

**OPEN SPACE ADVISORY COMMITTEE
STAFF REPORT**

MEETING DATE: February 22, 2016

AGENDA ITEM NUMBER: 3H

STAFF: Roger Moellendorf, Director
Ann Bollinger, Open Space Administrator
Richard Wilkinson, Senior Natural Resource Specialist

REQUEST: **For Possible Action:** To recommend to the Board of Supervisors approval of the annual activities report of the Open Space Advisory Committee for calendar year 2015.

GENERAL DISCUSSION: Section 13.06.090 of the Carson City Municipal Code provides 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:

- Activities and Events
- Capital Improvement Projects
- Land Acquisitions
- Land Management
- Planning Activities and Reports

Staff suggests a letter / newsletter format as attached which highlights the achievements and successes. Also attached, please find the Index which provides more details regarding each agenda item.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: I move to recommend to the Board of Supervisors approval of the annual activities report of the Open Space Advisory Committee for calendar year 2015.



OPEN SPACE



Carson City Parks, Recreation and Open Space Department

Report to the Board of Supervisors of the Open Space Advisory Committee Activities January – December 2015

Dear Mayor Crowell and Board of Supervisors,

As required by Section 13.06.090 of the Carson City Municipal Code, it is my honor to present to you the following report of the activities conducted by the Open Space Advisory Committee (OSAC) in 2015. The information provided is arranged into the following categories:

- Activities and Events
- Capital Improvement Projects
- Land Acquisitions
- Land Management
- Planning Activities and Reports

2015 was a busy and exciting year, especially with the conveyance of more than 3,500 acres from the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to the Open Space Division. We also welcomed three new staff to assist in the management of more than 6,900 acres of open space throughout Carson City. Richard Wilkinson filled the Senior Natural Resource Specialist position left vacant with Ann Bollinger's promotion to Open Space Administrator. The part-time Silver Saddle Ranch Host/Caretaker and full-time Park Ranger were newly added positions.



Left to right: Ted Esterby – Silver Saddle Ranch Host/Caretaker; Richard Wilkinson – Senior Natural Resource Specialist; Ann Bollinger – Open Space Administrator; and John Costello – Park Ranger

Activities and Events

The OSAC is very pleased to report that our activities and work have immensely benefited from the contribution and assistance of many organization and volunteers.

Environmental Education: Environmental education opportunities span across Carson City. River Wranglers coordinated several education-based work days along the Carson River. The Carson High School Biology Class continued their annual field trip to the Ambrose Carson River Natural Area in which high school students teach lessons to fourth grade students and their second semi-annual trip to Quill Ranch. The Quill Ranch field trip was made possible from a three-year grant through the Dream

Tags Charitable Fund at the Community Foundation of Western Nevada. The high school students are learning about invasive weeds, water quality, wildlife habitat, native vegetation and monitoring techniques. Included with this project is the herbicide application of Russian knapweed, perennial pepperweed and revegetation. Staff worked on project sites with the students to conduct monitoring of line transects to determine if the invasive weed treatments and re-seeding efforts are working. Ms. Koop has expressed an interest in expanding her science program to Silver Saddle Ranch.

The OSAC is proud to report that River Wranglers, who has partnered with the Open Space Division on many programs along the river, received the award for Organization of the Year from the Carson City Foundation for Parks and Recreation. Below is a copy of the nomination.



Open Space Tour: As a result from comments received on their annual Carson River Watershed Tour and made possible through a grant, the Carson Water Subconservancy District (CWSD) planned the first in-depth tour of the watershed. Carson City was selected for the inaugural tour, and in October, staff conducted a half-day tour of open space properties along the Carson River. The tour was open to the public and about 16 people were in attendance. An evaluation was given after the tour and all response were positive.

Organization of the Year: River Wranglers

River Wranglers was formed in 1994 from a grant written by the University of Nevada Cooperative Extension with the initial goals to incorporate water quality monitoring of the Carson River into high school science programs and to provide field experience for science students. When the grant funds were exhausted, Linda Conlin, project coordinator, continued to volunteer and kept the organization intact. Now a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, River Wranglers has expanded environmental education by working with local, state and federal agencies, local schools, and citizen groups to help implement various events throughout the Carson River watershed. They have been a project partner with Carson City for many years and have coordinated several educational events - notably "Trout in the Classroom" and "Conserve the Carson River Days" - in our parks and open space areas. In "Trout in the Classroom," students raise trout from eggs to fry while learning about water quality, habitats, ecosystems, and conservation ethics. The project ends with a release of their trout at the Baily Fishing Pond. One of the longest running projects in Carson City for "Conserve the Carson River Days" occurs at the Ambrose Carson River Natural Area, in which the Honors Biology Class from Carson High School teaches lessons to 4th-grade students on the riparian environment, vegetation, water quality, wildlife, and stewardship of the natural resources.



Public Lands Day: To celebrate the land conveyance from BLM, the Open Space Division inquired with the Kiwanis Clubs and Friends of Silver Saddle Ranch about a partner event and celebration. In September, there was a two-part event hosted at Silver Saddle Ranch. In the morning, the Kiwanis led their annual Carson River Clean-Up Event. More than 150 students from the Carson High School Navy Junior ROTC and about 50 residents joined in the efforts to clean up trash along the river and in the canyons and wrap cottonwood trees along the river. Volunteers returned to Silver Saddle Ranch for BBQ hamburgers and hot dogs served by the Kiwanis. In the afternoon, we began the celebration. Emceed by Roger Moellendorf, speeches were given by Mayor Crowell, Ralph Thomas – BLM District Manager, Juan Guzman, and Nancy Santos – Friends of Silver Saddle Ranch. **Two bands – Sierra Sweethearts and Hick’ry Switch – played bluegrass music until the early evening.**



Carson High School ROTC helping with cleanup along the Carson River.



Celebrating the land conveyance – a symbolic exchange of the check for the land deed.



Sierra Sweethearts performs for the celebraion.



Hick’ry Switch performs for the celebration.

Silver Saddle Ranch: In addition to the Public Lands Day discussed above, Silver Saddle Ranch was used for two other group events – in July by the Nevada All State Trail Riders and in October by BLM for an employee BBQ. In preparation for 2016, five event organizers have already contacted Carson City about continuing their events under the new ownership.

Volunteer Activities and Events:

Capital City C.I.R.C.L.E.S. Initiative Community Service Project: On a rainy Saturday morning and with assistance from Finest Fence, 10 volunteers including previous Supervisor Aldean, helped install an additional 250’ of split-rail fence on the north end of the Prison Hill Recreation Area to prohibit motorized use in the area.



C.I.R.C.L.E.S. volunteers hard at work.



C.I.R.C.L.E.S. volunteers after a wet day of work.

Carson High School ROTC: Linda Conlin with River Wranglers led the efforts to plan and coordinate a large tree wrapping event at the Ambrose Carson River Natural Area. ROTC cadets, their senior leaders and Carson City Open Space staff wrapped and re-wrapped chicken wire around 296 trees along the Carson River to protect them from beaver damage.

Eagle Scout candidates: Chris Berggren hosted a project on the west side of the Prison Hill Recreation Area near Clearview Drive. His project consisted of trail rehabilitation (from erosion events) and the installation of new trail wayfinding markers.

GraceWorks: More than 40 volunteers helped for two days with tree wrapping and trash cleanup along the Carson River at the Morgan Mill Preserve Open Space and Carson River Park.

Capital Improvement Projects

Ash to Kings Trail: In August, the official ribbon-cutting event was held on the Ash to Kings Trail. Approximately, 100 people participated in the event, most of whom arrived by mountain bike. Emceed by Roger Moellendorf, speeches were given by Mayor Cowell, Ann Bollinger, Chas



“Ribbon-cutting” on the Ash to Kings Trail

Macquarie – retired from Lumos & Associates, Dan Morris – U.S. Forest Service, Donna Inversin – Muscle Powered President, Jeff Potter –Muscle Powered Trail Crew Leader and recipient of the American Trails 2015 Trail Worker Award, Kevin Dose – Great Basin Institute, and Jenny Scanland – Nevada State Parks Recreational Trails Director. The ceremony concluded with cutting a unique “ribbon” made of old tire tubes strung between two mountain bike tires.

Eagle Valley Creek trail segment: The long-awaited bridge crossing the Eagle Valley Creek was installed in December. The bridge provides a dry crossing from the Empire Ranch Trail on the north to open space and Riverview Park to the south. The bridge and adjacent trail improvements were made possible by a grant from the Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act.



Eagle Valley Creek bridge

Golden Eagle Lane: Torrential rain events have caused significant erosion and damage in Golden Eagle Lane area. Unfortunately, one grant request for financial assistance with channel and slope stabilization on the Prison Hill Recreation Area and road stabilization on Golden Eagle Lane was not funded. Staff is planning to submit another request to a different agency in 2016.

Prison Hill Recreation Area, 5th Street Trailhead: In anticipation of submitting a grant to the Recreational Trails Program in early 2016 for trailhead improvements, staff contacted a consultant regarding assistance in project design.

Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act (SNPLMA): Staff is working with a volunteer working group consisting of two members each from the OSAC and Parks and Recreation Commission to identify and develop a strong project for the next round of SNPLMA funding, anticipated in late summer 2016.

Land Acquisitions

Arraiz property acquisition: For 2015, there is just one private property acquisition by Carson City to report. The acquisition included 28,424 sq. ft. from the Arraiz Family 1993 Trust. It is located south of Highway 50 at Lompa Lane. The acquisition is significant for further development of the Freeway Multi-Use Pathway. When completed, this section of pathway will travel past the wetlands managed by the Nevada Department of Transportation which provides amazing bird watching opportunities.

Marshall property acquisition: The Marshall property is located in the upper Ash Canyon area, adjacent to the Wilson acquisition by Carson City and to the Lake Tahoe Nevada State Park. The Open Space Division did not have the funding to purchase the property so had inquired with Nevada State Parks and Nevada Land Trust about alternative options. With a grant award from the Desert Terminal Lakes Program to partially fund the acquisition, the other parties were able to



Marshall property

complete the transaction. Nevada Land Trust closed on the purchase of 45.5 acres on November 2nd at the cost of \$205,000. The transaction will be complete after the property is transferred to Nevada State Parks.

Other acquisitions: Two additional acquisitions were reviewed and work will continue into 2016. One parcel is 20 acres located on U.S. Highway 50 near the Clear Creek interchange. The parcel is important for a regional trail connection between Clear Creek and Kings Canyon. The second acquisition is a conservation easement with the Old Woods Ranch LLC. The Old Woods Ranch LLC owns 130 acres which includes forested land and the southern portion of the meadow shared by Mr. Fagen/Horsecreek Ranch.

As of December 1, 2015, approximately 6,936 acres of land have been protected or obtained through purchases, donations, or transfers with a Question 18 cost of \$10,437,282. Grants or other supplemental funding have provided \$8,606,757 for a total of cost of \$19,069,569.

Land Management

Ash Canyon: In 2012, the Open Space Division received the first 319(h) grant specific to Nonpoint Source Stormwater Planning from the Nevada Division of Environmental Protection. Two years later, the Ash Canyon Maintenance and Erosion Control Plan was finalized. With the grant, the City committed to preparing and implementing the plan as funding allows with the project objective to reduce erosion from Ash Canyon Road and thus sediment in Ash Canyon Creek, a municipal water source for Carson City. With another grant award for \$10,000 in 2015, three water bars were repaired and three additional water bars were installed. The grant helped regrade the access to the Ash to Kings Trail, install road base, shape and rip-rap the edge of the parking area and install a boundary fence.

Carson City Weed Coalition (CCWC): In 2014, the University of Nevada Cooperative Extension (UNCE) reduced their funding and efforts towards noxious weeds, resulting in a few layoffs statewide. The CCWC was housed and supervised by UNCE, and therefore was directly impacted by the changes. The Parks, Recreation & Open Space Department offered to take charge, with the Open Space Division taking immediate supervision of the program. The Weed Coordinator position is primarily funded through grants, including \$10,000 from the Carson Water Subconservancy District. In August 2015, the CCWC officially reconvened and confirmed efforts to reduce the noxious weed problems within Carson City.

CCWC has used grant funding from the Nevada Department of Agriculture to hire contractors for treatment. The majority of the work has been on public and private lands adjacent to the Carson River. The Carson River is the biggest transport vector for noxious and invasive weeds, and due to the high risk of certain infestations, the work has been focused in these areas.

Carson River: The Open Space Division received \$10,000 from the Carson Truckee Water Conservancy District to remove large woody debris or snags from the river channel. The grant paid for equipment and seasonal crew time. Only debris from the river channel was removed, allowing for safer passage of water flows during peak flow periods. Debris along the floodplain remained, per the concepts of maintaining a living river, natural conditions, and wildlife habitat.



Carson River – before channel clearing



Carson River – after channel clearing

Eagle Creek / Empire Ranch Trail Bank Stabilization: Staff received \$12,400 from the CWSD to conduct stabilization and minor repair of the Empire Ranch Trail. In 2014, following heavy rains, the creek banks along the Empire Ranch Trail were impacted by high water flows, resulting in significant erosion and partial loss of the trail. These funds allowed staff to hire a contractor to perform the repair of the bank failure. Staff assisted the Carson City Parks Division with a grant, permits and hiring a contractor to complete the repair.



Empire Ranch Trail – before stabilization



Empire Ranch Trail – after stabilization

Fuels Management: Fuels management on acquired lands, as well as natural parks and the wildland-urban interface, is a top priority for the Open Space Division. Our well-received fine fuels management program through the use of sheep continued. The 10th consecutive year with targeted sheep grazing was conducted April – May, lasting 6 ½ weeks. Due to recent past and predicted drought conditions and the desire to maintain desirable species, just one band was used to graze herbaceous fuels on less than 2,000 acres. The Principles of Range Management class at the University of Nevada, Reno conducted a fieldtrip to Carson City to learn about land and grazing management.

Silver Saddle Ranch: Staff has been working hard on the transition from BLM ownership to Carson City by assuming all maintenance for the Silver Saddle Ranch. One of the maintenance activities that has been completed is the pruning of all of the trees near the red and white house complexes. A contractor was hired to trim dead and/or hazardous materials out of all of the trees and apply a systemic herbicide treatment for elm beetles. City crews have spent significant time cleaning up debris and materials around

the buildings and trimming brush along some of the trails. In September, a water leak was repaired near the Red House parking area. The pipes are all old, rusted and galvanized and will need to be replaced sometime in the future.

Volunteer Activities: Mr. Dick Wipfli regularly patrols Ash Canyon and Kings Canyon and provides a presence within open space lands. Mr. Paul Sinnott assists in the Prison Hill Recreation Area with trash clean-up and trail repair. Muscle-Powered continues to help plan and maintain single-track trails throughout Carson City. The Friends of Silver Saddle Ranch (FOSSR) have been very involved with management of lands along the Carson River, particularly the Silver Saddle Ranch. In December, the FOSSR hosted a holiday open house and Santa Claus provided horse-drawn carriage rides.

Planning Activities and Reports

BLM Resource Management Plan: Staff reviewed the BLM Resource Management and prepared a comment letter for the OSAC, Parks and Recreation Commission, and Carson City Board of Supervisors.

Eagle Valley Trails Committee (EVTC): The EVTC is a volunteer group of citizens working to inventory, analyze and improve trails around Carson City. The group held three successful open houses for the public to review maps and comment on trails throughout Carson City. The results will be summarized in a report and provided to Carson City as an updated planning tool. A website is also available to provide comments - <http://www.carsoncitytrails.org/>.

Management Plan for the Carson River Area: Staff is extremely pleased to report that the Final Draft Management Plan for the Carson River Area was completed and it will be presented in early 2016. More than 200 comments were reviewed. The plan can be found online at www.carson.org/PROSdocuments.

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