## OPEN SPACE ADVISORY COMMITTEE STAFF REPORT

**MEETING DATE:** February 22, 2016

**AGENDA ITEM NUMBER:** 3D

**STAFF:** Ann Bollinger, Open Space Administrator

**REQUEST:** For Possible Action: To recommend to the Board of

Supervisors submittal of a grant application to the Forest Legacy Program for the purchase of a conservation easement on the Old Woods Ranch, APNs 007-051-12 and

007-051-79.

## **GENERAL DISCUSSION:**

On February 19, 2015, the Board of Supervisors accepted the Committee's recommendation to approve the work program for calendar year 2015, including land acquisitions. One of the acquisitions is the subject of this staff report – the Old Woods Ranch LLC. This particular acquisition would be conservation easement rather a fee-title purchase.

There are two parcels under consideration - APNs 007-051-12 (80 acres) and 007-051-79 (50.17 acres). The parcels are located on the west side of Carson City between U.S. Highway 50 on the south and Kings Canyon Road on the north. The elevations range from approximately 5,700' to 6,500'. The parcels are adjacent to the Horsecreek Ranch Conservation Easement, and one parcel includes the southern part of the irrigated pasture. The same parcel is also adjacent to an open space property. To the east, there is a parcel owned by Schulz Investments (some of the same family members). It's possible that 100+ acres may be added to this transaction at a later date.

The Old Woods Ranch parcels were evaluated in 2007-2008 and an application was submitted to the FY 2010 Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP) through the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) for the acquisition of a conservation easement on 130 acres. The NRCS grant funding was not approved. The owners are not interested in a sale but would be interested in pursuing a conservation easement.

Since the last discussion with the Committee, the Nevada Division of Forestry (NDF) coordinated a meeting with various agencies, organizations, and the family to discuss the various options. Both NDF and the NRCS state the conservation easement is an eligible transaction for their programs and strongly support the purchase.

NDF administers the Forest Legacy Program (FLP), whose mission "protects 'working forests' those that protect water quality, provide habitat, forest products, opportunities for recreation and other public benefits." As stated above, NRCS administers the FRPP in addition to other programs. In 2014, the FRPP was replaced with the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP). The ACEP helps "conserve agricultural lands and wetlands and their related benefits." While both agencies and programs would be suitable, the match requirement for NDF is just 25% compared the NRCS at 50%.

In preparation for an application to NDF, as well as general assistance and guidance to manage the forest, the family has begun a Forest Stewardship Plan. Additionally, they have met with various City departments to learn and understand the opportunities and limitations to uses on their property.

At this time, staff is just seeking an action from the Committee to continue working on the project with anticipation of submitting an application to the FLP in late summer/early fall of 2016. At a future meeting of the Committee, the budget will be reviewed. The current balance in the land acquisition account is \$537,942; however, the Committee is also reviewing purchase of another un-related property. Only for background information, the Horsecreek Ranch conservation easement on 175 acres cost \$1,100,000, or \$6,274 per acre. The value of a conservation easement on the Old Woods Ranch will be determined through an appraisal.

## **RECOMMENDED ACTION:**

I move to recommend to the Board of Supervisors submittal of a grant application to the Forest Legacy Program for the purchase of a conservation easement on the Old Woods Ranch, APNs 007-051-12 and 007-051-79.















