



STAFF REPORT

Agenda Item: 11B

Report To: Open Space Advisory Committee

Meeting Date: February 22, 2021

Staff Contact: Lyndsey Boyer, Open Space Manager

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

Buzzy's Ranch

Conservation Plan

Staff have been working with consultants since 2019 to develop a Conservation Plan for Buzzy's Ranch. This plan will provide a framework for sustainable management of the ranch in terms of grazing and stocking rates. This plan also includes two test plots that have been established on the property in order to determine the most successful strategy for potential restoration of parts of Buzzy's Ranch in the event of a reduction in irrigation water available to be applied to the property. Currently, Carson City does not own any dedicated water rights for this property and the land is being irrigated through a variety of means, including water rights from the grazing operator and temporary water rights leased from Vidler Water Company. These test plots have been established across varying moisture regimes – both wet and dry – and seeded with a variety of native and introduced grass species. Establishment rates within these plots will help inform the plant palette that should be used on the ranch for restoration purposes. The plan also identifies which areas of the ranch are most productive in terms of grazing, and which ones could be returned to a non-irrigated state. In addition to the Conservation Plan, staff will also be working with the District Attorney's office to develop a Pasture Agreement that identifies roles and responsibilities between the City and the grazing operator.

Additionally, to begin addressing the lack of dedicated, City-owned water rights at Buzzy's Ranch, staff submitted a grant nomination to the SNPLMA Round 18 grant, under the Parks, Trails and Natural Areas (PTNA) category in September 2020. The grant nomination was entitled 'Buzzy's Ranch Water Rights Acquisition and Wetland Enhancement Project.' If successfully funded, the grant would pay for the purchase of 694 acre-feet annually of permanent water rights from Vidler Water Company to apply to approximately 154-acres in the middle parcels of the Buzzy's Ranch property where the Ducks Unlimited Wetland Enhancement Project and NDOT Mitigation Wetlands are located. This portion of the ranch supports waterfowl and migratory birds in the spring when the fields are flood irrigated. Sites like this are incredibly important throughout the Great Basin and stopover locations for bird populations during spring migration. The proposal also included funding for improvements like replacing culverts and cleaning out irrigation ditches to increase overall

irrigation efficiency to these areas. Lastly, the proposal also included funding for revegetation and noxious weed abatement to enhance the wetland and wet meadow habitat in these locations. Staff will be notified in September 2021 if the project was successfully funded.

Kings Canyon Road and Trailhead

Kings Canyon Dirt Road

In 2019, Carson City was awarded \$142,000 from the Recreational Trails Program (RTP) to fund the repair of the first two miles of the dirt portion of Kings Canyon Road, from the Waterfall Trailhead up the saddle of Kings Canyon Road near Horsecreek Ranch. 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. The Section-106 review has since been completed, the final report has been submitted and accepted by the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and the project is now shovel ready. We have also received the executed funding agreement from the RTP grant. The project will go out to bid for construction in the spring of 2021 and the project will begin in the summer of 2021.

Kings Canyon / Waterfall Trailhead

See Agenda Item 6 and Trails Coordinator Report for an update on this project.

Land Acquisitions

Clear Creek

Staff are working with Nevada Land Trust to help facilitate the acquisition of 100+ acres owned by the State of Nevada in the Clear Creek area, near Golf Club Drive and the terminus of the Clear Creek Trail. A site visit with staff from Carson City, Nevada Land Trust and Nevada Division of State Lands was completed in early December 2020. The appraisal is currently being compiled. After a value has been determined, staff will resume discussions with the State regarding funding options for potential acquisition of this property. Acquisition of this property would have significant recreation benefits, including establishment of a larger trailhead to accommodate visitation and trail use, as well as allow for further trail connectivity to Kings Canyon Road and the Ash-to-Kings Trail.

Hamm property acquisition

The grant deadline for the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) that was used to purchase the Hamm Property, AKA Eagle View Open Space was extended further to December 2021 in order to finalize the Marlette Water Line easement with Nevada Division of State Lands (NDSL). Staff are currently working with the Real Property Manager at Public Works to come to an agreement on the terms of this easement with NDSL and are meeting in mid-February for further discussion. In the meantime, the City requested and received a partial reimbursement for funds spent on the acquisition of this property. The remaining reimbursement request will be completed once the Marlette Water Line easement is finalized.

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

No updates from previous report.

August 17, 2020: 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 located adjacent to the Horsecreek Ranch conservation easement that is currently held by Carson City. 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: currently all AmeriCorps VISTA positions are vacant. The Department does not have any plans to have AmeriCorps VISTA members in FY22.
- AmeriCorps Intern: Open Space staff plan to hire another summer intern to assist with natural resource management and maintenance tasks. As in 2020, the intern will focus a significant amount of time at the Prison Hill OHV Area, as we continue to implement our management plan and site improvements for that property.
- Silver Saddle Ranch Caretaker: Ms. Megan Thompson was hired in early December 2020. Staff are currently waiting for her background check process to be completed and she will start her position in February. She will be responsible for opening and closing the gate at Silver Saddle Ranch, as well as general facility maintenance throughout the ranch and nearby Prison Hill, 5th Street Trailhead.
- Invasive Plants Coordinator: To avoid issues with turnover from this part-time position, staff decided to combine these duties with the Senior Natural Resource Specialist position and dissolve the Invasive Plants Coordinator position. The \$15,000 of annual weed abatement funding received from the Carson Water Subconservancy District (CWSD) will be used to hire contractors to complete noxious weed abatement, including herbicide purchase and contractor work rather than to support the part-time coordinator position.
- Senior Natural Resource Specialist: The position was reviewed by Carson City Human Resources Department in December, and it was determined that the position title could not be changed, so it will

remain Senior Natural Resource Specialist. The position was posted in December and closed in mid-January. Staff are currently reviewing applicants and will begin the recruitment process in February 2021.

Prison Hill, OHV Area Baseline Monitoring Report

No updates from previous report.

August 17, 2020: 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.

Preservation Plan and Nevada Site Stewardship Program/State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO).

The Preservation Plan for architectural features at Silver Saddle Ranch has been reviewed and approved by the State Historic Preservation Office in late 2020. Using the approved plan, staff will begin implementing recommendations related to priority maintenance tasks on the buildings at Silver Saddle Ranch, such as painting, roof repair and mitigating rust on the metal barns. The plan also outlined a list of routine maintenance tasks that staff will now be able to implement at Silver Saddle Ranch without requiring approval or oversight from the SHPO. Utilizing the Preservation Plan staff will also complete annual monitoring of the architectural features at Silver Saddle Ranch, including repeat photo monitoring and site condition forms to monitor change through time and potential degradation of the structures.

In addition, the Memorandum of Agreement (MOU) between Carson City and SHPO related to the Nevada Site Stewardship Program (NSSP) has been finalized and is ready to be executed. Carson City will participate in the NSSP to fulfill the annual archaeological monitoring obligation outlined in the Programmatic Agreement. Stewardship volunteers will be trained to monitor the archaeological features at Silver Saddle Ranch and in Carson River Canyon to monitor for changes, theft, or vandalism. These monitoring activities will be completed several times a year.

Events (Carson River area and elsewhere)

Our Department is excited to be able to continue offering socially distanced recreation events during COVID-19. We believe offering safe recreational opportunities to the public is an incredibly important service right now. Please see below for events put on by our Department throughout Open Space and Parks. For more information on joining an event, please visit our Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/CCPRDept/>

Date	Event	Location	Primary Staff and/or Other Notes
Sat, January 2	New Year’s Resolution Hike	Carson River Park/Mexican Ditch	Park Rangers
Sat, January 9	Ascent Winter Trail Series	Centennial Foothills	FYI only
Sat, January 9	Snowshoe Hike	Hope Valley	Dan Earp
Sat, January 9	Winter Wonderland Hike	N. Kings Canyon Loop	Park Rangers
Thurs, January 14	Snowshoe Hike	Spooner Lake State Park	Dan Earp

Sat, January 30	Snowshoe Hike	Skunk Harbor Trail	Dan Earp
Fri, February 5	Snowshoe Hike	Grass Lake Loop (Luther Pass)	Dan Earp
Sat, February 6	Winter Tot Trot	Prison Hill – Clearview	Park Rangers
Sun, February 14	Trails and Tails Adoption Event	Riverview Park	Park Rangers
Wed, February 17	Snowshoe Hike	Ash Canyon	Dan Earp
Sat, February 20	Leave No Trace Hike	Carson River Park	Park Rangers
Sat, February 27	Snowshoe Hike	Marlette Lake Trail	Dan Earp
Sat, February 27	February Full Moon Hike	Prison Hill, 5 th Street Trailhead	Park Rangers
Tue, March 9	Snowshoe Hike	Spooner Summit/Tahoe Rim Trail	Dan Earp
Sat, March 20	Snowshoe Hike	Skunk Harbor Trail	Dan Earp
Sun, March 28	March Full Moon Hike	TBD	Park Rangers