



STAFF REPORT

Agenda Item: 9B

Report To: Open Space Advisory Committee

Meeting Date: August 17, 2020

Staff Contact: Lyndsey Boyer, Open Space Manager, lboyer@carson.org

Agenda Title: Open Space Manager Report: Activities related to projects managed by the Open Space Division, including updates within the Carson River corridor.

Staff Summary: See below.

Agenda Action: Other/Presentation

Time Requested: 10 minutes

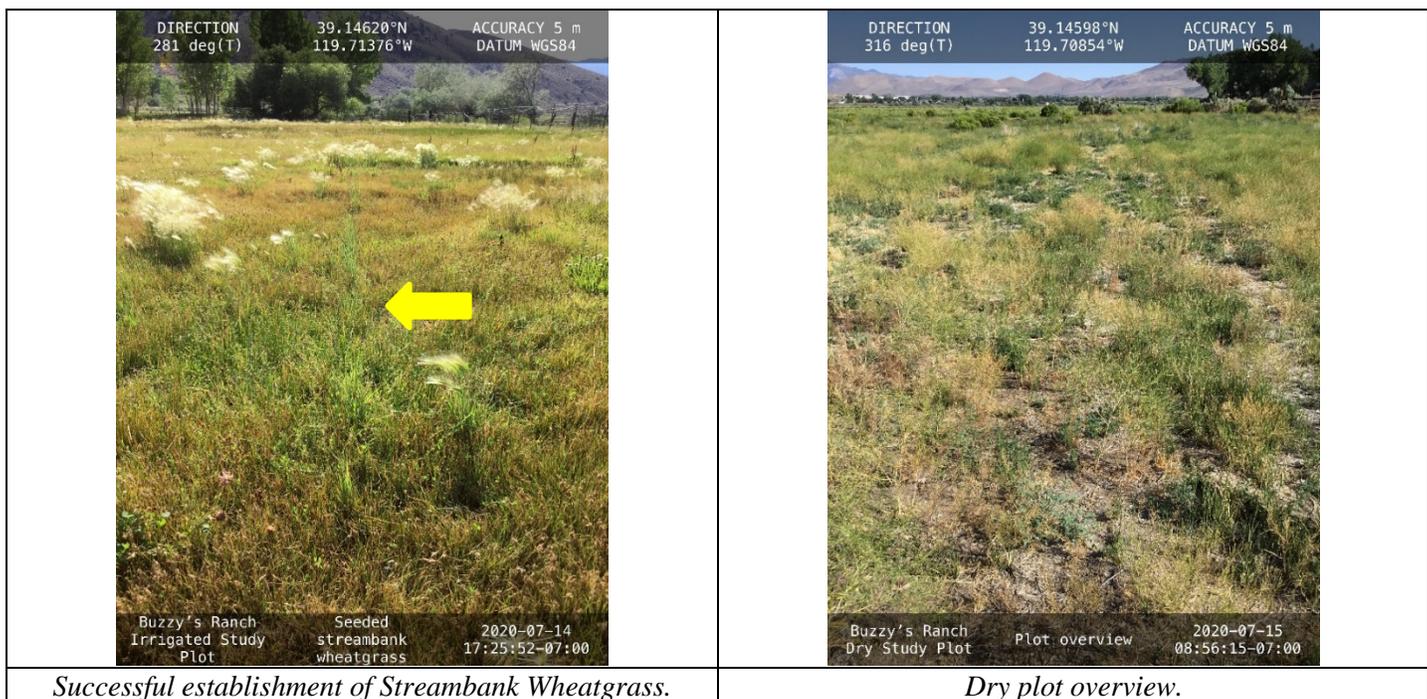
Ash Canyon Road

The gate on Ash Canyon Road was opened this year on May 15, allowing motorized vehicle traffic to travel to the State Parks gate approximately one mile from Hobart Reservoir. Prior to opening the gate, road maintenance and corridor clearing activities were completed. The gate will remain open throughout the season until winter precipitation is received. In past years the gate was typically closed in late October or November.

Buzzy's Ranch

Conservation Plan

Two test plots were established at Old Buzzy's Ranch, one along the eastern edge of the property, and one to the west. The two plots were established to evaluate seeding success across a varied irrigation regime, because the west plot receives much more water than the eastern plot. Seeding was completed in the fall 2019, and staff and consultants monitored the test plots in May and July and will continue to monitor in subsequent seasons to identify which species successfully established. 2020 results yielded that streambank wheatgrass was most successful at establishing (see photo below). Unfortunately, no species established in the dry plot, further exemplifying the need to maintain current or similar irrigation practices at Buzzy's Ranch. This also may have been due to a higher presence of invasive and nuisance weeds present in the dry plot. With these results, staff hope to better understand which species to use to effectively restore portions of the ranch to native conditions to combat potential future reductions in water rights to be applied to the property. In a related effort, staff are working with Carson City Public Works to include Buzzy's Ranch in the Carson City Effluent Reuse Plan as an additional source of irrigation water to apply to the property in the future, though the timeline for this is 10-15 years in the future as Carson City continues to grow and more effluent becomes available. Lastly, staff are beginning to look at grant opportunities that will help fund the acquisition of some water rights at Buzzy's Ranch to supplement the temporary water rights currently applied, as well as to augment the use of effluent in the future. Current funding sources that water rights acquisition may be eligible for are SNPLMA, under the Parks, Trails and Natural Areas (PTNA) category.



Bird Surveys

In anticipation of trail construction beginning this summer on the Carson River Trails Phase II project, staff worked to complete the second year of avian surveys along the proposed trail segment at Buzzy's Ranch along the Carson River. Survey results showed that while there were no threatened or endangered species present in the project location, many birds were shown to be actively nesting including red tailed hawks and wood ducks. As a result, construction will not begin on this segment of trail until after nesting season has concluded (August 15). This date was selected based on Nevada Department of Wildlife guidance for construction projects in similar habitats.

Carson City Weed Coalition

Open Space Maintenance Coordinator, Jared Whitaker has been conducting all noxious weed abatement activities on Open Space owned property. Target treatment areas this year include the river corridor: Morgan Mill, Ambrose Carson River Natural Area and East Silver Saddle, as well as Moffat, Lompa and Fulstone Wetlands. Target species include perennial pepperweed, hoary cress and Canada thistle.

Carson River Canyon Open Space – Rifle Range Fire

Aerial reseeding of the burned area with a native seed blend using a helicopter was completed in early November 2019. Staff completed additional monitoring in May to evaluate success and determine if additional treatments are required. Results from this monitoring showed that while some seeded species had successfully established, including perennial grasses, forbs and shrubs such as rabbitbrush, there was relatively low cover of seedlings present. This is likely a result of invasive annuals that colonized after the fire. Some accessible areas of the Canyon were treated with Plateau herbicide to combat these invasive annuals, but due to topography some areas were not able to be treated. As a result, these areas show a higher cover in invasive annuals. Staff will continue to monitor this fall to determine if spot treatments of Plateau would benefit the site. The grant close-out for the Dream Tags grant used to complete this project is in December 2020.

Carson River Clean-up

Open Space staff held the 3rd annual Carson River Clean-up in July this year, walking the Carson River from East Silver Saddle Ranch to Ambrose Carson River Natural Area, picking up trash and mapping noxious

weeds along the way. This year staff found that while the overall volume of trash has reduced through our efforts in the past few years, there was still plenty of trash to clean-up, including 6-8 tires that were removed from the river. Staff also mapped infestations of Eurasian watermilfoil throughout the river, and one patch of yellow starthistle. Staff plan to continue this tradition every year as it's a great way to monitor the health of the river while stewarding it. Staff also had plenty of wildlife sightings, including several ospreys, black capped night herons, and snowy egrets. A video was compiled of our efforts and can be viewed on the Good Day Carson morning show website here: <https://www.carsoncitynv.tv/shows/good-day-carson/7-28-20/?channel=5641>



Jared Whitaker, Open Space Maintenance Coordinator and Chris Ford, Recreation Intern pick-up trash and other debris in the Carson River.

Foothill Trail

Following on the success of the Chamber Leadership group from 2019, the 2020 Leadership Group chose to complete their class project at the Foothill Garden. They wanted to continue with the Bee City theme, and further enhance the habitat at this location. Project elements included planting 25 pollinator friendly trees, improving the Serenity Stroll to allow for ADA accessibility, as well as the installation of pollinator themed art to enhance the trail and surrounding area. Between these improvements and the Bee Hotel and Pollinator Garden that were installed in 2019, this site has become a fantastic area to promote pollinator conservation in Carson City.



Art placed at the Foothill Trailhead, along the Serenity Stroll to celebrate pollinators and to provide inspiration to patients and their families.

Kings Canyon Road and Trailhead

Kings Canyon Road

In 2019, Carson City was awarded \$142,000 to fund the repair of the first two miles of Kings Canyon Road. Additionally, Carson City was subgranted \$17,990 from the original 2017 grant between the Nevada OHV Program and the U.S. Forest Service, which funded the repair design for the road, to support cultural review on the project. Currently, the field review has been completed to evaluate cultural resources in the project area, and the draft report has been reviewed and approved by the USFS and sent to SHPO for review and comment. Once comments are received the report will be finalized and the Section 106 process will be complete, and the project will be ready for construction. Due to COVID-19 the Recreational Trails Program grant has been delayed in processing the awarded applications and funding agreements, so the City has not received the notice to proceed. As a result, construction will likely not begin until the spring or summer of 2021.

Kings Canyon / Waterfall Trailhead

See Trails Coordinator Report for update.

Land Acquisitions

Clear Creek

No updates from previous report.

October 21, 2019: Staff is working with Nevada Land Trust to help facilitate the acquisition of 100+ acres owned by the State of Nevada. An appraisal is underway. After a value has been determined, staff will resume discussions with the State regarding funding options.

Hamm property acquisition

No updates from previous report.

May 18, 2020: The Board of Supervisors passed a motion to officially name the property as the "Eagle View Open Space." Staff also worked to record the public access route to the property in order to close the Land and Water Conservation Fund grant out and receive reimbursement. The grant deadline has been extended to December 2020.

Joost Land and Cattle Co.

No updates from previous report.

December 16, 2019: The subject property includes two parcels consisting of approximately 100 acres located on the west side of Carson City along Ash Canyon Road and just south of the Ash Canyon water tanks. The property has been in the Joost Family for nearly 100 years. Ms. Karen Joost was the most recent owner/occupant. Unfortunately, Ms. Joost recently and suddenly passed away. Her family would like to carry forth her wishes for a conservation easement or some other land protection (development restriction) on the property. Staff from the Open Space Division and Public Works Department have met with the family and family attorney to initiate discussions on the options. The southern part of the property is on the Open Space Plan and Opportunities Map. The northern part of the property is the homestead. While it was not on the Open Space Plan and Opportunities Map, it is currently part of the discussion for a holistic plan.

Old Woods Ranch

In November 2019, a grant nomination was submitted to the national committee of the Forest Legacy Program. The nomination requested funding to purchase a conservation easement on 130 acres of ranch land and conifer forest. Unfortunately, the grant was not awarded, however it is not uncommon

for applicants to be denied the first round, given feedback and comments to incorporate into a future application and the project is then awarded. After speaking with the family, they had some financial matters to get in order and did not want to proceed with applying to the 2020 grant nomination round. In the meantime, Nevada Land Trust will continue to be in communication with the family regarding the potential for a Conservation Easement on this property.

Schulz Investments

No updates from previous report.

December 16, 2019: The Schulz Investments properties include two parcels consisting of approximately 355 acres located along the north side of Highway 50 west. While identified on the Open Space Plan and Opportunities Map for protection, staff have not been actively working with the family on an acquisition plan. Rather, the preferred option would be acquisition by the U.S. Forest Service since they are the adjacent land owner/administrator. The family is researching options for limited development on the properties. Staff has provided comments on the proposals, including the desire to keep the hillside undeveloped and protect the scenic views between Carson City and Lake Tahoe.

Personnel

-AmeriCorps VISTA members:

- Community Education Coordinator: Ms. Kristynn Bryant has been working with the Department since May 2020 and has been working to organize virtual education opportunities and outreach techniques to engage with the public during COVID-19. Her current project is a ‘Smile, Selfie, Share Instagram and Facebook Challenge’ to engage with the public in Parks and Open Space virtually.
- Marketing & Outreach Coordinator: position is currently vacant, and the funding has been relocated to support other AmeriCorps VISTA positions.
- Volunteer Coordinator: Ms. Mackenzie Gargano has been working with the Department since December 2019 and has also been working to organize virtual volunteer opportunities and COVID-19 safe projects. Her current endeavor includes creating a program for volunteers to assist with maintaining Mutt Mitt stations in Parks.

-Invasive Plants Coordinator: position vacant due to City-wide hiring freeze and budget evaluations.

-Senior Natural Resource Specialist: position vacant due to City-wide hiring freeze and budget evaluations.

-Silver Saddle Ranch Caretaker: the previous Caretaker, Ray Ralston resigned from his position in June. The position has been approved for recruitment by the Internal Finance Committee and is currently posted, and we are accepting applications.

-Open Space Maintenance Seasonal Worker: filled by William “Bill” Beck, a returning seasonal maintenance worker. Bill started with the Department on May 18 and will work with us through October.

Prison Hill, OHV Area Baseline Monitoring Report

In conjunction with the Prison Hill Master Plan, and the plans that have been developed for the motorized portion of Prison Hill, staff are also working to compile a Baseline Monitoring Report that will allow for repeat photo monitoring activities to monitor changes to the land as it relates to project implementation and potential impacts from increased recreation on-site. The baseline survey and monitoring photos have been taken, and staff are currently working to compile the information into a comprehensive report. Staff plan to take additional monitoring photos in August as it has been approximately six months since the original photos were taken. Staff will then be able to evaluate any changes to the landscape over time and identify any areas that are being heavily impacted and complete or plan for any mitigations.

Steinheimer Wetlands

As a request from Member Evans, staff have been conducting research on the history and current status of

the acquisition of parcel 008-931-01, located just south of the City owned parcel known as Lompa Wetlands. Originally, the Steinheimer family purchased 520 acres in northeast Carson City and established a ranching operation. After 1930, parts of the Steinheimer Ranch were divided and acquired by several entities, including Carson City, NDOT and the School District for a variety of projects, as well as private landowners for development. After speaking with Juan Guzman, he informed me that original discussions for this acquisition were held between Juan and the private property owners, which were local developers. Originally the owners approached the City about donating this parcel to the City or completing a land exchange as they were interested in developing surrounding land. Also, as a component of this project, at the time staff were looking at developing a wetland banking program. Unfortunately, the developers later changed their mind and retained the property rather than donating it to the City. It currently remains in private ownership and there are no plans or discussions for acquisition unless the private property owner approaches the City for sale or donation.

Stewardship Plan/State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO).

Staff received a response from SHPO in early 2020 related to the Silver Saddle Ranch Preservation Plan. They provided a few comments and items to follow-up on and edit. Staff are working with consultants to finalize the requested edits to the Preservation Plan, and once complete the finalized plan will be sent back to SHPO for final approval. After approved by SHPO, staff will work with them to initiate the stewardship monitoring plan for the architectural features, and will also be able to begin working through priority maintenance tasks on the buildings at Silver Saddle Ranch, such as painting and roof repair.

Events (Carson River area and elsewhere)

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Carson City sanctioned events, and events on Carson City property have been cancelled through the end of August.

Date	Event	Location	Primary Staff and/or Other Notes
Friday, July 3	Full Moon Hike	Wildhorse Trail	Park Rangers
Sun, July 5	Meditation Walk	Foothill Trail	Parks Rangers/AmeriCorps
Sat, July 18	Scorpion Adventure	Wildhorse Trail	Park Rangers
Sat, July 25	Tot Trek	Ambrose Carson River Natural Area	Park Rangers
Sat, August 1	Ascent Trail Series	C-Hill/Ash Canyon	Park Rangers
Sat, August 1	Sacramento PITS Trails	Prison Hill OHV Area	Gregg
Sun, August 2	Meditation Walk	Ambrose	Park Rangers
Sun, August 3	Full Moon Hike	Prison Hill OHV Area	Park Rangers
Sun, August 16	Jazz and Beyond	SSR	Jared and Lyndsey
Tue, September 1	Full Moon Hike	Dead Truck Canyon	Park Rangers
Sat, September 5	Tree Hike	Kings Canyon/Upper Waterfall Trail	Park Rangers
Sun, September 20	Jazz and Beyond – rescheduled	SSR	Jared and Lyndsey
Sun, September 27	Pieron/Donaldson Wedding	SSR	Jared and Lyndsey