



# STAFF REPORT

**Agenda Item: 6C**

**Report To:** Open Space Advisory Committee

**Meeting Date:** September 18, 2023

**Staff Contact:** Lyndsey Boyer, Open Space Manager, [lboyer@carson.org](mailto:lboyer@carson.org)  
Marena Lovejoy, Senior Natural Resource Specialist, [mlovejoy@carson.org](mailto:mlovejoy@carson.org)

**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, [lboyer@carson.org](mailto:lboyer@carson.org))

**Staff Summary:** See Attachment 1 – Senior Natural Resource Specialist and Open Space Manager Report

**Agenda Action:** Other/Presentation

**Time Requested:** 10 minutes

## **Proposed Motion**

N/A

## **Board's Strategic Goal**

Quality of Life

## **Previous Action**

N/A

## **Background/Issues & Analysis**

See Attachment 1 – Senior Natural Resource Specialist and Open Space Manager Report:

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

N/A

## **Financial Information**

Is there a fiscal impact?  Yes  No

**ATTACHMENT 1**

**Senior Natural Resource Specialist and Open Space Manager Report**

**Lyndsey Boyer, September 18, 2023**

**Prison Hill Fire and Restoration**

In June 2023, staff conducted monitoring of the burned area to assess revegetation progress that is occurring naturally and from seeding efforts that were implemented in the fall of 2021. This data has yet to be analyzed, but anecdotally, staff observed increases in both native and non-native plant species post-fire, though no Nevada State-listed noxious weeds were observed. Monitoring involved taking repeat photography and collecting vegetation data. The next round of monitoring will occur in May or June of 2024. Given that it has only been two years since seeding occurred, it may be too early to assess whether additional seeding efforts are needed.



Example of successful revegetation on the north facing slopes of Prison Hill.

**Prison Hill, OHV Area Baseline Monitoring Report**

Monitoring for this report was conducted by staff in July and August, 2023. The report will be presented during this meeting.

**Silver Saddle Ranch Architectural Monitoring**

Marena Lovejoy, Senior Natural Resource Specialist and Jared Whitaker, Open Space Maintenance Coordinator conducted the photo monitoring and architectural review in July and August of 2023. This report is currently being compiled and will be sent to the State Historic Preservation Office (“SHPO”) to fulfill our annual monitoring requirement of the historic structures at Silver Saddle Ranch.

**Bird Surveys**

With assistance from two local bird enthusiasts, Open Space staff conducted annual monitoring of bird species along the Buzzy’s Ranch Trail and Riverview Park. A June survey has been conducted since 2019, and though more individual birds were recorded last year, 2023 had a greater number of birds than found in 2019, 2020 and 2021 at the Buzzy’s Ranch locations, and a greater number of birds than found in 2019 and 2021 at Riverview, though the fact that one of our survey locations was inaccessible due to flooding likely influenced our data. However, because it can be difficult to accurately count the total number of birds found (because they may be hidden or fly over us too quickly to count), the number of unique species may be more valuable data, in which case, 2023 saw more unique species than all previous years besides 2022 at both Buzzy’s Ranch and Riverview survey locations.

June Comparison 2019-2023										
	2019		2020		2021		2022		2023	
	Total	Unique								
Buzzy's Ranch	184	26	233	28	182	24	335	41	250	38
Riverview	50	14	67	16	41	18	66	23	57	22

## ATTACHMENT 1

Table 1. Summary of total birds counted, and unique species identified during June surveys since 2019 along the Buzzy's Ranch Trail & Riverview Park.

### **Carson River Updates**

#### *Canada thistle*

Staff from Open Space and the Nevada Department of Agriculture conducted annual monitoring of the Canada rust thistle fungus, *Puccinia punctiformis*. This host-specific rust fungus can infect healthy Canada thistle, a noxious weed in Nevada. Since 2018, Open Space staff have been releasing and monitoring the effectiveness of the rust fungus in a formerly large Canada thistle patch near the Mexican Dam. Vegetation sampling along a permanent transect includes monitoring the density of Canada thistle, which appears to be reducing in number and is noticeably less healthy. This year especially, staff observed substantial reductions in Canada thistle, though whether this is due to the rust fungus or the flooding that the site experienced is yet to be determined. Follow-up monitoring will occur this fall.



Counting Canada thistle individuals using a quadrat while vegetation monitoring.

#### *Carson River Master Plan Update*

Staff, along with OSAC Chair Mark Kimbrough have been working with the National Parks – Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance program since December 2022 to update the Carson River Master Plan, which was completed in 1996 and is due for an update. Specifically, our goals are to identify all acquisitions that were completed from the original plan and revise to include maintenance and management strategies for the properties along the River corridor through Carson City. Other agencies, as well as neighboring counties will be invited during the planning process to provide input for the development of the plan amendment. In 2023, our goals have been centered on a strategic planning effort to identify critical partnerships, as well as outreach strategies. Currently, staff are working on a baseline Carson River mapping effort to serve as a tool at subsequent planning meetings. Additionally, staff are working to bring in Carson Water Subconservancy District (CWSD) as part of our core planning team. CWSD is currently in the process of revising the Carson River Watershed Floodplain Management Plan, so their efforts will dovetail well with Carson City's planning efforts.

#### *Get on the Bus Tour*

On June 13-14, CWSD held their "Get on the Bus Tour" which is a two-day, watershed wide tour of the Carson River watershed, starting from Alpine County and ending at the Carson Sink. Gregg Berggren, Marena Lovejoy and Chelsea Kincheloe all had the opportunity to attend this tour to learn more about the watershed. Topics included restoration, water quality, recreation and trails, wastewater, Mercury Superfund sites and more! Additionally, Gregg Berggren and Lyndsey Boyer were featured as speakers to discuss the Open Space program and trails in Carson City.

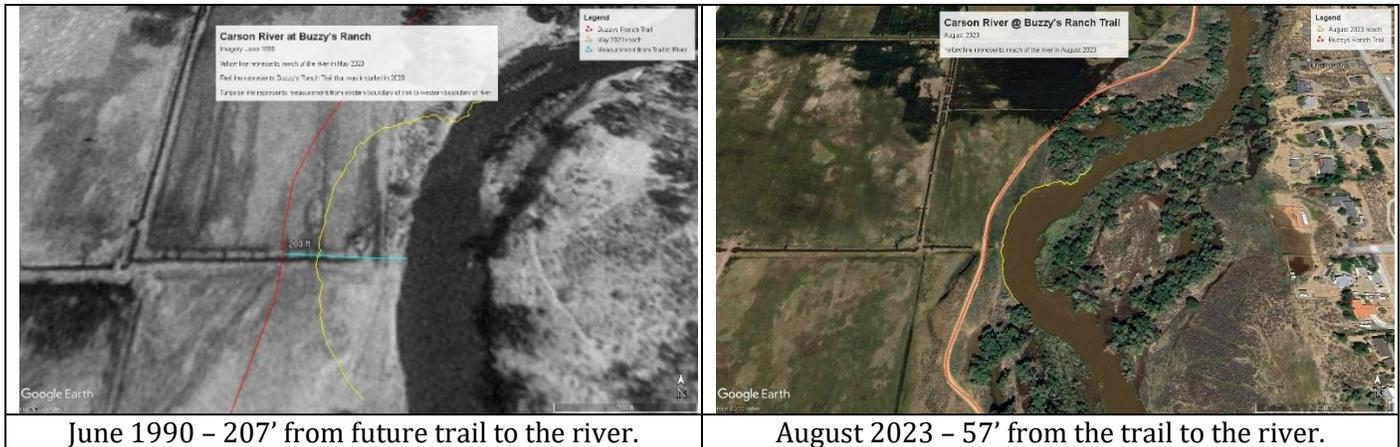
### **Buzzy's Ranch**

#### *Bank Stabilization*

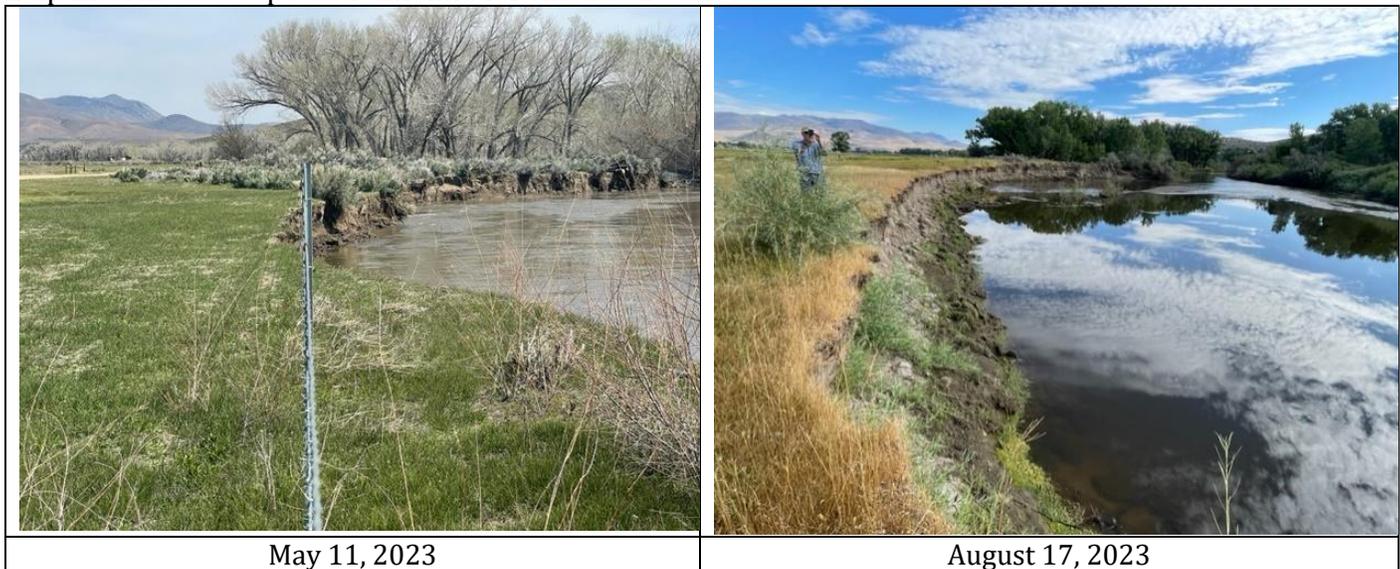
Following the epic winter of 2022-23, as well as the sustained high flows experienced through the spring and summer, the riverbank along the Buzzy's Ranch Trail has eroded significantly. While this site has suffered from unstable banks and erosive issues for many years, the big winter has caused the bank to erode at an unsustainable rate, putting the new Buzzy's Ranch Trail and the agricultural land

## ATTACHMENT 1

associated at risk. From October 2020 to August 2023, the bank has migrated approximately 22 feet, and it is estimated that 150 feet of bank have been lost at this location since 1990!



While Carson City Open Space always strives to adopt the 'Living River Approach' – as identified in the Carson River Watershed Floodplain Management Plan, when there is infrastructure at risk the river needs to be stabilized. Currently, staff are working with an engineering firm to assist with hydrologic modeling and soil studies to understand the erosive potential and urgency for intervention at this location. A fully permitted bank stabilization project will require additional engineering, extensive permitting, and the construction costs may be in the \$100,000 range, so the hydrologic modeling will help inform the scope and timeline for this future effort.



### Water Rights

On July 20, the Board of Supervisors reviewed the draft Management Plan for Buzzy's Ranch, as well as staff's presentation regarding water rights acquisition project at Buzzy's Ranch. The Board provided authorization to staff to move forward with pursuing the due diligence needed to further develop the City's water rights acquisition plan. Currently, staff are working with other City Departments to understand if there are any internal water rights options to evaluate before circling back with our partners for a more concrete plan. Initiating appraisals on water rights identified internally and externally will be the next step, but this process will be on-going for the next year. Lastly, the Board of Supervisors requested that the Buzzy's Ranch Management Plan return to them for approval when it is finalized.

**ATTACHMENT 1**

**Community Programs and Education**

Chelsea Kincheloe, Volunteer Coordinator, has hosted several volunteer events throughout Open Space geared towards natural resource stewardship including a beautification event at Moffat Open Space to pull weeds and pick up trash, painting of cottonwoods to deter beavers in Ambrose Carson River Natural Area, thistle pulling at Horsecreek Ranch Conservation Easement, and forthcoming duck box installation along the Mexican Ditch trail. Please refer to the Events table below for more information.

*Water Quality*

Mareanna Lovejoy and Chelsea Kincheloe spent a total of 5 hours combined addressing trash that had accumulated in one of the wetland areas located at Blackwell’s Pond Park. Approximately 10 garbage bags worth of plastic bottles, dog toys, plastic food wrappers, and micro trash were accumulated and hauled to the landfill!

*Bee City USA*

On May 24, Lyndsey Boyer, Open Space Manager led a tour of the Bee Hotel and a guided hike at the Foothill Trail with students and a teacher from the Tahoe Expedition Academy. These students are based in Truckee, CA and are hoping to establish a Bee City USA designation and pollinator garden in their community.



**Programmatic Agreement Update**

Staff have been working with the State Historic Preservation Office over the past few years to amend the Programmatic Agreement that dictates procedures for cultural resource protection and evaluation on OPLMA conveyed lands. The proposed amendment provides a revised approach and timeline between Carson City and SHPO for routine maintenance tasks needed on Open Space lands. A list of approved routine maintenance tasks was included in the document, which allows staff to notify SHPO that a proposed maintenance task is identified and includes an abbreviated timeline for review and approval of that task. This allows staff and the program more flexibility and efficiency when approaching critical maintenance tasks such as installing and repairing fences and gates, installing signage, maintaining trails and access roads and more. The proposed amendment has been reviewed and approved by all parties to the agreement and staff are currently working to gather signatures and execute the document.

**Personnel**

- Senior Natural Resource Specialist: Mareanna Lovejoy started as the Senior Natural Resource Specialist on May 31, 2023. Mareanna previously served as the Carson City Weed Coalition Coordinator from March 2018 – June 2019.
- Parks Maintenance Worker (Open Space): Joe Steele started May 29, 2023.
- Parks Maintenance Worker (Open Space): Bob Tonseth will be starting October 2, 2023 and will round out the current Open Space Maintenance Program Team.

**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
------	-------	----------	----------------------

**ATTACHMENT 1**

			<b>Other Notes</b>
7/1/2023	Junior Ranger Activity – Scorpion Search	Carson River Park	Park Rangers
7/11/2023	Camp Carson Field Trip	East Silver Saddle Ranch	Recreation
7/12/2023	Moffatt Open Space Beautification	Moffat Open Space	Chelsea Kincheloe
7/15/2023 – 7/16/2023	Tahoe Rim Endurance Run	Ash and Vicee Canyon; Lakeview	Gregg Berggren
7/28/2023	Scorpion Search	Wild Horse Trail	Park Rangers
7/29/2023	Movers & Doers Fishing Day	Baily Pond	Recreation
8/13/2023	Jazz and Beyond, Day in the Country Concert Series	Silver Saddle Ranch	Lyndsey Boyer
8/19/2023	Cottonwood Painting	Ambrose Carson River Natural Area	Chelsea Kincheloe
8/19/2023	Junior Park Ranger Day	Carson River Park	Park Rangers
8/30/2023	Full Blue Moon Hike	Kings Canyon TH	Park Rangers
9/9/2023	OHV Area Clean-up	Prison Hill OHV Area	Friends of Prison Hill
9/16/2023	Creatures of the Night	Fuji Hall	Park Rangers
9/23/2023	Coyote Walk	Silver Saddle Ranch	Park Rangers
9/24/2023	Thistle Dig	Horse Creek Ranch	Chelsea Kincheloe
9/27/2023	River Wranglers Field Trip	East Silver Saddle Ranch	River Wranglers
9/30/2023	Carson City Motorsports – Ride Days	Prison Hill OHV Area	Lyndsey Boyer Gregg Berggren
10/9/2023	Snapshot Day Training	Carson River Park	River Wranglers
10/13/2023	Snapshot Day	Carson River	River Wranglers
10/13/2023	Cemetery Tour	Lone Mountain Cemetery	Park Rangers
10/14/2023	Light After Dark Run/Walk	Riverview Park	Advocates to End Domestic Violence
10/14/2023	Sierra Arts Foundation Festival	Silver Saddle Ranch	Anna Freeman
10/15/2023	Disc Golf Tournament & Fundraiser	Carson Ridge Disc Golf Course	Dave Navarro
10/20/2023- 10/21/2023	NNICA Mountain Bike Competition	West side Trails	Gregg Berggren
10/21/2023	Safe & Sober – 5K Run/Walk Fundraiser	Riverview Park	Lyndsey Boyer
10/22/2023	Fall Colors Wagon Rides	Silver Saddle Ranch	FOSSR
TBD (Fall)	Willow harvesting & planting	Mexican Ditch Trail	Marenna Lovejoy
TBD (Fall)	Duck Box Installation	Mexican Ditch Trail	Chelsea Kincheloe