River Access Area and hike for ¼ mile towards the east on a new single-track trail leading through the willows to the cottonwood grove. Alternatively, visitors may park in the vacant parcels on Deer Run Road and hike down the service road. Numerous unmarked trails (old roads) traverse the parcel.

The parcel located on the southwest corner of the bridge currently does not offer road or trail access.

Neither parcel is open to public vehicular access.

## **Background**

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Funding Source: 1) Carson City Open Space, Quality of Life Sales and Use Tax Funds  
2) Nevada Division of State Lands, Question 1 Program

## **Physical Characteristics**

**Historic / Cultural:** Beginning just upriver, this section of the Carson River played a very prominent role during the mining days of the Comstock Era. After ore was mined in Virginia City, it was transferred to any of the great number of stamp mills located along the river. The Carson River provided a water source which was necessary in the ore extraction process. This property(ies) is within the vicinity of the historic Morgan Mill, but no artifacts seem to remain.

*The Morgan Mill, afterwards known as the Yellow Jacket, on the Carson River, at Empire City, was built as a custom-mill, with 20 stamps, by James Morgan in 1864. It was sold to the Yellow Jacket Mining Company in 1865, and enlarged to 40 stamps, 20 of which weighed 1050 pounds each. In 1871, it passed into the hands of the Nevada Mill Company who worked ores for this company until 1875, when it was purchased by the Pacific Mill Company. (Amalgamation at the Comstock Lode, Nevada. 1890)*

As a consequence of the ore extraction process and widespread occurrence of mercury, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) declared much of this area as a federally listed Superfund site in August 1990. Referred to as the Carson River Mercury Superfund Site, the primary concerns reside in contaminated soils and waterways at or near former mill sites. Along the Carson River, the site extends from the Empire Ranch Golf Course in Carson City and continues downstream for 50 miles to the Lahontan Valley. This particular site has not been tested by the Carson City Parks and Recreation Department for contaminants.

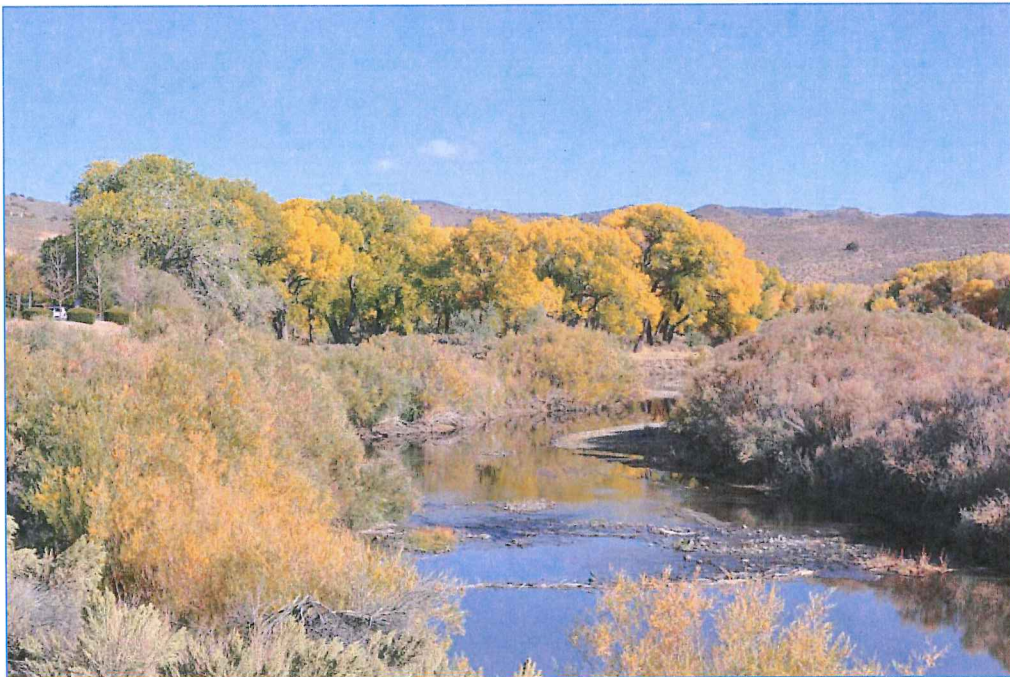
Landform / scenic quality: Located on the north and south sides of the Carson River, both parcels lie within the floodway and the floodplain. The northern parcel is fairly level. The southern parcel contains a slope and an upper bench above the floodplain. There is not much variation in the elevation profile, generally ranging from 4,600' to 4,640'.

Plant communities: Riparian species are the dominant vegetation type. Mature cottonwoods are common throughout the parcels whereas coyote willow is common along the river's edge and Wood's rose is found in a few pockets. Sagebrush is located in the upper, drier areas.

Water Resources: The Carson River flows between the two subject parcels.

Wildlife: The Carson River and diverse plant communities should provide habitat for many species of wildlife. The Carson River Master Plan, dated 1996, identifies fish, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, and birds throughout the river corridor, but not specific to this property.

Photo 1: Overview of the property, looking east from Morgan Mill Road. From the Morgan Mill Road River Access Area, visitors can hike for ¼ mile along a single-track trail to the cottonwoods.



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*Carson City Open Space  
APNs 008-541-73 and 008-541-92, west of Deer Run Road bridge*



Photo 2: An alternative access is from Deer Run Road. Visitors may park in the vacant industrial parcels and hike down the service road.



Photo 3: From the Deer Run Road bridge, one parcel can be seen towards the southwest. This parcel currently does not offer road or trail access.

