



# STAFF REPORT

## Agenda Item: 5.E

**Report To:** Open Space Advisory Committee

**Meeting Date:** October 17, 2022

**Staff Contact:** Lyndsey Boyer, Open Space Manager, [lboyer@carson.org](mailto:lboyer@carson.org)

**Agenda Title:** For Possible Action: Discussion and possible action regarding the 2021 Annual Report of the activities of the Open Space Advisory Committee to be presented to the Board of Supervisors.

**Staff Summary:** Carson City Municipal Code 13.06.090 states that the Committee shall provide an annual report of its activities to the Board of Supervisors. The information has been organized into the following categories: History of Open Space, Land Acquisitions, Land Management, Grant Funding, Capital Improvement Projects, Activities and Events. Staff drafted a report in newsletter format which highlights the achievements and successes.

**Agenda Action:** Formal Action/Motion

**Time Requested:** 10 minutes

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### **Proposed Motion**

I move to approve the 2021 Annual Report of activities of the Open Space Advisory Committee to be presented to the Board of Supervisors.

### **Board's Strategic Goal**

Quality of Life

### **Previous Action**

N/A

### **Background/Issues & Analysis**

N/A

### **Applicable Statute, Code, Policy, Rule or Regulation**

Carson City Municipal Code 13.06.090

### **Financial Information**

Is there a fiscal impact?  Yes  No

If yes, account name/number:

Is it currently budgeted?  Yes  No

Explanation of Fiscal Impact:

### **Alternatives**

N/A

**Board Action Taken:**

Motion: \_\_\_\_\_

1) \_\_\_\_\_

Aye/Nay

2) \_\_\_\_\_

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(Vote Recorded By)



# OPEN SPACE



## Carson City Parks, Recreation & Open Space Department

### Report to the Board of Supervisors from the Open Space Advisory Committee

**January – December 2021**

Dear Mayor Bagwell and Board of Supervisors,

As required by Section 13.06.090 of the Carson City Municipal Code, it is our honor to present to you the following report of the activities conducted by the Open Space Division in 2021. The information provided is arranged into the following categories:

- History of Open Space
- Land Acquisitions
- Grant Funding
- Capital Improvement Projects
- Land Management
- Activities and Events

2021 was another unprecedented year filled with new challenges and celebrations of accomplishments, but it was another year that reaffirmed how important access to parks, trails and open spaces is for the public. In 2020, we saw unprecedented numbers of visitors at our trails and trailheads, and while those numbers dropped slightly in 2021, we're still seeing more use in our Open Spaces than ever before.

We welcomed new staff in 2021 to assist in the management of 6,958 acres of Open Space throughout Carson City. The Open Space Division is comprised of four full time staff - Lyndsey Boyer, Open Space Manager, Gregg Berggren, Trails Coordinator, Jared Whitaker, Open Space Maintenance Coordinator and Georgia Vasey joined the Open Space team as the Senior Natural Resource Specialist. Additionally, we had three part-time employees assist with Open Space management, including Dennis 'Mike' Cupp, Seasonal Maintenance Worker and Megan Thompson, Silver Saddle Ranch Caretaker. Lastly, Kaylee Maples worked the summer as our Recreation AmeriCorps Intern. Despite our small but mighty team, 2021 was a big year for accomplishments throughout Open Space!

### History of Open Space

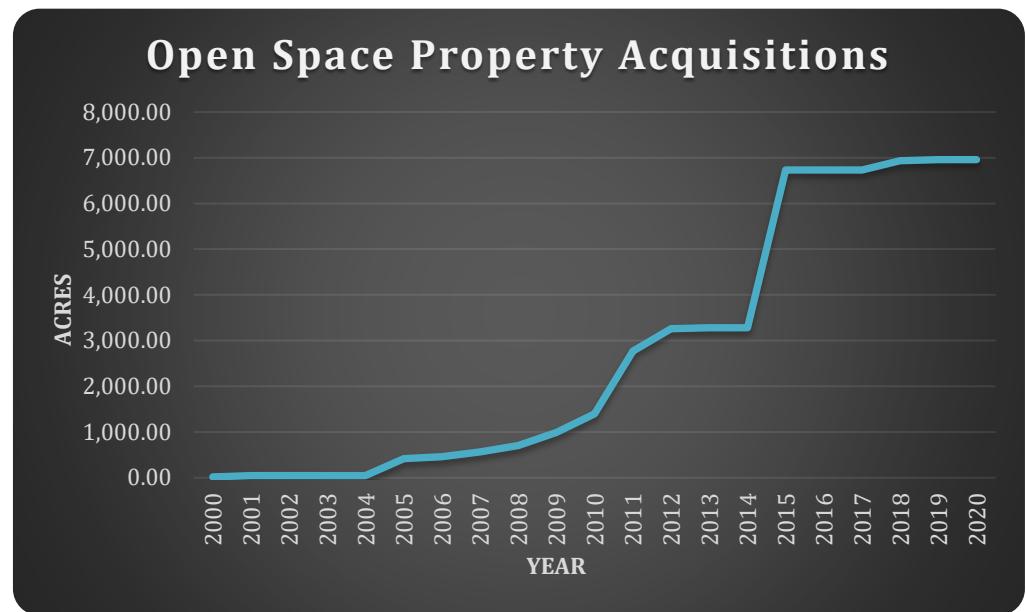
The Open Space Division was created in 1996 with the passing of the Question 18 - Quality of Life Initiative. Carson City residents at the time voted to increase sales tax  $\frac{1}{4}$  of 1 percent to fund the acquisition, development and maintenance of parks, open space, trails and recreation facilities. The first Open Space property, Moffat Open Space, was acquired in 2000. The most recent acquisition was completed in 2019 to purchase 20-acres in the Highway-50 west corridor, as well as 206-acres in the Ash Canyon area called Eagle View Open Space.

The Open Space Division manages 6,958-acres of floodplain, agricultural land and scenic viewsheds in Carson City. Additionally, staff are responsible for managing or assisting with the management of nearly 70 miles of shared use pathways and single-track trails throughout Carson City. The Open Space Division acquires property through a variety of means, including fee-title acquisition and donation. Additionally, nearly 50% of Open Space acreage was acquired in 2015 from the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) via a federal land exchange called the Omnibus Public Lands Management Act of 2009. This includes the Prison Hill Recreation Area, Silver Saddle Ranch, Ambrose Carson River Natural Area as well as several

properties on the west side of Carson City acquired from the USFS.

The Open Space Program in Carson City is incredibly unique in our region and unlike any other program in Nevada. No other county has been able to pass the same type of ballot initiative focused on land preservation through a very modest sales tax increase. By utilizing this funding and leveraging it further using grants, Carson City has been able to purchase and preserve unique and critical lands throughout

Carson City, including the majority of the Carson River corridor. Keeping the Carson River corridor in an undeveloped natural state with a protected floodplain protects Carson City from catastrophic and costly damage during a flood event. Carson City has also been able to preserve the historic legacy of ranching in Eagle Valley by purchasing Silver Saddle Ranch and Old Buzzy's Ranch – one of the few remnants of agriculture remaining in Carson City. Lastly, by focusing on our viewsheds and trail connectivity, Carson City has been able to preserve the scenic quality of our foothills while also creating a legacy and reputation for incredible trail systems and recreation opportunities in our Open Space areas. Carson City is truly lucky that voters 25 years ago had the foresight in mind to protect this beautiful landscape!



## Land Acquisitions

As of December 2021, approximately 6,958 acres of land have been protected or obtained through purchases, donations, or transfers using the Quality of Life/Question 18 funds at a cost of \$11,006,277. Grants or other supplemental funding have provided \$9,723,060 for a total of cost of \$20,729,337!

## Grant Funding

In addition to the Quality-of-Life Initiative funds that the Open Space Division receives, grant funds are also sought and leveraged wherever possible. Currently, the Open Space Division manages or is an identified partner on 11 individual grants, totaling nearly \$9.7 million in funds that help Carson City manage Open Space, or complete large improvement projects to trails and trailheads for the benefit of all Carson City residents.

Project Name / Area	Grantor	Grant Award	Period	Quality of Life- Open Space (cash or in-kind)
<b>Buzzy's Ranch Water Rights Acquisition and Wetland Enhancement Project</b>				
	Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act	\$1,883,875	6/30/2026	\$50,000 (cash)
<b>Carson River Trail System, Phase 2 – Ranch Connections</b>				
	Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act	\$1,843,685	6/30/2022	\$50,000 (cash)
<b>Carson River Trail System, Phase 3 – Prison Hill West</b>				
	Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act	\$2,403,250	6/30/2026	\$0
<b>Hamm Property Acquisition</b>				
	Land and Water Conservation Fund	\$250,000	12/31/2021	\$250,000 (cash)
<b>Kings Canyon Road (Dirt Road)</b>				
	Nevada Off-Highway Vehicle Commission (NOHVC)	\$18,000 (sub-grant from USFS to Open Space)	12/31/2021	\$0
	Recreational Trails Program (RTP)	\$142,500	12/31/2021	\$0
<b>Kings Canyon / Waterfall Trailhead</b>				
	Federal Land Access Program (grant award to Public Works)	\$5.3 million (to Public Works)	12/31/2023	\$35,350 (cash) \$33,275 (cash)
<b>Noxious Weed Abatement</b>				
	Carson Water Subconservancy District (annual funding)	\$15,000	6/30/2021	\$0
<b>Prison Hill Recreation Area, Motorized Area</b>				
	1) Nevada Off-Highway Vehicle Commission (NOHVC) 2) Recreational Trails Program (RTP)	1) \$100,000 2) \$150,000	12/31/2022	\$0
<b>Prison Hill Recreation Area, North Loop Fire Restoration</b>				
	Community Foundation of Western Nevada, Dream Tags Foundation	\$20,000	12/31/2022	\$25,774.96 (cash)

## Capital Improvement Projects

### Carson River Aquatic Trail

With completion of the safety improvements to the crossing of the intake at the dam in 2020, staff moved forward with exciting enhancements to the Carson River Aquatic Trail in 2021. Muscle Powered widened a segment of the once very narrow foot trail to the south of the dam, and the Carson Water Subconservancy District (CWS) received a 2021 Recreational Trails Program (RTP) grant that will include construction of a take-out adjacent to the foot trail just south of the dam. This will enable extension of the Carson River Aquatic Trail upstream to the River Fork Ranch in Carson Valley, effectively creating a 14-mile flatwater segment of river trail. Boaters will utilize the take-out, widened trail and the new intake crossing to safely portage around the dam. In addition, the RTP grant will fund the placement of uniform signage throughout the length of the Aquatic Trail and the printing of a new map. Improvements to the Aquatic Trail are anticipated to be completed in 2023.

### Capital to Tahoe/Lincoln Bypass Trail

The Capital to Tahoe Trail, along with the Lincoln Bypass Trails, has been in progress for the past several years in partnership with Muscle Powered and the U.S. Forest Service (USFS). Muscle Powered received RTP grants in 2021 for both projects.



The four-mile Lincoln Bypass will connect the Kings Canyon end of the Ash-to-Kings Trail with lower Kings Canyon Road at Longview Drive, effectively “bypassing” the motorized road (Old Lincoln Highway) with single-track trail.

Construction for the Lincoln Bypass Trail was finished in late 2021 and it received great reviews from hikers and mountain bikers in the last days of fall. Much of the trail was constructed by a professional trail builder, with Muscle Powered completing some significant components like major rock work through a large

drainage and along a steep side-slope. Muscle Powered plans continue working on improvements to the previously existing lower portion of the trail in the spring and summer of 2022. Together with the Capital to Tahoe Trail, over 13-miles of new trail will be added to Carson City.

### Kings Canyon Road and Trailhead

#### *Kings Canyon Dirt Road*

In 2019, Carson City was awarded \$142,000 from the 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. The road was badly damaged from the flood of 2017, and some sections of the road were nearly impassable, and motorists were being stranded. Construction on the project began in November of 2021 and is anticipated to be completed in early 2022.

### *Kings Canyon Trailhead*

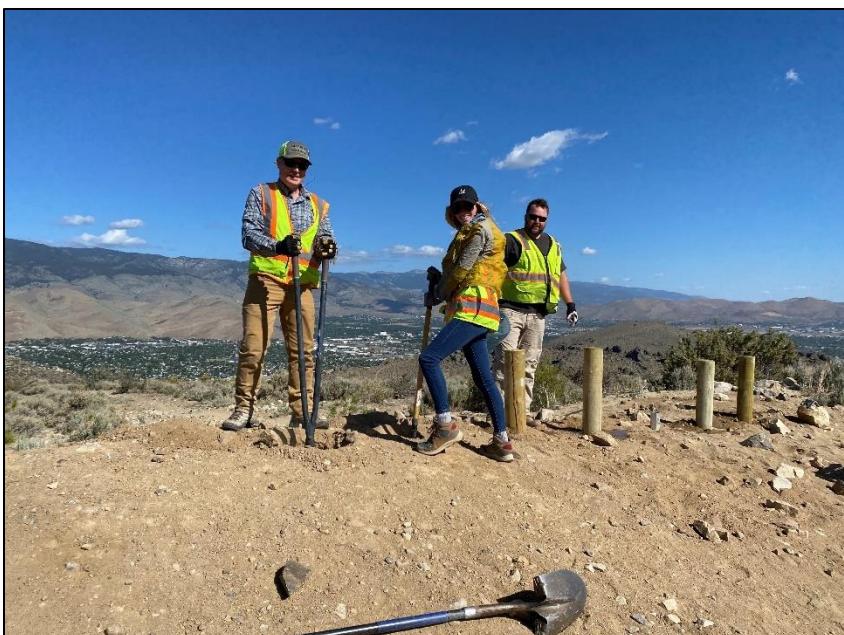
Planning for the Kings Canyon Trailhead was completed in early 2021. This long-awaited and badly needed project includes 25-parking spaces and trailer parking, a new informational kiosk, vault toilet and a one-way access through the parking lot to reduce the overall footprint and the required excavation. Construction began in July 2021 and is anticipated to be completed in 2022. Due to relocation of the trailhead, a short segment of new trail will also be constructed, and a portion of the existing trail will be decommissioned.



### Prison Hill OHV Area

In partnership with the National Off-Highway

Vehicle Conservation Council (NOHVCC), and with grant funding from RTP and the Nevada Off-Highway Vehicle Program, several improvements were made to the Prison Hill OHV Area in 2021 including: new roads and trails, drainage improvements, safety enhancements, signage and fencing placements. In the fall, project work began in the west-half of the OHV area, which included route enhancements, drainage improvements and reclamation and restoration work in some heavily impacted areas. In the future, staff plan to link-together existing trails in the middle of the OHV area to complete a new six-mile loop trail, to be named Toad Rock Loop. Construction is anticipated to be completed in early 2022. Additionally, based on recommendations from the Carson City Fire Department, the Prison Hill OHV area was closed to motorized use during Red Flag Warning Days throughout the summer.



### **Land Management**

Land management and maintenance activities continues to be the Open Space Division's highest priority. With the significant increase in use of our parks, trails and Open Space since 2020, staff have adapted to new challenges to continue to provide quality recreational experiences to our residents, while balancing protection of natural resources. To support this increased use, staff continued to install informational signage throughout our facilities including wayfinding trail signage, trailhead kiosks and interpretive signage. The new signage aims to connect visitors to a site, as well as to identify, direct, and interpret features and improve knowledge and safety. Signs also help to identify Open Space areas as Carson City owned public lands available to all residents and

visitors. We hope with this subtle change we will continue towards our goal of improving the aesthetics and understanding of Open Space areas, while continuing to educate Carson City residents about the public land and recreation opportunities in their backyards that have been funded by them! Staff also remained busy throughout the year completing our more routine natural resource management, maintenance and planning tasks, including everything from noxious weed abatement in the spring, to fuel reduction and restoration activities in the fall. Staff continued to implement the Open Space Integrated Pest Management (IPM) program, utilizing a variety of methods of controlling nuisance and noxious weeds including herbicide treatments, manual removal and re-seeding/re-vegetation with desirable species to discourage weed infestations. Silver Saddle Ranch also remains a property with a lot of management activities, including weed abatement, beaver activity management on the Mexican Ditch and vegetation management such as working to clear the travel corridor along roads and trails, tree pruning and removal. Highlights from a few notable management projects are outlined below.

### Carson River Updates

#### *Carson River Clean-up*

Open Space staff held the 4<sup>th</sup> annual Carson River Clean-up in June 2021, 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, much of the debris remaining was micro-trash like cigarette butts and plastic caps. Staff plan to continue this tradition every year as it's a great way to monitor the health of the river while stewarding it.



Unfortunately, staff also found that populations of the aquatic noxious weed Eurasian watermilfoil greatly increased throughout the Carson River, particularly in areas with higher sediment for the 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 temperatures. In order to help mitigate this problem, Open Space staff continue to research the most effective methods for control, while coordinating with Watershed partners like the Carson River Coalition, Carson Water Subconservancy District and associated Carson River Watershed Invasive Species Working Group to discuss watershed-wide treatment options. While the infestation in the river appears to decline as the weather cools, active monitoring, management and coordination are planned to continue next spring.

#### *Canada Thistle Control - Rust Fungus*

Since 2018, Open Space staff have been releasing and monitoring the effectiveness of a naturally occurring rust fungus, *Puccinia punctiformis* in a formerly large Canada thistle patch in the Mexican Dam Open Space. This host-specific rust fungus can infect healthy Canada thistle, a Class-C noxious weed in Nevada. Each fall, staff

add the rust fungus to small rosettes of Canada thistle with the goal of inhibiting the plants' ability to flower, thereby reducing the overall population. This year, the rust fungus was released in early October and vegetation monitoring was completed to identify the density of Canada thistle, which has shown size of the infestation is reducing, while the remaining populations showing signs of distress. This rust fungus is an excellent example of using IPM strategies to treat weed populations, reducing our reliance on herbicide.

#### *Pollinator Gardens*

In 2021, staff engaged with the Institute for Applied Ecology to participate in the Sagebrush in Prisons Project, in cooperation with the Northern Nevada Correctional Center (NNCC). Specifically, staff proposed a departure from the traditional project model of growing sagebrush seedlings for restoration, and instead proposed growing native pollinator friendly species for increasing pollinator habitat along the Carson River corridor. In the fall, locally adapted seeds from the Reno-Carson region were collected, including many wildflowers important for bees, butterflies, hummingbirds and bats. These flowers and some perennial grasses will be grown at the nearby NNCC with the help of a crew of inmates. This program is unique in that it helps train those incarcerated important horticultural skills that can be transferable to jobs following their release and gives them a way to give back to their community by increasing the ecological health of our local Open Space and Park properties. During the project grow-out in 2022, Open Space staff will visit the prison at least once to lead an interpretive talk with the inmates.

Staff estimate that approximately 1,100 plants will be grown for this project, which will be planted in four different pollinator gardens located on properties along the 5-mile stretch of the Carson River Trail.

We are very excited to support the initiative to increase pollinator habitat as the 76<sup>th</sup> Bee City USA—setting a new precedent for the state of Nevada. Planting with volunteers is planned for the fall of 2022, and we hope to outreach to the community in other ways such as installing a bee hotel like the one at Foothill Trailhead.

#### Bird Surveys

Bird surveys along the Buzzy's Ranch Trail and Riverview Park Trails were completed on an early morning in June 2021. The most common 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. Annual bird surveys will be completed each spring at Buzzy's Ranch and Riverview Park to monitor bird diversity changes that could be a result of increased recreation along the Buzzy's Ranch Trail specifically, as it was completed in 2020. 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.

#### Carson City Sheep Project

Fuels management on acquired lands, as well as natural parks and the wildland-urban interface located on the west side of Carson City continues to be a top priority for the Open Space Division. 2021 was the 15<sup>th</sup> consecutive year that Carson City utilized targeted sheep grazing to reduce fine fuel on the landscape. This project was initially created following the

devastation from the 2004 Waterfall Fire.

In 2021, staff continued implementing the two-band grazing system – with separate groups of sheep grazing simultaneously to cover as much ground during the small window of time in which cheatgrass is palatable to the sheep, typically April to mid-May. One band of ewes grazed the lands to the north – specifically Lakeview,



Vicee Canyon and behind WNC, and a second band of lambs and ewes focused on the lands to the south – Greenhouse Garden Center, C-Hill and Kings Canyon. Coordinating two bands of sheep allowed for more effective grazing across the nearly 2,000-acres of project area, 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 also grazed 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. Lastly, staff held an interpretive talk about the sheep in May of 2021, allowing the public to see the sheep in action at the C-Hill Trailhead.

#### Open Space Naming

In 2018, two properties in Kings Canyon went before the Open Space Advisory Committee to review naming nominations from the public. At that time, one nominating party suggested names to recognize and honor the Native American culture in our area. The policy regarding naming Open Space properties suggests, “if possible, names should be related to the unique natural landscape, geographic or topographic features, indigenous plants or wildlife, cultural or historical heritage.” Based on this direction, the Washoe Tribe was contacted to provide nominations for several properties throughout Carson City, in addition to the two in Kings Canyon. Staff from the Washoe Tribe identified Open Space properties that were culturally significant to the Tribe, and they proposed names for six properties throughout Carson City. A public survey was created for the proposed names and staff received approximately 50 responses to discuss further with the Open Space Advisory Committee (OSAC). After additional discussion with the OSAC and the Board of Supervisors, the following names were adopted for the properties: Gumalonga Open Space, meaning ‘A Leader of the Washoe Tribe’, Tahnu Leweh Open Space, meaning ‘The People’s Place’; Dasolung Ridge Open Space, Washoe Wetlands, Voltaire Canyon Open Space and Vidler Open Space. The latter names were chosen to recognize the history of mining in the area, as well as to recognize the donation of land from Vidler Water Company.

#### Prison Hill Fire and Restoration

In July 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 sagebrush habitat and a small pinyon juniper woodland. A significant portion of the North Loop Trail was within the burn zone, but the trail survived very well. This



is a testament to the value of sustainably built trails, as Muscle Powered volunteer Paul Sinnott had recently led a maintenance and realignment effort on this trail in 2019-2020. Staff observed places where helicopters had dumped water – hundreds of gallons at a time – while the fire was burning, and the trail shed the water as it was designed.

Due to the location and terrain, an aerial reseeding effort was the only viable option for restoration. The Open Space Division applied for and was awarded a grant from the Dream Tags Charitable Fund which provides emergency relief funding for restoration following a fire. This funding was used to purchase seed, as well as fund the aerial reseeding effort via helicopter on Prison Hill. In early December, approximately 4,000 pounds of perennial bunchgrass, forb and shrub seed was released over Prison Hill. Additionally, to monitor the revegetation success on Prison Hill following seeding, ten photo monitoring points and three vegetation transects per monitoring point were set up to document change over time at the Prison Hill burn scar. Repeat monitoring will be completed by staff to evaluate native plant recruitment and invasion of non-native species.

### ***Trails in 2021***

After 2020, staff saw dramatic increases in use of trails throughout Carson City. This trend is not unique to Carson City as agencies across the country have seen these increases everywhere. Moving in 2021 we saw these use number increase even further! Below is a table that outlines trail use in 2020 and 2021 on three popular trails – Buzzy’s Ranch Trail, Prison Hill Trail, East and the Mexican Ditch Trail. Trail counts increased at each trail location, and we are anticipating the same or greater use in 2022.

Year	Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	ADT	Annual
<b>2020</b>	<b>Buzzy’s Ranch Trail</b>											<b>3,120</b>	<b>1,901</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>24,977</b>
	<b>Prison Hill Trail, East</b>											<b>4,397</b>	<b>2,789</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>36,744</b>
	<b>SSR Bridge</b>											<b>2,760</b>	<b>2,637</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>31,545</b>
<b>2021</b>	<b>Buzzy’s Ranch Trail</b>	<b>2,717</b>	<b>2,192</b>	<b>2,529</b>	<b>2,932</b>	<b>2,940</b>	<b>2,087</b>	<b>1,666</b>	<b>1,344</b>	<b>1,976</b>	<b>2,040</b>	<b>2,039</b>	<b>910</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>25,372</b>
	<b>Prison Hill Trail, East</b>	<b>3,210</b>	<b>3,181</b>	<b>4,920</b>	<b>4,254</b>	<b>4,017</b>	<b>3,265</b>	<b>4,411</b>	<b>3,143</b>	<b>3,526</b>	<b>4,643</b>	<b>3,413</b>	<b>2,428</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>44,389</b>
	<b>SSR Bridge</b>	<b>3,143</b>	<b>2,973</b>	<b>3,774</b>	<b>3,688</b>	<b>3,290</b>	<b>1,988</b>	<b>1,705</b>	<b>1,875</b>	<b>1,951</b>	<b>3,598</b>	<b>3,168</b>	<b>7,066</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>38,219</b>

### **Trail Projects**

Other trail projects are being planned for the Carson City area, including Centennial to Washoe Lake State Park; and a connection from Clear Creek to Kings Canyon. Also, working in cooperation with Western Nevada College (WNC) and Muscle Powered, Carson City will assume responsibility for the maintenance of trails behind WNC. This will increase west side trail connectivity and allow for signage placement and inclusion of these trails in our Carson City trail system. Relatedly, Staff have also worked with Muscle Powered to add wayfinding signage to the west side trail system in the Ash Canyon area. In addition to the wayfinding signage, this project includes a few small trail modifications and improvements with the hope that we can reduce the creation and use of social trails.

### **5<sup>th</sup> Street Trailhead**



In August, the Great Basin Institute conducted training for a trail crew at our 5<sup>th</sup> Street Loop Trails. Their crew completed the connection of our Sagebrush Loop trail with the new Prison Hill East trail, at no cost to our Department. Also, staff placed four interpretive panels on the 5<sup>th</sup> Street Trails. We placed one panel for each loop – Sagebrush, Bitterbrush and Rabbitbrush, and a fourth panel was placed at the Ranch Overlook which highlights the 5,000 acres of Carson City Parks and Open Space that may be viewed from this location. This RTP funded project is now 100% complete, and the new trailhead has become very popular as it provides access to several new trails. On weekends we have counted as many as 24 cars in the parking lot at one time.

#### “Share the Trail” Campaign – “Go Slow and Say Hello”

Our trails are experiencing growth in usership, both in terms of numbers and the variety of users. These trends have seen a huge spike in the last year due to COVID-19 but are expected to continue even after COVID-19 concerns begin to recede. Along with these trends we are also beginning to see occasional conflict between the various user groups which include hikers, runners, bicycles, horses, strollers, wheelchairs, those with dogs, wildlife viewers, families with children and more. As a result, staff identified that we needed to proactively manage these issues with an education campaign and associated signage.

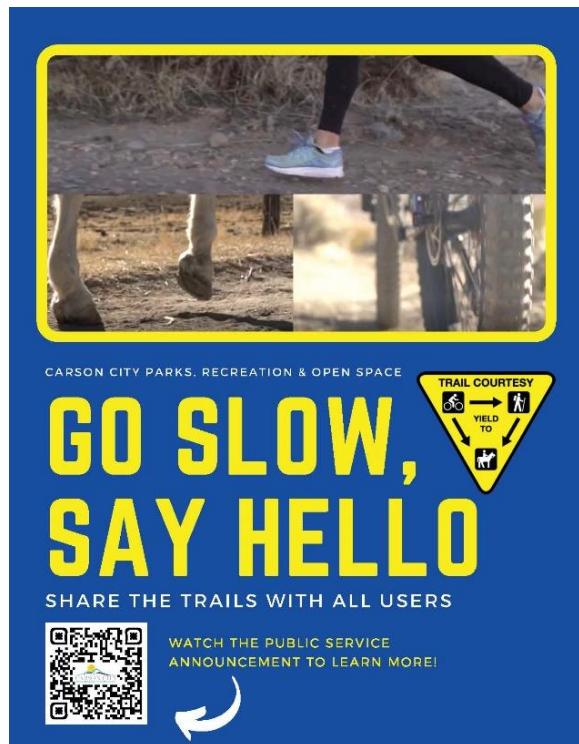
Often people are simply not aware of current trail etiquette and practices between user groups and so we are beginning to address this through messaging and education. For example, all our new trailhead signs display the yellow Trail Courtesy diagram and include various “Share the Trail” messages. One of those messages is the slogan “Go Slow and Say Hello”. In addition to signage, staff completed a video that shares perspectives from various trail users and shows examples of proper interactions. The Culture and Tourism Authority generously loaned us their videographer Zach Bragdon to do the filming, and the editing was done by our own Ranger Tyler Kerver. Special thank you to our “film stars”, Supervisor Lisa Schuette (trail runner), equestrian Maggie Stillwell and mountain biker Nathan Harrison and his daughter. A QR code with links to the video was posted at various trailheads, along with various Share the Trail messages. The six-minute film is on the Parks, Recreation & Open Space Facebook page and may also be found at this link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gb-R9UXcFM&t=18s>

#### Waterfall Trail

In 2021, a variety of trail improvements and maintenance projects were completed on the Waterfall Trail to dovetail with the Kings Canyon Trailhead Project. Improvements included: widening of the trail at the top near the waterfall to improve safety, decommissioning several steep social trails and removal of graffiti. Additionally, we worked to decommission the old trail to the north along Kings Creek, which included replacement of missing signs, replacement of broken fencing, and additional fencing at both the top and bottom. Lastly, several bounders were placed on the north side of the waterfall in the decommissioned area to give it a more natural look.

### **Activities and Events**

2021 was a busy year for activities and events. After the shutdowns of 2020, residents, students and staff were eager to get back to normally scheduled events throughout the community. The Park Ranger team continued their effort to lead robust interpretive programs throughout Parks and Open Space, with classic events like the monthly Full Moon Hikes, Tot Trots, Trails and Tails Adoption Events or educational hikes like Walk with the



Weeds, Scorpion Adventure or Coyote Walk. Additionally, they added seasonally themed hikes like Winter Wonderland Hike, Fall Colors and an Autumn Trail River Bike Ride, and developed new historic tours such as Mexican Ditch Historic Bike Ride and Silver Saddle Ranch Historic Tour. Lastly, the Rangers continued to develop the Jr. Ranger Program with events like Kids to Parks Day and Jr. Ranger Day.

#### Community Programs and Education

Open Space staff and Carson City Park Rangers facilitated a few educational programs in 2021.

The first program was held in the spring 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. 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 originates. Staff also 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. Lastly in the fall, Open Space staff helped support Snapshot Day, an educational and community-science volunteer stream monitoring event in the Carson River watershed. We led interpretive walks into Clear Creek with high school students at Fuji Park, covering topics like the importance of riparian areas, and how to assess stream health.



#### National Trails Day

Our National Trails Day (NTD) event, hosted in cooperation with Muscle Powered, was a huge success. About 86 people attended, including Mayor Bagwell and other City leaders. Since June is Pollinator Month, and this year was the first “Bee Kind Carson City, Protect Pollinators” campaign, we held the event at the Foothill Trailhead. The program included a tour of the adjacent Greenhouse Project and the Pollinator Garden, and there was a “Bee Booth” with information about pollinators. Twenty-nine people attended our two naturalist-led



interpretive hikes along the Foothill Trail to the V&T Railroad Grade where the curator of the Nevada State Railroad Museum gave a talk. We had over 50 volunteers for the trail maintenance portion of the event, including about 40 volunteers from the Great Basin Institute.

#### Prison Hill, 5th Street Trailhead and Trails Project Wins National Recognition!

In 2021, the Coalition for Recreational Trails (CRT) selected the Prison Hill Recreation Area - 5th Street Trailhead and Trails project as the winner of the CRT's Annual Achievement Award for outstanding use of Recreational Trails Program funds in the Community Linkage category. This highly successful project transformed about 60-acres on the north end of the Prison Hill Recreation Area into a very popular trailhead. The area was once seldom used by the public, and in fact many people avoided the area because of difficult access and undesirable activities. The project constructed a parking lot which includes ADA parking spaces, an ADA accessible toilet and an ADA accessible picnic shelter. The project also included construction of three easy, natural-surface loop trails that are accessible to 3-wheel adaptive mountain bikes and are perfect for families and people of all abilities to hike or ride. This trailhead is centrally located near several neighborhoods and affords year-round access to over 14-miles of multi-use pathway in our Carson River Trails System, and to over 25-miles of paved trails that provide links to Carson City's downtown core. These trails are all accessible

to persons with disabilities. In the future, staff plans to construct a single-track connection between the 5th Street Loop Trails and the Prison Hill North Loop, further expanding trail linkage from this trailhead.



An especially important component of this project was the involvement of so many agencies and organizations. In addition to contributions from Parks, Recreation & Open Space staff, Public Works did the parking lot design, Muscle Powered helped with trail design, two different Boy Scout Eagle Projects placed benches and signage, and the Nevada Conservation Corps completed most of the trail construction. The nomination for this award received support from Congressman Amodei, and a virtual awards ceremony took place in November.



#### Quality of Life Celebration

The Question 18, Quality of Life Initiative was passed in Carson City on November 5, 1996. This ballot question proposed an increase in the sales tax rate  $\frac{1}{4}$  of 1% (\$0.0025) to fund the acquisition, development and maintenance of parks, open space, trails and recreational facilities. Each year, 40% of these funds are used to develop parks, recreational facilities and trails throughout Carson City; 40% is used to acquire and manage open space lands; and 20% is dedicated to operations and maintenance of park facilities. November 2021 marked the 25th anniversary of Question 18 being passed by the residents of Carson City.

Over the past 25 years, these funds have been used to purchase approximately 2,200 acres of Open Space lands, build new and exciting trail systems, construct the Multiuse Athletic Center (MAC), make improvements to the Carson City Community Center Theater, Carson City Aquatic Facilities and the Carson City Rifle and Pistol Range and so much more. To celebrate, the Parks, Recreation & Open Space Department held “Quality of Life” month in November to acknowledge the forethought Carson City residents had in 1996 to invest in the quality of life in our community. Additionally, staff celebrated the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the passage of the Quality-of-Life Initiative at Silver Saddle Ranch in October. Staff were so proud and excited to celebrate this incredible accomplishment within our community. It was a beautiful fall day at the Ranch, featuring live music from Sierra Sweethearts and cowboy poetry from Johanna Foster and Larry Marinell. We also had information tables from Muscle Powered, Tahoe Mountain Milers and vendors from Great Basin, the Bus Boy and Deadtruck Graphics. We had a steady stream of visitors throughout the day, with more than 100 visitors at our peak!



### **Volunteer Activities and Events**

The Open Space Division proudly recognizes volunteer efforts provided by individuals and organizations, and also acknowledges and appreciates any and all who help to clean and maintain our precious lands. Throughout 2021, the Open Space Program received an estimated value of **\$93,303.11** from volunteers. At minimum, volunteers spent **3,659.25** hours on our lands, at a value of \$25.46/hour (the latest dollar value available, according to [www.independentsector.org](http://www.independentsector.org)).

Muscle Powered has contributed hundreds of hours to trail planning, building, maintenance and Trash Mobs this year. Other groups have contributed time through our Adopt-a-Trail program, including the Friends of Prison Hill, Kiwanis, Moose Lodge, Target and Click bond. The Great Basin Institute donated well over 200 hours on National Trails Day. Highlights of a few notable volunteer programs are provided below.



#### National Public Lands Day

Muscle Powered and the Open Space Division sponsored a clean-up of two washes in East Silver Saddle Ranch on the east side of Sierra Vista Lane. Fifteen volunteers more than filled a 20-yard dumpster with trash.

#### Restoration Programs

In the fall, staff helped River Wranglers host a workday and education event with Empire Elementary School at Moffat Open Space. Rotations of students helped outplant in a formerly burned area, while the other groups of students engaged in various educational activities. In total, the students planted 128 plants. The following day, nine community volunteers helped finish up the planting at

Moffat Open Space, for a total of 130 plants. Additionally, Open Space staff hosted a planting volunteer program at a disturbed area along the new Buzzy's Ranch Trail. This location was used as a staging area for large equipment when the trail was constructed in 2020. A total of 231 native grasses, forbs and shrubs were planted with just two volunteers and staff! Staff were excited to restore and diversify these areas to enhance the aesthetic value and make it more desirable for wildlife.

Numerous organizations volunteered their time in 2021. Their efforts were mainly focused on trail construction and maintenance, trash clean-up and river stewardship. Some of these organizations and other volunteer efforts are highlighted below.

Event/Organization	Date	Location	# People	Total Hours	Monetary Value
<b>National Trails Day</b>	07/5/21	Foothill Trail, V&T Trail	41	233.5	\$5,944.41
<b>Friends of Prison Hill</b>	06/12/21	Prison Hill OHV Area	15	45	\$1,284.30
<b>Kiwanis Adopt-A-Trail</b>	06/17/2021	River Trail	5	7.5	\$190.95
<b>Target Adopt-A-Trail</b>	06/21/2021	Buzzy's Ranch	6	9	\$229.14
<b>Moose Lodge Adopt-A-Trail</b>	06/25/2021	East Silver Saddle Ranch	6	9	\$229.14
<b>National Public Lands Day</b>	09/25/2021	Washes on east side of Sierra Vista Lane.	15	37.5	\$954.75
<b>V&amp;T Beach/Interp Sign Placement</b>	9/28/2021	Mary B. Ansari Memorial benches/signs	3	12	\$305.52
<b>Empire Elementary with River Wranglers</b>	10/19/21	Moffat Open Space	80	200	\$5,092.00
<b>Moffat Planting Day</b>	10/20/21	Moffat Open Space	9	22.5	\$572.85
<b>September Mutt Mitt Volunteers</b>	September 2021		7	23.5	\$639.20
<b>Buzzy's Ranch Planting Day</b>	11/12/21	Buzzy's Ranch	2	6	\$152.76
<b>Moose Lodge-Adopt-A-Trail</b>	12/4/2021	East Silver Saddle Ranch	10	15	\$381.90
<b>Click Bond Adopt-A-Trail</b>	March 2021	Empire Ranch Trails	8	16	\$407.36
<b>Muscle Powered</b>	2021	Open Spaces and Trails	182	3046.25	\$77,557.53
<b>TOTALS</b>	-	-	<b>407</b>	<b>3,659.25</b>	<b>\$93,303.11</b>



*On behalf of our Committee and staff, thank you very much for the opportunity to present this report.*