



STAFF REPORT

Agenda Item: 9B

Report To: Open Space Advisory Committee

Meeting Date: August 16, 2021

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Agenda Title: For Discussion Only: Senior Natural Resource Specialist and 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

Prison Hill Fire and Restoration Plan

On Friday afternoon, July 2, 2021 a lightning strike started a fire at the north end of Prison Hill Recreation Area. The fire burned 171 acres on the upper flanks of the mountain, including predominantly sagebrush habitat and a small pinyon juniper woodland. Vegetation around much of the North Loop Trail is now burned, however the trail remains in good shape and continues to be open to the public. The Open Space Division is currently devising restoration plans for revegetation and erosion mitigation.

This location possesses many challenges for restoration implementation. The substrate is characterized by rocky outcrops and stony soils that hold less moisture and are difficult for drill seeding. Additionally, the burned area has limited access, thus bringing up larger equipment and materials will require significant effort and trips by foot. Staff are diligently researching all options, with a likelihood to contract unmanned aerial vehicles (i.e. drones) or helicopters to help with broadcast reseeding and potentially herbicide application. To address erosion concerns, preliminary plans include building rock check dams with local material to slow soil movement in the event of high precipitation.

The Open Space Division is applying for the Dream Tags Charitable Fund that provides emergency relief for restoration of Nevada's wildlife and habitat following natural disaster. This funding should provide a sufficient amount to initiate restoration endeavors. To monitor future success of the restoration project, photo-monitoring points will be selected, and permanent vegetation transects installed. Community participation in helping with seed collection and revegetation will be requested later this fall/early winter. Local volunteer organization and community stewards, Muscle Powered, have already shown enthusiasm in providing support when needs become more defined.



North summit after Prison Hill Fire in July.



Burn scar on east side, taken from Buzzy's Ranch.

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. 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. The initial baseline survey and monitoring photos were taken in February and August 2020, with repeat monitoring completed in June 2021. A first draft of the OHV Area Baseline Monitoring Report has been prepared and is currently being reviewed by staff internally; the Monitoring Report will be presented at the Open Space Advisory Committee meeting in October 2021.

Carson River Updates

Carson River Clean-up

Open Space staff held the 4th annual Carson River Clean-up on Wednesday, June 30, 2021 to remove trash and monitor invasive weeds. Starting at East Silver Saddle Ranch and wrapping up at Ambrose Carson River Natural Area, staff were pleasantly surprised to find the least amount of trash relative to previous years. Much of the debris was micro-trash like cigarette butts and plastic caps.

Unfortunately, populations of Eurasian watermilfoil greatly increased throughout the river, particularly in areas with higher sediment for the aquatic weed to establish on. Thick mats of milfoil created warmer, anaerobic patches within the water, decreasing the river's health shown by dead fish floating in the waterway. From initially just being established in the Mexican ditch, this spread was considerably alarming. The increase in milfoil is likely due to lower water levels and increased temperature. In hopes to mitigate this problem, Open Space staff is researching the most effective methods for control and communicating with the Carson River Coalition and Carson Water Subconservancy District to coordinate efforts watershed-wide. The Carson River Watershed Invasive Species Working Group met on Thursday, July 8 to discuss the issue and now plan to schedule a site visit to an infested area in the river by mid-August for brainstorming future objectives.



Open Space staff wade through the Carson River to collect trash.



Thick mats of Eurasian watermilfoil change water flow and health in the Carson River.

Buzzy's Ranch Bird Surveys

Bird surveys along the newly constructed trail at Buzzy's Ranch were conducted early morning on June 10, 2021. The most commonly spotted species included the American robin, California quail, house wren, magpie, and starlings. Some rarer sightings included the black-capped night heron, Bullock's oriole, and Say's phoebe. Compared to the 2019 pre-construction and 2020 during construction surveys, this survey revealed a slight reduction in species diversity. Overall, it was not significant enough to cause major concerns, and monitoring will continue for the next several years.



Sr. Natural Resource Specialist, Georgia Vasey, and AmeriCorps Intern, Kaylee Maples, record sightings on a chilly morning.



Open Space Manager, Lyndsey Boyer, shows her enthusiasm for watching a house wren sing in a nearby tree.

Community Programs and Education

Open Space staff and Carson City Park Rangers facilitated a few educational programs to wrap up the school year. The first program was with fourth graders from St. Teresa, with the goal to learn about birds at Riverview Park. The teacher brought a sound amplifier to tune into the distinct bird calls

taking place in the wetland, highlighting a few different species of blackbirds. Students were also given binoculars to try spotting the birds, and many of them wrote about their findings in the Junior Ranger Adventure Guide "Nature Journal" page. Another program was with third and fourth graders from the Boys & Girls Club to help steward their neighboring open space property, Fulstone Wetlands. The youth helped pick up trash and discussed wetland dynamics, including the animals and plants that inhabit them, how they can clean pollution, and where point source pollution comes from. Lastly, staff attended the Boys & Girls Club Career and Community Appreciation Day. It was a tabling event that the youth could explore different career options in Carson City. The Parks, Recreation, & Open Space table included pelts to touch, fake scat for identification, skulls, and invasive plants to identify. The students had a fun time running around, learning, and taking workbooks home for more hands-on activities.



Lyndsey Boyer leads group of 4th graders on nature walk at Riverview Park.



Students from St. Teresa listen to bird calls with the amplifying device.



Georgia Vasey discusses the importance of wetlands after a trash pick-up program at Fulstone Wetlands.



Students and staff from the Boys & Girls Club Career Day event pose for a group photo.



Trails Coordinator, Gregg Berggren, leads group on the River Cruise – a community bike ride hosted by Muscle Powered for May Bike Month.

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 reviews 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 and recent projects include:

- Prison Hill – West
- Prison Hill North Loop Fire – revegetation
- Pete Livermore Sports Complex Access Road
- Class I Inventory of all OPLMA conveyed lands – COMPLETE
- Prison Hill OHV Area, Snyder memo – COMPLETE
- Silver Saddle Ranch Automatic Gate Project – COMPLETE
- Silver Saddle Ranch fencing – COMPLETE

In addition to the work being completed to ensure compliance with the NHPA and the PA, Carson City is also working with SHPO and the Nevada Site Stewardship Program (NSSP) to establish a volunteer monitoring program for the archaeological resources at Silver Saddle Ranch and Carson River Canyon. This will fulfill the monitoring obligations identified in the PA for existing historic resources identified on OPLMA conveyed lands. SHPO and Carson City will work to recruit, train, and manage volunteers who will monitor the archaeological resources quarterly to ensure no vandalism or theft is occurring. Staff are meeting with NSSP coordinators in mid-August to begin establishing the program.

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, bid

documents for construction have been completed and are going out to bid in August, with the anticipation that construction on the project will begin in the late fall of 2021, following the completion of construction on the Kings Canyon Trailhead.

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.

Personnel

- AmeriCorps Intern: In May, Open Space staff brought on Ms. Kaylee Maples as a summer intern to assist with natural resource management and maintenance tasks. This summer, Kaylee has been focusing a significant amount of time at the Prison Hill OHV Area, helping to implement our management plan and site improvements for that property. In addition to work at the Prison Hill OHV Area, Kaylee has been creating interpretive signs to be placed along the Buzzy's Ranch Trail and on Prison Hill at Eagle Rock. Kaylee's last day is August 20.
- Open Space Maintenance Seasonal: Open Space staff are currently recruiting for a full-time, seasonal Maintenance Worker to join our Open Space team to assist with maintenance and natural resource projects throughout Open Space. Recruitment is still open for this position, but we have not received any qualified applicants and likely will not full this position in 2021.
- Park Ranger: In July, the Department brought on Lauren Zentner as our 3rd full time Park Ranger to join Rangers Costello and Kerver. Lauren comes to Carson City from North Carolina having served as a Park Ranger in the park system in that area for several years. Lauren is enthusiastic about all aspects of being a Park Ranger, but especially interpretive programming and she has already begun planning new educational opportunities. We are excited to have Lauren on-board!

Events (Carson River area and elsewhere)

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, June 5	National Trails Day	Foothill Trail	Gregg
Wed, June 9	Fulstone Wetlands Cleanup	Fulstone Wetlands	Lyndsey/Georgia
Sat, June 12	Hiker's Ed	Prison Hill, Clearview	Park Rangers
Sat, June 26	Carson River Bike Tour	Empire Ranch Trail	Park Rangers
Sat, July 3	Silver Saddle Ranch Historical Tour	Silver Saddle Ranch	Park Rangers
Sat, July 31	Scorpion Adventure	Wildhorse Trail	Park Rangers
Sat, August 7	An Adventure on Prison Hill	Prison Hill, 5 th Street Trailhead	Park Rangers
Sun, August 15	Jazz and Beyond 'A Day in the	Silver Saddle Ranch	Lyndsey/Jared

	Country'		
Sun, August 22	Summer Full Moon Hike	Prison Hill OHV Area	Park Rangers
Sat, September 4	Silver Saddle Ranch Historical Tour	Silver Saddle Ranch	Park Rangers
Tue, September 7	OSAC/PRC Board Development Day	TBD – Community Center	OSAC, PRC and Staff
Sat, September 11 or Sun, September 12	CASI 5k Walk/Run Fundraiser	Riverview Park	
Sun, September 12	Hiker's Ed	Empire Ranch Trail	Park Rangers
Sat, September 25	Coyote Walk	Riverview Park	Park Rangers