



STAFF REPORT

Agenda Item: 9B

Report To: Open Space Advisory Committee

Meeting Date: April 19, 2021

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

Agenda Title: For Discussion Only: Open Space Manager Report: Activities related to projects managed by the Open Space Division, including updates within the Carson River corridor. (*Lyndsey Boyer*)

Staff Summary: See below.

Agenda Action: Other/Presentation

Time Requested: 15 minutes

Ash Canyon Road

The goal for re-opening the gate on Ash Canyon Road every year is May 1, to coincide with the start of fishing season at Hobart Reservoir. However, the timing for opening the gate to motorized travel is based on current snowpack levels in upper Ash Canyon – both for safety purposes and to protect the road from damage by motorized travel over saturated soil. Currently, staff are evaluating the accessible portion of the road and identifying a plan for road repairs and drainage control measures, as necessary. As the snow melts, staff will continue to evaluate the upper portion of the road for damage and identify any additional repairs that need to be completed prior to opening the gate. Anticipated date for the gate opening, based on the reduced snowpack and previous years, is June 1. The road remains open to non-motorized users year-round. Updates on the gate and Ash Canyon Road will be provided on our website: <https://www.carson.org/government/departments-g-z/parks-recreation-open-space/parks-trails-and-open-space/natural-parks-and-open-space/ash-canyon>

Carson River Updates

The Carson Water Subconservancy District (CWSD), in coordination with the Carson River Coalition, hosts the Carson River Watershed YouTube channel. This is a one-stop location for videos and information related to stewardship, recreation and most importantly floodplain protection in the Carson River Watershed. https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC7gdKmh76lPiV_sgf1G-0nQ. For the past several years, CWSD has been working with the Nevada Department of Environmental Protection (NDEP) to release the 'I am Carson River Watershed' campaign. This is large-scale effort aims to increase watershed awareness and stewardship within our community to enhance water quality throughout our watershed. The 'A Walk through the Carson River Watershed' video was released last year: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2cmZH8LzwWM>, and the 2nd video in that series will be released this spring. Keep an eye out on the Carson River Watershed YouTube or social media channels for the 'One Thing That Connects Us All' PSA focusing on protecting water quality in the Carson River Watershed. You might see a variety of familiar faces! Also in coordination with CWSD and the Recreational Trails Program (RTP), staff will be working on improvements to the Carson River Aquatic Trail over the next year. See Trails Coordinator Report for an update on this project.

Additionally, staff are working with the non-profit River Wranglers to organize a volunteer workday with Harley Davidson staff in mid-May to complete a variety of river stewardship projects, including cottonwood wrapping at East Silver Saddle Ranch to protect juvenile cottonwoods from beaver damage. Other river stewardship projects planned for 2021 include annual noxious weed abatement, willow planting and bank stabilization and the 4th Annual Carson River Trash Walk. For this event, Open Space staff walk the river from East Silver Saddle Ranch to Ambrose Carson River Natural Area in late summer – collecting trash and mapping noxious weeds along the way.

Cultural Review (Section-106 Projects)

Through the 2009 Omnibus Public Land Management Act, over 5,000 acres of Bureau of Land Management (BLM) land and nearly 500 acres of private land were transferred to Carson City. In 2012, a programmatic agreement (PA) between the BLM, Carson City, and the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) was established to identify procedures to be followed by the City to satisfy BLM responsibilities under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA). Activities on those lands, including maintenance, require SHPO review under the 2012 PA. As a result, staff have been working extensively over the last year to complete cultural review throughout Open Space to remain compliant with the PA and the NHPA and to allow for both projects and maintenance activities to take place.

Current projects include:

- Class I Inventory of all OPLMA conveyed lands
- Silver Saddle Ranch Automatic Gate Project
- Silver Saddle Ranch fencing
- Prison Hill – West
- Prison Hill – Koontz interim fencing
- Prison Hill OHV Area, Snyder memo

Fuel Reduction with Sheep

It will be another exciting year for the sheep program! 2021 will be the 15th year the sheep program will operate in Carson City. Our Department, in coordination with the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), Nevada Division of State Lands and the Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California will be implementing the same grazing plan as last year - after working with consultants to update the grazing plan for the project in 2020. The project will reduce fuels at the wildland urban interface using two separate bands of sheep, one comprised of ewes only to graze the lands north of Carson – specifically Lakeview, Vicee Canyon and behind WNC, and a second band comprised of lambs and ewes that focus in the usual project area – Greenhouse Garden Center, C-Hill and Kings Canyon. Coordinating two bands of sheep will allow for more effective grazing across the entirety of the project area by targeting cheatgrass during its prime palatability, resulting in more effective fuel reduction. Additionally, this will be the second year the project will graze on Washoe Tribal land, which is an important piece of property to reduce fuels as there have been several wildfires in this area in the past. The USFS will also graze Borda Meadow for the second year, previously it had been excluded to allow for recovery after the Waterfall Fire but has since started accumulating fine fuels. Both additions provide greater continuity between grazed areas, increasing Carson City's overall resilience to devastating wildfire. The sheep will graze in Carson City from mid-April to the end of May. Open Space staff will be leading one of more interpretive talks about the sheep project in May, keep an eye on our Facebook page for event announcements.

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. Currently, staff are working to prepare bid documents for construction with the anticipation that construction on the project will begin in the summer-fall of 2021.

Kings Canyon / Waterfall Trailhead

See Trails Coordinator Report for an update on this project.

Land Acquisitions

The Open Space Division has several on-going land acquisition discussions and projects that have been in progress for several years. Each project remains a staff priority, however the sale of land is not currently active. When discussions on those projects resume with the landowners, they will be highlighted in future staff reports.

Clear Creek

No updates from previous report.

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.

Personnel

- 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. Recruitment for this position is on-going and staff hope to have someone on-board by May.
- Open Space Maintenance Seasonal: Open Space staff are currently recruiting for a full-time, seasonal Maintenance Worker to join our Open Space team for the summer-fall to assist with maintenance and natural resource projects throughout Open Space.
- Silver Saddle Ranch Caretaker: Ms. Megan Thompson has started her position as the Silver Saddle Ranch Caretaker. She is 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 and the new Prison Hill – East trail system.
- Senior Natural Resource Specialist: Ms. Georgia Vasey has accepted the position of Senior Natural Resource Specialist! Georgia is a very passionate and enthusiastic individual and she comes to Carson City with a wealth of experience, including extensive experience with leading restoration and revegetation efforts, and working with volunteers. Georgia is currently finishing her master's degree from UNR – focusing on Pinon Pine encroachment in the Great Basin. Georgia will start her position in mid-May following graduation from UNR and the

completion of her background check.

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 have been working to create a monitoring program for different sites throughout the Prison Hill OHV Area to monitor changes to the land as it relates to project implementation and potential impacts from increased recreation on-site. The initial baseline survey and monitoring photos were taken in February and August 2020. When our new Senior Natural Resource Specialist starts with Carson City, staff will take additional photos for 2021 and work to compile them into a comprehensive report to bring to the Committee for review. Staff will continue this monitoring on a biennial basis while implementation is occurring in the project area. Using the photo monitoring and report, staff will 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.

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, April 3	Escape from Prison Hill, Half Marathon	Prison Hill	Gregg/Lyndsey
Sat, April 10	Spring Tot Trot	Riverview Park	Park Rangers
Sat, April 17	Mexican Ditch Historic Bike Ride	Empire Ranch Trail	Park Rangers
Sat, April 24	Walk with the Weeds	Empire Ranch Trail	Lyndsey
Sat, May 1	Silver Saddle Ranch Historic Tour	Silver Saddle Ranch	Park Rangers
Sun, May 9	Mother's Day Botany Walk	Carson River Park	Park Rangers
Sat, May 15	Kids to Parks Day	TBD	Park Rangers
Wed, May 26	Spring Full Moon Hike	Wildhorse Trail	Park Rangers
Sat, June 12	Hiker's Ed	Prison Hill, Clearview	Park Rangers
Sat, June 26	Carson River Bike Tour	Empire Ranch Trail	Park Rangers