

**OPEN SPACE ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
STAFF REPORT**

**MEETING DATE:** March 16, 2015

**AGENDA ITEM NUMBER:** 3B

**STAFF:** Rich Wilkinson, Senior Natural Resource Specialist

**REQUEST:** Presentation and discussion only on the wetlands enhancement project at the old Buzzy's Ranch property by Mr. John Ranlett with Ducks Unlimited.

**GENERAL DISCUSSION:** Ducks Unlimited was awarded a grant from the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) for several projects throughout the Carson River watershed, including wetlands enhancements at the old Buzzy's Ranch property. Attached, please find the project narrative provided as submitted in June 2012.

In late 2014, the project planning began – including a meeting with the ranch operator (Mick Andersen) and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). In October, Ducks Unlimited visited the property to conduct surveys and collect topography data.

Mr. John Ranlett with Ducks Unlimited will present the project updates.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION:** This agenda item is for informational purposes only. No formal action can be taken at this time.

## **Buzzy's Ranch Wet Meadow Pasture Habitat Enhancement Project Concept**

### **Background**

Ducks Unlimited (DU) is interested in collaborating with Carson City Department of Parks and Recreation (CCDPR), Micky Andersen, and other partners on a project at Buzzy's Ranch to enhance wet meadow pasture habitat for waterfowl as well as improve the same pastures for livestock grazing. DU's interest in this project stems from our North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) partnering relationship with CCDPR wherein DU seeks to leverage CCDPR funds, recently expended on the purchase of the Serpa – Deer Run and Bently Carson River Canyon properties, as non-federal match dollars to obtain federal NAWCA dollars to conduct wetland restoration and enhancement projects in the Carson and Lahontan valleys. Furthermore, Great Basin wetlands such as those in Carson and Lahontan valleys provide continentally important spring migration stopover areas for waterfowl to feed and rest before continuing their migration journey to breeding grounds in the Prairie Pothole Region of the Dakotas and prairie Canada, and the western Boreal Forest Region of western Canada and Alaska. Therefore, DU seeks to work in partnership with other conservation groups to obtain grant funding to implement wetland restoration and enhancement projects to fulfill our collective conservation missions.

### **Pasture Improvement Concepts**

At Buzzy's Ranch, the concept is for a project to improve wet meadow pastures by improving water drainage and delivery capabilities to the three pastures shown in Figure 1. Pastures 1 and 2 currently support extensive stands of tules which provide minimal waterfowl foraging areas and are also poor cattle pasture; pasture areas adjacent to the tule stands do provide cattle forage value. Pasture 3 supports cattle pasture as well as an open water pond which provides waterfowl habitat and cattle drinking opportunities.

In Pasture 1, drainage capability is limited because the northern levee bank separating the pasture from the adjacent drainage ditch is breached, and culverts in the northeast corner are rusted out and non-functional; the resulting saturated soil conditions have led to the development of the extensive stands of tules. Pasture 2 also lacks adequate drainage, with the resulting saturated soil conditions also leading to the build-up of tules. Pasture 3 also lacks adequate drainage due to a non-functional culvert located in the levee separating Pasture 2 from Pasture 3. Water delivery to these three pastures is also marginal due to conveyance ditches that have been damaged by cattle traffic.

DU proposes to improve water drainage and delivery and management capabilities to these pastures by:

- Replacing worn out culverts with new flashboard-type water control structures to provide improved water drainage and delivery capabilities;
- Reconstructing existing levees where needed and constructing one new levee (north end of Pasture 2) to provide improved irrigation water management as well as improved site access; low berms will also be constructed along several field edges to improve pasture irrigation capability;

- Excavating a drainage swale through Pastures 1 and 2 along with several wider pothole areas within the swale that will provide water drainage and delivery capability as well as managed wetland habitat during the spring migration period (water depths to be no greater than 1.5- to 2-feet deep);
- Regrading water delivery ditches as needed to provide improved water delivery; and
- Installing barbed wire fence along the west and east sides of the Pasture 3 pond to limit continuous cattle access to the pond for drinking.

These improvements will provide the following livestock benefits:

- Improved irrigation capability to Pastures 1 and 2 that will allow for better pasture grass management; and
- Improved drainage capability to Pastures 1 and 2 so that pastures can be drained after irrigations to provide improved cattle access to drier pastures.

Besides livestock improvements, these same improvements will benefit waterfowl by:

- Developing wetland habitat management capabilities in Pastures 1 and 2 so that shallow-flooded wetlands (not more than 1.5- to 2-feet deep) can be provided during the February thru early April spring migration period; and
- Protecting wetlands in Pasture 3 during the spring migration and nesting/brood-rearing season (February – July) by constructing riparian pasture fencing.



**LEGEND**

- x — CONSTRUCT / RECONSTRUCT FENCE
- REGRADE DITCH
- EXCAVATE SWALE / POTHOLE
- CONSTRUCT / RECONSTRUCT BERM
- REPLACE / ADD WATER CONTROL STRUCTURE

**PRELIMINARY**

NO.	DESCRIPTION	DATE	APPROVED


**DUCKS UNLIMITED INC.**  
 WESTERN REGIONAL OFFICE  
 06.20.12

PROJECT NO.	BUZZY'S RANCH	DESIGNED BY:	
SHEET NO.	WET MEADOW PASTURE	DRAWN BY:	
	HABITAT ENHANCEMENT CONCEPT	CHECKED BY:	
		APPROVED BY:	

0 300 600 900  
 — BAS. SCALE —  
 UNAUTHORIZED CHANGES & USES  
 THE ENGINEER PREPARING THESE PLANS WILL NOT BE RESPONSIBLE  
 FOR ANY CHANGES MADE TO THESE PLANS. ALL CHANGES MUST BE IN WRITING AND MUST BE APPROVED BY  
 THE PREPARED OF THESE PLANS.