



# STAFF REPORT

**Agenda Item: 6C**

**Report To:** Open Space Advisory Committee

**Meeting Date:** December 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:** This item is to provide updates from the Senior Natural Resource Specialist and Open Space Manager regarding activities of the Open Space Division.

**Agenda Action:** Other/Presentation

**Time Requested:** 10 minutes

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**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

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

**Lyndsey Boyer, December 18, 2023**

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**End of Season Sheep Monitoring**

Lyndsey Boyer, Open Space Manager and Marena Lovejoy, Senior Natural Resource Specialist conducted annual end of season sheep monitoring in the fall. This process included visiting each of the established monitoring points and taking repeat photographs to help document change over time. The photos at right capture the hillsides looking down on Borda Meadow in Kings Canyon. Staff are monitoring for changes such as presence of noxious or invasive weed species, as well as any negative impacts sustained from the grazing season. Over four years, we see little change in vegetation composition, which is positive.

**Fuel Reduction Partnerships**

The Carson City Fire Department (“CCFD”) in partnership with Carson City Parks, Recreation and Open Space (“CCPROS”) has applied for \$4.3 million in funding through the USDA Forest Service Community Wildfire Defense Grant that will primarily be used to increase capacity of the Wildland Divisions of CCFD. The goal is to hold Wildfire Education and Fire Safety workshops, conduct defensible space inspections, and create fuel breaks on 1,000 to 1,500 acres of City lands adjacent to high-risk neighborhoods, hiking trails, and recreation facilities. If awarded, Open Space would utilize additional crew labor available within the Fire Department to complete defensible space projects in Open Space and along trails. Funding awards are expected to be announced February 2024 with the funding period lasting for four years.

**Silver Saddle Ranch Architectural Monitoring**

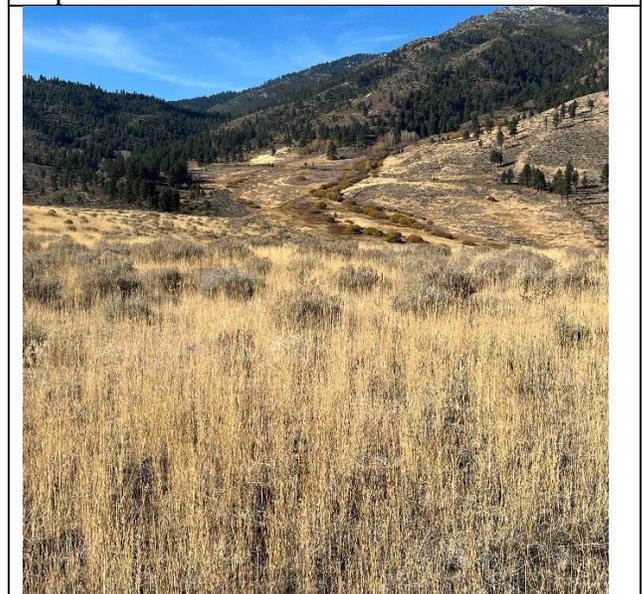
Marena Lovejoy, Senior Natural Resource Specialist and Jared Whitaker, Open Space Maintenance Coordinator conducted the photo monitoring and architectural review in July and August of 2023. The report was compiled and sent to the State Historic Preservation Office (“SHPO”) to fulfill our annual monitoring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

**Horsecreek Ranch Conservation Easement Monitoring**

In October Lyndsey Boyer, Open Space Manager and Marena Lovejoy, Senior Natural Resource Specialist conducted annual monitoring of the Horsecreek Ranch Conservation Easement which is held by CCPROS. The report will likely be prepared for the April 2024 OSAC meeting.



Sheep monitoring. Photo taken in September 2019.



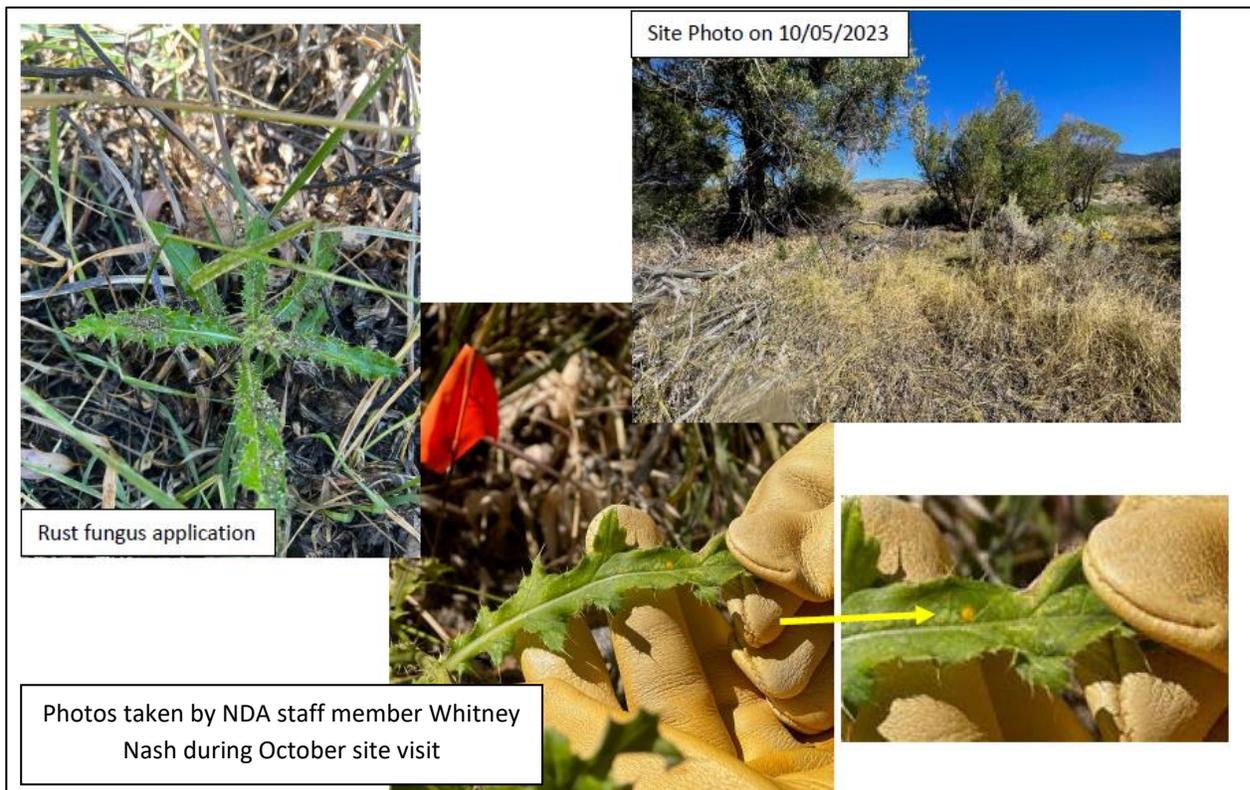
Sheep monitoring. Photo take in November 2023.

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**Carson River Updates**

*Canada thistle*

Staff from Open Space and the Nevada Department of Agriculture conducted monitoring in early October 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. While the population of Canada thistle has lessened over the last few years, the flooding that occurred during the spring and summer likely contributed to more thistles that we saw during our first monitoring visit of the year in June. To combat the new emergence of thistle, approximately 50 grams of the rust fungus was collectively applied to 40 Canada thistle plants. Staff will inspect the plants again in the Spring of 2024.



*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. As of the last update, the Carson Water Subconservancy District (“CWSD”) has been brought in as an integral partner and are assisting staff with formulating the vision and mission of the plan.

*Mexican Dam Portage Project*

In partnership with CWSD, staff are working on a project to construct a takeout location above the Mexican Dam to allow boaters to safely exit the river before reaching the Mexican Dam. This will

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dovetail well with the bridge that was constructed over the Mexican Ditch inlet that was the first phase of this effort. After completion of the takeout, the Aquatic Trail will be lengthened allowing longer float trips from Douglas County through Carson City. A project kickoff and site visit was held with CWSD, Carson City and consultant staff in early September. Since then, the required permitting for the project has been initiated, and a geotechnical soil survey has also been completed.

### **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 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 additionally 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. The hydrologic modeling effort is almost complete and staff anticipate a presentation of the results in February 2024.

#### *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 to conduct a meeting with our purchasing partner to discuss next steps in the water rights acquisition process. Additionally, staff are working to complete a scope of work for the due diligence that is required as a component of the SNPLMA funded grant focusing on water rights. Lastly, staff are looking to apply for additional grant funding through the Conserve Nevada grant program to assist with this effort.

### **Community Programs and Education**

Several volunteer and education events took place in the fall including a Thistle Dig at Horsecreek Ranch Conservation Easement with OSAC and PRC members, Move With The Mayor cleanup of Lone Mountain Cemetery, Arbor Day cottonwood planting along the Carson River near the Mexican Dam, trail brushing at the trails near Prison Hill's 5<sup>th</sup> Street Trailhead with a local Geocache group, and installation of Wood Duck nesting boxes along the Carson River at Riverview Park with volunteers from the community and the UNR



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student chapter of Ducks Unlimited. Please refer to the Events table below for more information.

Several education events took place in the fall. Source Water Assessment Day took place on October 7<sup>th</sup> at Kings Canyon Trailhead parking lot and was open to the public to learn about water quality and the ecosystems of the Carson River watershed.

Snapshot Day took place on October 13 and is a watershed wide event organized by the local nonprofit River Wranglers, with the goal of teaching local students about the importance of Carson River water quality and riparian habitat health. Open Space Staff and CWSD hosted a site at Carson River Park and were visited by Carson Montessori School students and their families. Another educational event took place on October 16 with River Wranglers at Fuji Park and had students from Empire Elementary school.

Open Space staff taught students about some of the plants and animals that live at or near Fuji Park.



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Arbor Day cottonwood planting.



Wood Duck nesting box installation.

**American Planning Association Conference**

On October 17, 2023, Lyndsey Boyer, Open Space Manager and Gregg Berggren attended the American Planning Association Conference in South Lake Tahoe to participate in a panel presentation entitled: “Balancing Economic Development with Environmental Sustainability through the Lens of Outdoor Recreation.” The panel was comprised of representation from the Department of Outdoor Recreation, Travel Nevada, SMG Consulting as well as very special guest Lt. Governor Anthony Stavros.

**Personnel**

- Chelsea Kincheloe departed as Volunteer Coordinator on November 4, 2023
- Erin Larsen will start as the new Volunteer Coordinator on January 8, 2024.

**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/>



APA Conference.

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<b>Date</b>	<b>Event</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Primary Staff and/or Other Notes</b>
11/4/2023	Duck Box Installation	Mexican Ditch Trail	Chelsea Kincheloe
11/4/2023	Junior Ranger Outdoor Safety & Leave No trace	Riverview Park	Park Rangers
11/4/2023	Eagle Scout Project	Lone Mountain Trails	Gregg Berggren
11/18/2023	Eagle Scout Project	Bob's Trail	Gregg Berggren
12/8/2023	Galaxy Talk	Silver Saddle Ranch	Park Rangers
12/9/2023	Ascent Winter Trail Run	Ash Canyon, WNC Foothills	Gregg Berggren
12/16/2023	Holiday Hike	Riverview Park	Park Rangers
12/16 – 12/17/2023	Friends of Silver Saddle Ranch – Holiday Open House and Wagon Rides	Silver Saddle Ranch	Lyndsey Boyer

**Happy Holidays, Open Space Advisory Committee!**