

## OPEN SPACE ADVISORY COMMITTEE STAFF REPORT

**MEETING DATE:** December 16, 2013

**AGENDA ITEM NUMBER:** 3B

**STAFF:** Ann Bollinger, Natural Resource Specialist *A13*

**REQUEST:** For Possible Action: To recommend to the Board of Supervisors a name for two open space acquisitions, formerly the Serpa and Bently properties, located east of the Deer Run Road bridge.

**GENERAL DISCUSSION:** On November 2, 2013, the Nevada Appeal published a short article notifying the public that Carson City was receiving proposals for the naming of two open space properties (Exhibit A). Staff also posted a notice on the Parks and Recreation Department Facebook page (viewed by 267 people, as of December 2, 2013). The deadline set by our department for receiving proposals was 5:00 P.M. on Wednesday, November 27. No names were submitted as a result of this outreach. Rather, two names were submitted by OSAC Member Evans and one name was submitted by staff. The submitted names are listed in alphabetical order (Exhibit B):

- Carson Canyon
- Carson Gorge
- Carson River Canyon Open Space

After the Committee takes action to name the property, our department will forward that recommendation to the Board of Supervisors for their consideration. Staff is anticipating an agenda item at the Board of Supervisors meeting in January 2014.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION:** I move to recommend to the Board of Supervisors that the name for two open space acquisitions, formerly the Serpa and Bently properties, located east of the Deer Run Road bridge should be called \_\_\_\_\_

## BRIEFLY

Nov 2, 2013

### Input sought to name two open spaces

The Carson City Open Space program seeks written proposals to help in the official naming of two open spaces located along the Carson River in the vicinity of Deer Run Road on the east side of Carson City.

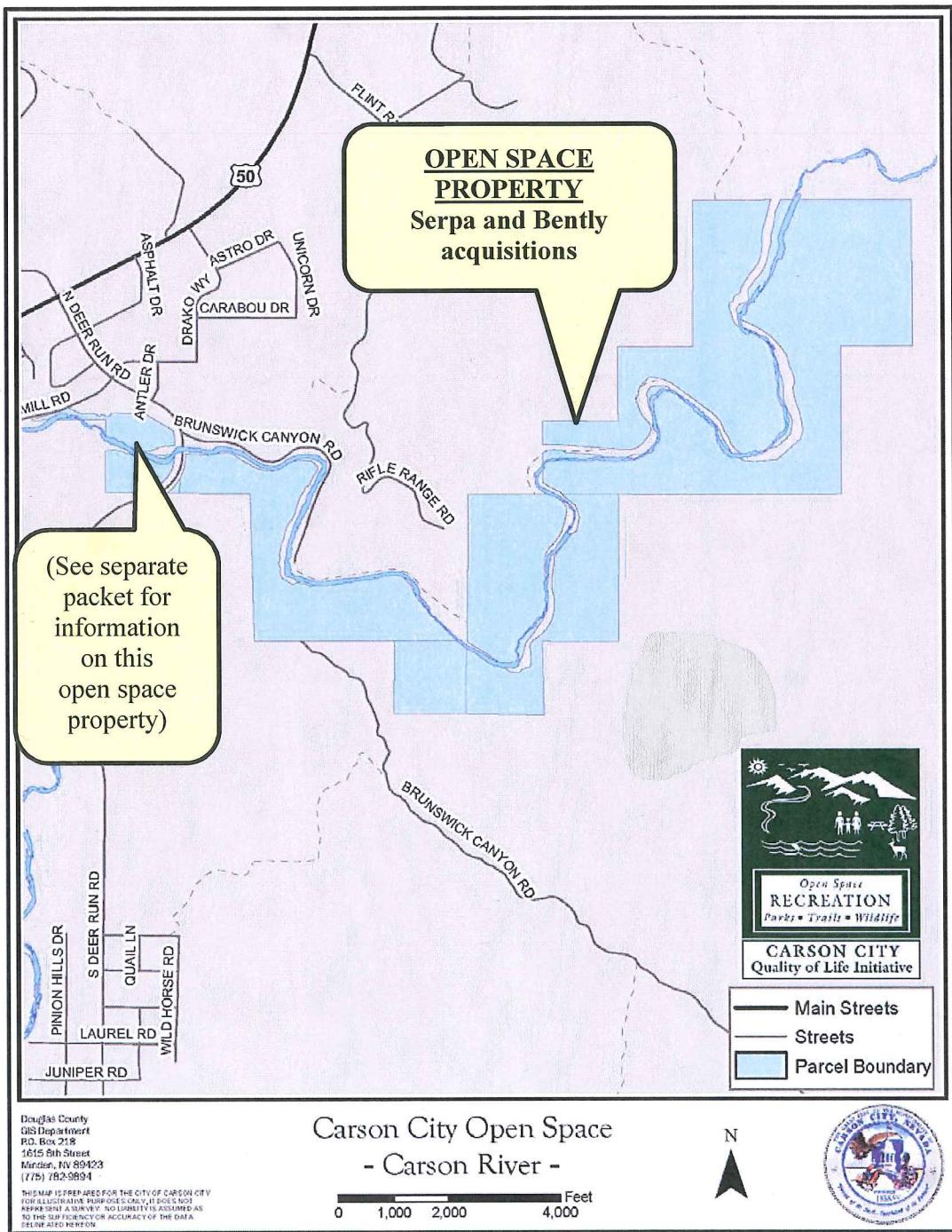
Applications, available online at <http://www.carson.org/parksandrec>, must be mailed or delivered to the Carson City Parks and Recreation Department, Open Space Division, 3303 Butti

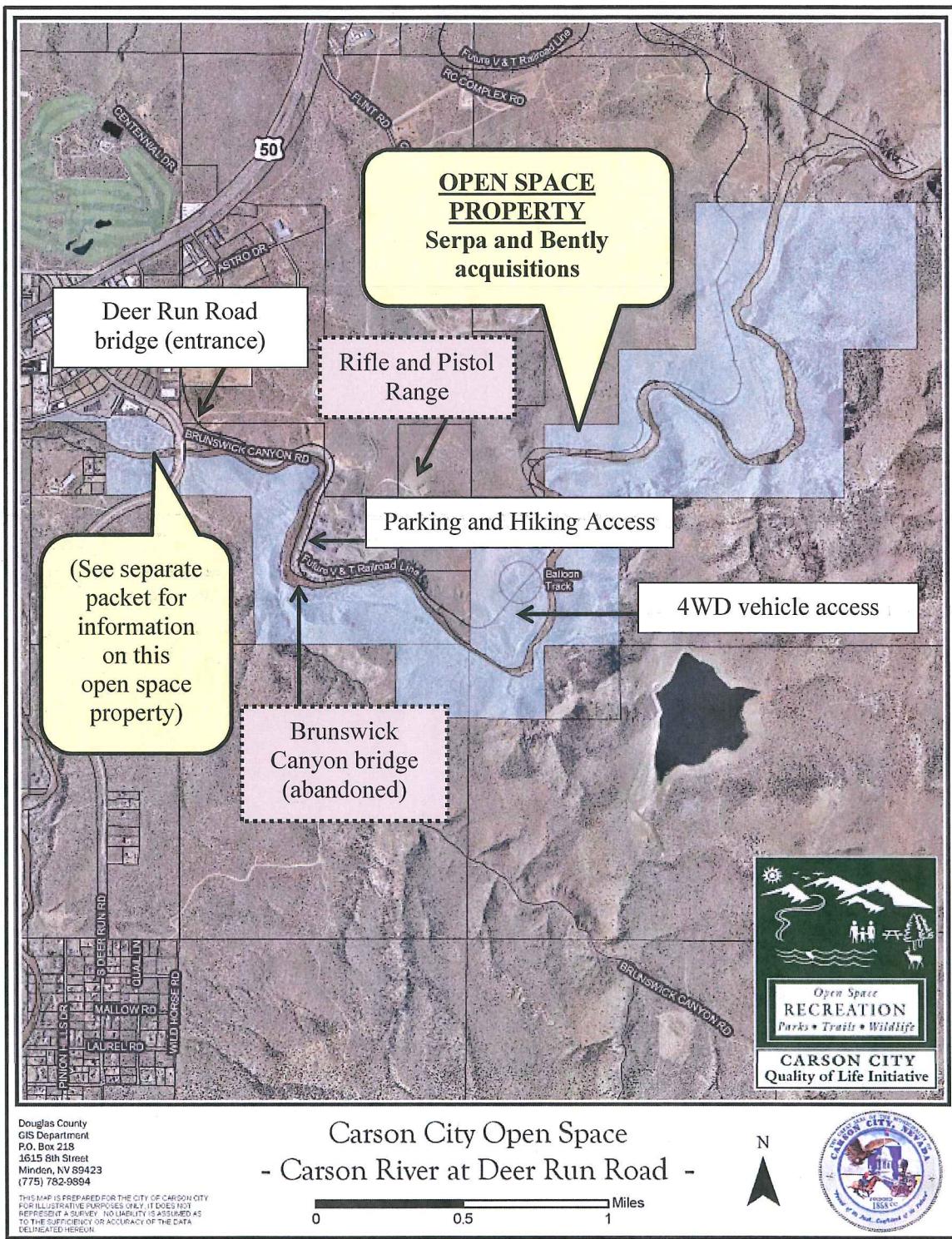
Way, Building 9, Carson City, Nevada 89701, by 5 p.m. on Nov. 27.

Proposals will be presented to the Carson City Open Space Advisory Committee at its meeting at 6 p.m. Dec. 16 in the Sierra Room at the Carson City Community Center. For more information, call 775-887-2262.

## Carson City Open Space

Serpa and Bently Property Acquisitions, east of Deer Run Road bridge  
871 acres (approximate total)





## *Carson City Open Space Serpa and Bently Acquisitions*

## 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.

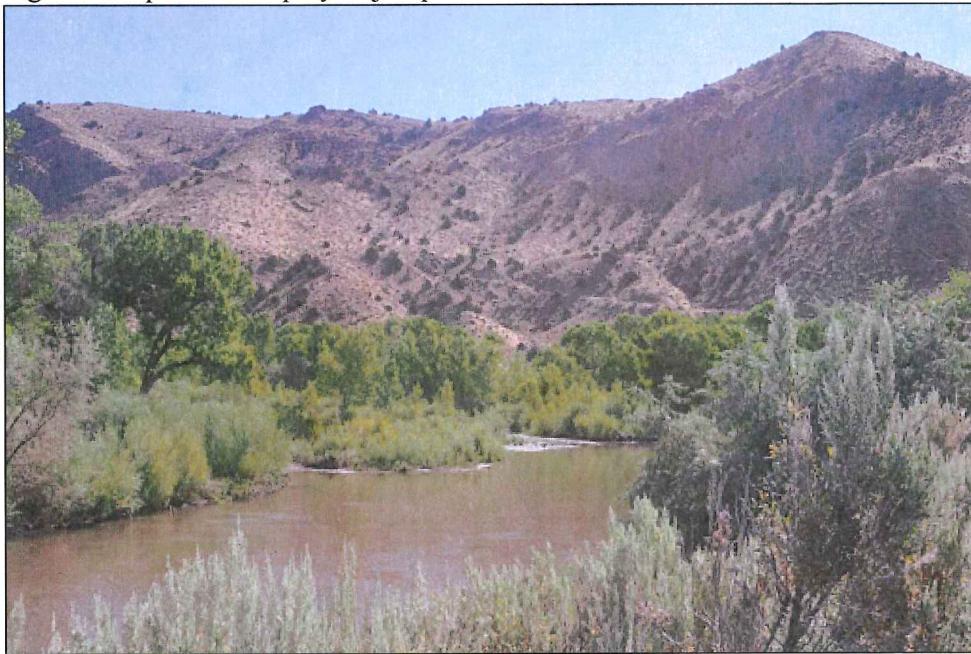


Photo 2: The only Class III whitewater rapids on the middle section of the Carson River flow through this section of the canyon.



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.

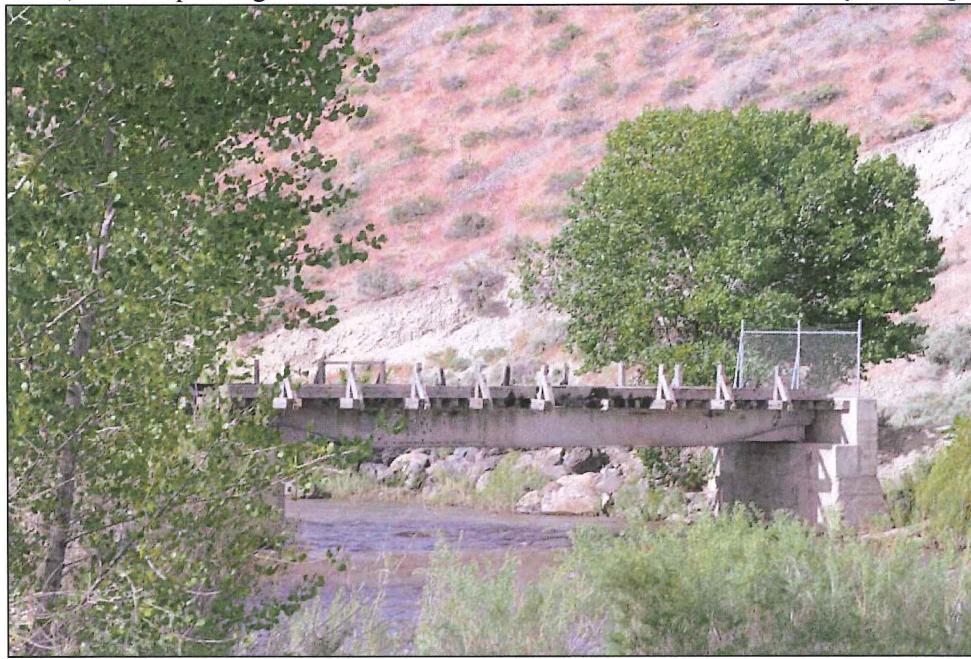


Photo 5: From the north side of the river and located approximately 1.3 miles from Deer Run Road, an Open Space signs designates the entrance to the open space property.

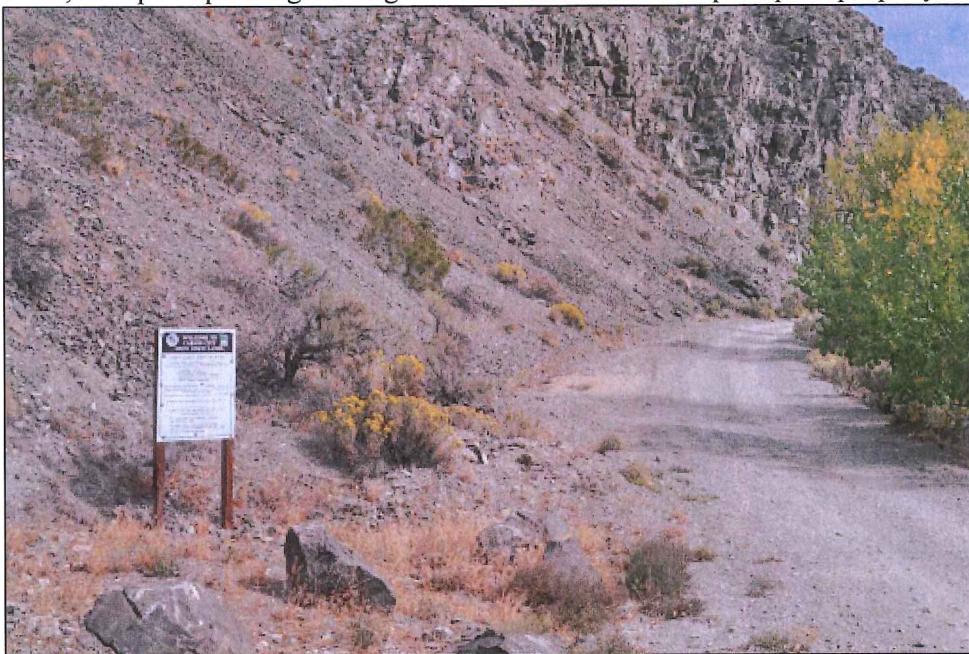


Photo 6: From the north side of the river and located approximately 1.8 miles from Deer Run Road, one wall is the remaining artifact of the Merrimac Mill.

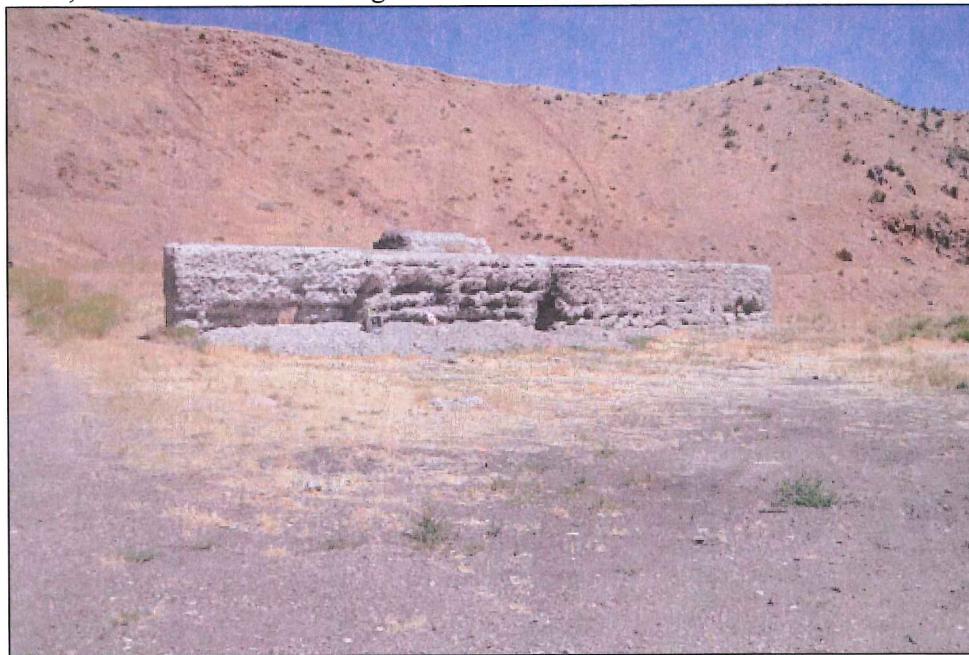
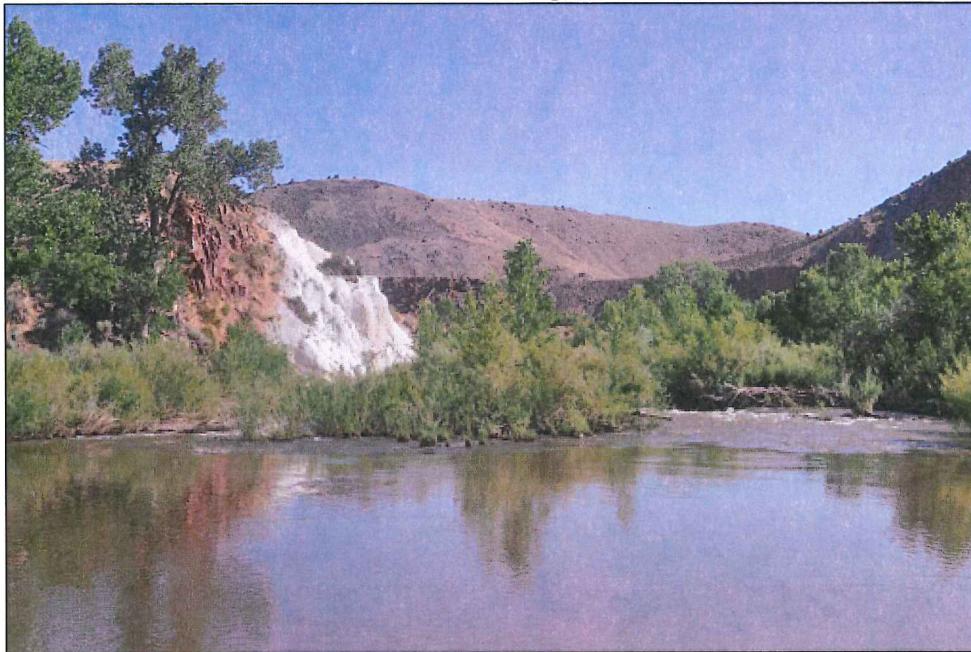


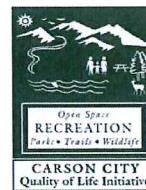
Photo 7: From the south side of the river, unique white cliffs can be observed across the river.



# Exhibit B



## Carson City Parks and Recreation Department Open Space Division



### Open Space Naming Application

Date: November 2, 2013

Submitted By: Margie Evans

Address: 2640 Woodcrest Lane

Telephone: 775-720-0162

Email: meg4bio@sbcglobal.net

Open Space Property / Location: Open Space Property 1

Name Classification (Landscape, Geographic or Topographic Feature, Indigenous Plants or Wildlife, Cultural or Historical Heritage, Individual or Family Name): Geographic, Landscape, Topographic Feature

Proposed Name: Carson Canyon

Supportive Information for Proposed Name: This property has been improperly referred to as Brunswick Canyon for many years. It seems appropriate to name it accurately and distinctly in a way that cannot misinterpret its location or uniqueness. I am also submitting a second naming possibility, addressing the location and unique attributes of our beautiful open space.



Carson City Parks and Recreation Department  
Open Space Division



Open Space Naming Application

Date: November 2, 2013

Submitted By: Margie Evans

Address: 2640 Woodcrest Lane

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Open Space Property / Location: Open Space Property 1

Name Classification (Landscape, Geographic or Topographic Feature, Indigenous Plants or Wildlife, Cultural or Historical Heritage, Individual or Family Name): Geographic, Landscape, Topographic Feature

Proposed Name: Carson Gorge

Supportive Information for Proposed Name: This property has been improperly referred to as Brunswick Canyon for many years. It seems appropriate to name it accurately and distinctly in a way that cannot misinterpret its location or uniqueness. My preference for the term "gorge" is due to the ruggedness implied by that name. Canyon doesn't illicit quite the same wildness that gorge does in my opinion. Thank you for considering my idiosyncrasies.



## Carson City Parks and Recreation Department Open Space Division

### Open Space Naming Application



**Date:** November 12, 2013

**Submitted By:** Ann Bollinger

**Address:** 3303 Butti Way, Bldg #9, Carson City, NV 89701

**Telephone:** (775) 283-7337

**Email:** abollinger@carson.org

**Open Space Property / Location:** Serpa and Bently property acquisitions, east of the Deer Run Road bridge

**Name Classification (Landscape, Geographic or Topographic Feature, Indigenous Plants or Wildlife, Cultural or Historical Heritage, Individual or Family Name):** landscape, geographic, and topographic features

**Proposed Name:** Carson River Canyon Open Space

**Supportive Information for Proposed Name:** The Carson River flows approximately five miles through the center of the property. The river and steep, rocky slopes across the landscape are classic features for the definition of a "canyon".