



STAFF REPORT

Report To: Board of Supervisors **Meeting Date:** July 16, 2020

Staff Contact: Lyndsey Boyer

Agenda Title: For Discussion Only: Discussion and presentation regarding the Open Space Advisory Committee 2019 Annual Report. (Lyndsey Boyer, lboyer@carson.org)

Staff Summary: Carson City Municipal Code ("CCMC") Section 13.06.090 requires that the Open Space Advisory Committee provide an annual report of its activities to the Board of Supervisors.

Agenda Action: Other / Presentation **Time Requested:** 20 Minutes

Proposed Motion

N/A

Board's Strategic Goal

Quality of Life

Previous Action

N/A

Background/Issues & Analysis

As required by CCMC, the annual report has been prepared on behalf of the Open Space Advisory Committee and it describes the most notable activities, functions and successes of the Open Space Division of the Parks and Recreation Department in 2019.

Applicable Statute, Code, Policy, Rule or Regulation

CCMC Chapter 13.06 – Open Space

Financial Information

Is there a fiscal impact? No

If yes, account name/number:

Is it currently budgeted?

Explanation of Fiscal Impact:

Alternatives

N/A

Attachments:

Board Action Taken:

Motion: _____

1) _____

2) _____

Aye/Nay

(Vote Recorded By)



OPEN SPACE



Carson City Parks, Recreation & Open Space Department

Report to the Board of Supervisors from the Open Space Advisory Committee

January – December 2019

Dear Mayor Crowell and Board of Supervisors,

As required by Section 13.06.090 of the Carson City Municipal Code, it is our honor to present to you the following report of the activities conducted by the Open Space Division in 2019. The information provided is arranged into the following categories:

- Acknowledgments
- Activities and Events
- Capital Improvement Projects
- Land Acquisitions
- Land Management

2019 was a busy and exciting year filled with lots of projects and activities! We welcomed new staff to assist in the management of 6,958 acres of open space throughout Carson City. Bill Beck and Tammy Rozman both joined our team as Open Space Seasonal Maintenance Workers, while Kara Berggren worked the summer as our Natural Resource Management AmeriCorps Intern. Ray Ralston came on-board as our new Silver Saddle Ranch Caretaker; and lastly, Shyla Pearson started as the Invasive Plants Coordinator, formerly known as the Carson City Weed Coalition Coordinator.



The photo to the right features Open Space staff in the summer of 2019 who worked to clean-up the Carson River.

(From left to right – Kelsey Stalker, Tammy Rozman, Bill Beck, Ann Bollinger, Kara Berggren, Gregg Berggren, Jared Whitaker and Lyndsey Boyer).

Acknowledgements

The Acknowledgements category was added at the request from OSAC to specifically highlight extra assistance provided to the Open Space Program. This includes grant awards and volunteer efforts. Currently, the Open Space Division manages or is an identified partner on 15 individual grants, totaling nearly \$3 million in funds that help Carson City manage the 6,958 acres of Open Space, or complete large improvement projects to trails and trailheads for the benefit of all Carson City residents.

Grant Awards

Project Name / Area	Grantor	Grant Award	Period	Quality of Life-Open Space contribution (cash or in-kind)
Carson River Canyon Rifle Range Fire Restoration				
	Community Foundation of Western Nevada, Dream Tags Foundation	\$10,000	12/31/2020	\$20,967.75 (cash)
Carson River Trail System, Phase 2 – Ranch Connections				
	Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act	\$1,843,685	6/30/2022	\$50,000 (cash)
Hamm Property Acquisition				
	Land and Water Conservation Fund	\$250,000	9/30/2020 EXTENDED	\$250,000 (cash)
Kings Canyon Road (Dirt Road)				
	Nevada Off-Highway Vehicle Commission (NOHVC)	\$47,000 (to the USFS)	12/31/2021 EXTENDED	\$0
	Nevada Off-Highway Vehicle Commission (NOHVC)	\$18,000 (sub-grant from USFS to Open Space)	12/31/2021	\$0
	Recreational Trails Program (RTP)	\$142,500	12/31/2021	\$0
Kings Canyon / Waterfall Trailhead				
	Federal Land Access Program (grant award to Public Works)	\$3.7 million (to Public Works)	7/30/2021	\$35,000 (cash)
Mexican Dam Ditch Intake Structure Improvement (Mexican Ditch Bridge)				
	Carson Water Subconservancy District	\$25,000	6/30/2020	\$27,500
Noxious Weed Abatement				
	Carson Water Subconservancy District/ National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF)	\$10,200	6/30/2020	\$0
	Carson Water Subconservancy District (annual funding)	\$15,000	6/30/2020	\$0
Prison Hill Recreation Area, 5th Street Trailhead				
	Recreational Trails Program (RTP) / Nevada State Parks and Federal Highways Administration	\$200,000	9/1/2020	\$51,141 (20% match – cash and in-kind)
Prison Hill Recreation Area, Motorized Area				
Phase 2	1) Nevada Off-Highway Vehicle Commission (NOHVC)	1) \$100,000	12/31/2020	\$34,640 (cash and in-kind; \$19,381 for UTV and trailer purchase)
	2) Recreational Trails Program (RTP)	2) \$100,000		
Phase 3	3) Nevada Off-Highway Vehicle Commission (NOHVC)	3) \$100,000	12/31/2022	\$0
	4) Recreational Trails Program (RTP)	4) \$150,000		

Volunteer Activities and Events

Summary: The Open Space Division proudly recognizes volunteer efforts provided by individuals and organizations. While this summary only recognizes those who have submitted official applications, have official agreements, and/or have participated in scheduled activities, the Open Space Division acknowledges and appreciates any and all who help to clean and maintain our precious lands.

Numerous organizations volunteered their time in 2019. Their efforts were mainly focused on trail construction and maintenance, trash clean-up, and river stewardship. Some of these organizations include: River Wranglers, Great Basin Institute, Dutch Bros, Bike Smith, Kiwanis, and Tahoe Rim Trail Association. Muscle Powered continues to be a huge help in planning and maintaining trails throughout Carson City. Additionally, several student groups volunteered with us as well, including multiple Boy Scout troops and the Carson Senator's mountain bike team. The Friends of Silver Saddle Ranch (FOSSR) continue to be very involved with management of lands along the Carson River, particularly Silver Saddle Ranch.

Muscle Powered

Muscle Powered continues to be one of our strongest volunteer partnerships throughout the City. Each year, they assist with the maintenance and management of nearly all single-track dirt trails, in addition to new trail construction as well. In addition to trail activities, Muscle Powered also holds a "Trash Mob" each month to pick up trash in both Open Space and Parks. We greatly appreciate all of Muscle Powered's efforts in helping us maintain and enhance our beautiful Open Spaces.



Muscle Powered Trash Mob volunteers remove 360 pounds of trash at East Silver Saddle Ranch.

Residents played a big part in our volunteer program this year too. Throughout the year, volunteers were busy with a variety of volunteer projects and opportunities, including several different trash clean-up competitions, cottonwood wrapping events, as well as several noxious weed removal events throughout our Parks and Open Spaces. One of the most exciting and novel volunteer events of the year, the first annual "River Float and Cottonwood Wrapping" event was held in late May. Seventeen participants worked to wrap and repair chicken wire on cottonwoods at Ambrose Carson River Natural Area, and then enjoyed a leisurely float down the Carson River, starting at East Silver Saddle Ranch and landing back at Ambrose. We hope this unique mix of stewardship and recreation in Open Space will continue to build our volunteer program in Carson City.

Last, but certainly not least, several individuals like Mr. Paul Sinnott and Ms. Robyn Orloff continue to steward the Prison Hill Recreation Area with trash clean-up and trail maintenance activities.

Adopt-A-Trail

In 2019, our AmeriCorps Volunteer Coordinator worked to create a program which encouraged organizations to assist the Department with volunteer trail maintenance, clean-ups and weeding, while increasing a sense of ownership among the community. Adopters who have signed up include Sierra Strength & Endurance, Boys & Girls Club of Western Nevada, Carson Senators Cycling, Kiwanis Club, Beards & Men, Wells Fargo and of course Muscle Powered. Signage to recognize adopters has been placed at trailheads.



Wells Fargo volunteers on their adopted segment of the Mexican Ditch Trail.

AmeriCorps Volunteers

- Kara Berggren, Natural Resource Management Intern worked with Open Space staff during the summer of 2019 and during her time with the Division she surveyed the entire Carson City owned river corridor for presence of the aquatic noxious weed, Eurasian watermilfoil. She then worked to research, monitor and develop a management plan to address the Eurasian watermilfoil infestations in the Mexican Ditch and other infested water sources in Carson City. In addition, throughout the summer, Kara worked to monitor and remove dryland noxious weeds, focusing on poison hemlock, bull thistle and musk thistle.
- Chelsea Kincheloe, Volunteer Coordinator started as our first AmeriCorps VISTA in this position back in June 2018. During her year-long appointment, she worked to build a robust Volunteer Program for the Department. She worked with dozens of groups and individuals to complete a variety of projects through Carson City, everything from Trash-Dash Competitions to cottonwood wrapping with the public. One of her most notable recent accomplishments was launching the Adopt-a-Trail Program in Carson City. Chelsea's position was filled by Ms. MacKenzie Gargano in December 2019. She will complete another year of service with the Department and continue building the Volunteer Program where her predecessor left off.
- Kristin Simons, Marketing & Outreach Coordinator started with the Department in August 2018. During her year long term of service, she worked to manage and improve our overall marketing and outreach strategy for the Department. Some other examples of projects include: developing a biweekly Department newsletter, continuing to generate video and photo content at events, highlighting the program-of-the-month, website updates and working on various graphic design projects. Additionally, she worked to expand our social media presence and greatly increased our social media following on several platforms.
- Kelsey Stalker, Community Education Coordinator started with the Department in August 2018. During her tenure with the Department, she diligently worked to expand the Community Education Program in Carson City. She worked to create and lead numerous events - including many interpretive hikes and community workshops. She also worked to expand the Junior Ranger Program that was created in 2017. Additionally, one of Kelsey's biggest accomplishments was developing a pollinator garden in conjunction with the Greenhouse Project staged near the Foothill Trailhead and new Bee Hotel.

Eagle Scout Project, C-Hill Trailhead Improvements

Mr. Halen Harrison completed improvements to the C-Hill Trailhead, located at the west end of McKay Drive. Improvements included resurfacing the parking area, as well as applying and compacting an aggregate base. Additional work included refinishing the trailhead kiosk signage and removal of vegetation that was growing around the kiosk.



Volunteers and boy scouts standing in the newly improved C-Hill Trailhead.

Eagle Scout Project, C-Hill Refresh Project

Mr. Gabe Crossman worked with several members from his Boy Scout troop, as well as members from his church to complete a refresh of the “C” on C-Hill. He and volunteers worked to realign the “C” back into place, as well as weed and remove vegetation that was encroaching the “C.”



Volunteers and boy scouts proudly displaying their hard work on C-Hill.

Eagle Scout Project, East Silver Saddle Ranch Revegetation Project

Mr. Ryan Cooley worked with several Boy Scouts from his Troop to complete the revegetation of the burned area at East Silver Saddle Ranch in the fall. Volunteers worked to scatter native seed and plant native shrubs, including sagebrush and bitterbrush across the one acre burned area. In addition to revegetation activities, volunteers also worked to install several tree boxes to create habitat for wood ducks.

Eagle Scout Project, Prison Hill 5th Street Signage Project

Mr. Ari Erickson installed wayfinding signage on the three loop trails on the north end of the Prison Hill Recreation Area for his Eagle Project. In addition, Mr. Erickson also worked with staff to develop the draft text and layout for an interpretive sign to be placed at one of the viewpoints on the trail.

Great Basin Institute, Nevada Conservation Corps

AmeriCorps volunteers from the Nevada Conservation Crew volunteered their efforts at Prison Hill, 5th Street for the entire summer in order to assist us with new trail construction and road decommissioning. Temperatures on the north end of Prison Hill were typically 90 degrees or above throughout the summer, so Open Space staff occasionally treated them with ice-cream and cold water, as well as provided them with educational lessons on the flora and fauna of the region to contribute toward the crew's professional development while they were working with us.



Nevada Conservation Corps and Open Space staff during a professional development training.

Throughout 2019, the Open Space Program received an estimated value of **\$75,247** from volunteers. At minimum, volunteers spent **2,959** hours on our lands, at a value of \$25.43/hour (the latest dollar value available, according to www.independentsector.org).

Activities and Events

In addition to volunteer efforts, the Open Space Division is very pleased to be engaged with various environmental education activities and other events throughout the year.

Carson River Workday

Every year, the Open Space Division works with River Wranglers to implement outdoor education lessons along the Carson River. The project objective is to provide natural resource lessons to high school students, allowing them to teach the same lesson to 4th graders in an outdoor classroom environment. This year, several workday events were held in both the spring and fall and focused on watershed literacy, non-point source pollution as well as riparian ecology. Featuring a cottonwood wrapping service project, as well as water quality education with River Wranglers, students were able to learn a variety of hands-on lessons while learning to appreciate the Carson River.



Senior Natural Resource Specialist, Lyndsey Boyer teaches a lesson on beaver ecology and cottonwood protection.

Interpretive Program

Since 2017, staff have been working with AmeriCorps VISTA volunteers to build a robust interpretive program in Carson City. With the help and dedication of several VISTA members, 2019 was an exciting year for interpretation and education in Carson City, and we saw huge attendance at all programs. In 2019, staff led over 20 programs, including reoccurring Full Moon Hikes, Bird Watching Programs, Ranger Speaks Series and much more!



Carson City Park Rangers have fun with light photography on a Full Moon Hike.



Park Ranger Kerver teaches kids along the Mexican Ditch Trail.

Kids to Parks Day

In May, our Community Education Coordinator and Park Ranger team coordinated an extremely successful 2nd Annual Kids to Parks Day, which was hosted at Silver Saddle Ranch. The day included a guided hike and mountain bike ride, environmental education booths, face painting, food trucks, as well as the second annual Junior Ranger Program event.

National Trails Day

This year, over 70 people participated in National Trails Day which was held on June 1 at the newly acquired and named, Eagle View Open Space property in Ash Canyon. The event included trail construction of a new “Baldy Green to Deer Run Loop”, as well as guided interpretive hike across the new property acquisition.

Approximately 25 volunteers from Muscle Powered, Great Basin Institute and the Tahoe Rim Trail Association helped build the new trail segment.



National Trails Day participants gather to take a guided hike or help build a new section of a trail.

Prison Hill Events

In October, the Pine Nut Mountains Trails Association (PNMTA) planned a major clean-up of the Prison Hill OHV area, which included the removal of hundreds of pounds of trash and debris. Additionally, some OHV enthusiasts put their technical equipment and skill to the test by assisting Open Space staff with the removal of an abandoned vehicle that had been stuck in the non-motorized portion of Prison Hill for several years. Approximately 15 students from the NJROTC assisted with cleanup of the lower canyons and along Golden Eagle Lane as well. This clean-up was completed in advance of the National Off-Highway Vehicles Conservation Council (NOHVCC) Conference in Reno which included a mobile workshop at Prison Hill OHV Area for conference attendees. The mobile workshop was attended by approximately 100 people and included a discussion of the Prison Hill OHV Area project, equipment displays, and vehicle demonstrations.



PNMTA volunteers work to remove the abandoned vehicle.



Mobile workshop participants learn about the Prison Hill Recreation Area OHV Project.

Snapshot Day

The Annual Carson River Snapshot Day took place in October 2019. Over 17 agencies came together to assist nearly 300 students at 11 different spots throughout the Carson River Watershed to teach about water quality,

collect water quality samples and complete an assessment on a specific reach of River. This was the 20th year this event took place on the Carson River, and with this amazing citizen science project we can track water quality and river health across time based on these individual “snapshots.”

Silver Saddle Ranch

There were several events held in 2019, and with increased interest there is the potential for more events in the future.

- Friends of Silver Saddle Ranch: monthly board meetings, hike/bike meet ups, bird walks, star gazing, Spring Open House and Christmas Open House
- Escape from Prison Hill half marathon and 10k running events
- Jazz and Beyond Music Festival
- Interpretive events, Junior Naturalist/Carson Explorers, Kids to Parks Day
- Homestead Holidays

In 2019, the Jazz and Beyond Music Festival was held in August. Four bands played across two stages, with the main “stage” being a flatbed truck donated by Meeks Lumber and Hardware. Approximately 150-175 people visited the venue throughout the day. The Wild Ass Women were present with their adopted burros and two food trucks were on-site for attendees to purchase food and drinks.

Hosted by the Recreation Division, the first annual Homestead Holidays event was held at Silver Saddle Ranch in December 2019. The event featured a Christmas light display, wagon rides, food, crafts and entertainment. Over the course of three days, approximately 1,800 people visited Silver Saddle Ranch and participated in the event. Given the popularity and attendance, the Recreation Division hopes to host the event again next year.



Children worked to make ornaments at Homestead Holidays.



Children get the opportunity to tell Santa their wish list at the Homestead Holidays event.

Trail and Transportation Summit

This year, the Eastern Sierra Trails Coalition (ESTC) combined with the Nevada Department of Transportation/Bike and Pedestrian Program, to hold the first combined summit. The theme was “Connecting Communities – Trails/Transportation/Tourism.” Over 260 participants registered for the event, and between Parks, Recreation & Open Space and Public Works, Carson City participated in four panels and presentations at the summit.

Throughout the year, Open Space staff also had the opportunity to attend several formal trainings, conferences and workshops, as well as hands-on equipment training from the Parks Division.

Capital Improvement Projects

Bee City USA

In celebration of the 2018 Bee City USA #76 designation in Carson City, the 2019 Carson City Chamber of Commerce Leadership Class completed a bee habitat project near the Greenhouse Project at the Foothill Trail. The Chamber Leadership group worked to design and build a Bee Hotel, which will provide habitat for both mason, and leaf-cutter bees. These bees will help pollinate the fruits and vegetables growing in the adjacent Greenhouse Project. In addition to the habitat, the Chamber Leadership Group also worked to create interpretive panels about pollinator conservation, so residents can see the bees hard at work and learn more about organic food production and pollinator conservation before hiking the Foothill Trail.



Bee Hotel constructed by the Chamber of Commerce Leadership Class of 2019.



Close-up of the Mason Bee cells, many of which are 'plugged' indicating a Mason Bee inside.

In addition to the Bee Hotel, staff worked with the Carson-Tahoe Health and Greenhouse Project to create a pollinator garden at this site as well. The garden is located adjacent to the Serenity Stroll, a designated wellness trail administered by the Carson Tahoe Cancer Center. Several other organizations, including The Greenhouse Garden Center and Comstock Seed have assisted with various elements of the project, from donating seeds and seedlings, as well as expertise. We hope that with the combination of the unique projects in this area this site can become a central location for education opportunities, public engagement in pollinator conservation issues and solutions, as well as to learn more about food production.



Volunteers planting native flowers in the Foothill Pollinator Garden.



Blooms of the Foothill Pollinator Garden.

Carson River Trail System, Phase 2 – Ranch Connections

The Open Space Program was awarded a \$1.8 million-dollar grant through the Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act (SNPLMA) in 2016. The grant funds will support the construction of several multi-use pathways on the Prison Hill Recreation Area, Mexican Ditch Trail, Silver Saddle Ranch, and the Old Buzzy’s Ranch. In 2019, Open Space staff worked to hire consultants to complete the section-106 review and engineered design for the trail. Additionally, environmental review activities were also completed, including avian surveys and wetland delineation. Staff anticipates that construction will begin in June of 2020.

Prison Hill Recreation Area, 5th Street Trailhead

In 2016, The Nevada Division of State Parks Recreational Trails Program (RTP) awarded \$200,000 to Carson City for trailhead improvements at the corner of 5th Street and Carson River Road, as identified in the Unified Pathways Master Plan. Construction on the trailhead took place in summer 2019, and included resurfacing the parking lot, and installation of a vault toilet and picnic shelter. In addition to trailhead improvements, the project also focused on sustainable trail realignment, drainage improvements and the rehabilitation of more than two acres of non-sustainable trails. The newly completed trail is an average of 48” wide and was designed to be relatively easy for hiking, mountain biking and horseback riding. Also, as a component of this project, construction of three new trails - the Sagebrush, Bitterbrush and Rabbitbrush Loops was completed.



Newly installed vault toilet, ADA parking stalls and picnic shelter.

In addition to the trail realignment, staff got together to complete revegetation activities at Prison Hill, 5th Street as well. In October 2019, Carson City Parks, Recreation & Open Space Department had an all-staff workday, where they worked to install stray bales for erosion control, as well as to seed decommissioned roadbeds with a native seed blend.



Carson City Parks, Recreation & Open Space staff work together to revegetate disturbed areas at Prison Hill, 5th Street.

Mexican Dam – Mexican Ditch Inlet Safe Passage

In early 2019, Carson City Open Space was awarded a grant from CWSD for a proposed project that will make

modifications to the inlet to allow safe passage around the Mexican Dam for hikers, mountain bikers, runners and equestrians, and will enable portage of small watercraft. This project is supported by both Douglas County Community Services and the Carson Valley Trails Committee because it will extend float trip opportunities into Carson Valley and improve options for trail connectivity between the two counties. This project will be an important component in future connectivity for a loop trail around Prison Hill and for extension of the Aquatic Trail into Carson Valley. Construction on this project began in the fall of 2019.

Silver Saddle Ranch - Stewardship Plan

Since 2018, staff has been working with State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and an architectural historian to complete a baseline survey and develop monitoring protocol for the historic structures at Silver Saddle Ranch. In 2019, the architectural historian worked to compile extensive historic research with the results from the evaluation and assessment of the various buildings on site. Specifically, the consultant worked to evaluate the condition of each historic building, identify any damage and provide recommendations on how best to mitigate the damage for the purposes of preserving the integrity and historic character of the building. This information has been compiled into a report that also includes treatment and maintenance recommendations that will be incorporated as part of the overall stewardship plan. Once approved by SHPO, the plan will provide guidance on maintenance projects at Silver Saddle Ranch, as well as providing framework for the creation of an architectural stewardship and monitoring program for Carson City.

Trail Projects

Other trail projects are being planned for the Carson City area, including the Capital to Tahoe Trail and the Lincoln Bypass Trail which will link Carson City trail systems with trails in Tahoe; Centennial to Washoe Lake State Park; and a connection from Clear Creek to Kings Canyon.

Land Acquisitions

2019 was an exciting year as we continued to make great strides towards future acquisitions!

Clear Creek

Staff has been working with Nevada Land Trust to help facilitate the acquisition of 100+ acres owned by the State of Nevada located in the Clear Creek area, off U.S. Highway 50 West. An appraisal was initiated in fall 2019, and Carson City also submitted a Forest Legacy Grant for acquisition of the property. Unfortunately, the grant application was denied, and the City worked with its Federal Lobbyists to appeal the decision with the USDA. It was determined that the acquisition is not eligible for Forest Legacy funding, as it was previously federal land. Staff is continuing to work with the Nevada Division of State Lands, Nevada Division of Forestry, and Nevada Land Trust to identify options and solutions for acquisition.

Joost Land and Cattle Co.

The subject property includes two parcels consisting of approximately 100 acres located on the west side of Carson City along Ash Canyon Road and just south of the Ash Canyon water tanks. The property has been in the Joost Family for nearly 100 years. Staff from the Open Space Division and Public Works Department have met with the family and family attorney to initiate discussions on the options for the property. These conversations will continue between staff and the family into the future to identify opportunities for acquiring this property.

Old Woods Ranch Conservation Easement

Staff have been working with the Old Woods Ranch LLC for several years regarding the potential to establish a conservation easement with Carson City. This easement would protect approximately 130 acres of pristine meadow and forested habitat adjacent to the Horsecreek Ranch conservation easement that Carson City currently holds. In the fall of 2019, staff worked with the Old Woods Ranch LLC, Nevada Division of Forestry and Nevada Land Trust to submit a grant application to the Forest Legacy Program for the purchase of a conservation easement on the property. During this process, members and managers of the Old Woods Ranch LLC have been diligently working on acceptable terms and conditions of the conservation easement, as well as

potential trail alignments that would provide important connectivity through the property. The grant application will be reviewed in early 2020.

Parks and Recreation Month – Donor Recognition

At the July 18th meeting of the Board of Supervisors, several individuals and companies were recognized for the donation(s) to our department. Specifically, Mr. Michael Fagen (featured below) was recognized for his generous donation of \$10,000 to be used for the stewardship and maintenance of the 20 acres of land acquired along U.S. Highway 50 West. The Open Space Division greatly appreciates all our generous donors and Open Space advocates.



Michael Fagen received recognition for his donation to the Open Space Program.

Schulz Investment

The Schulz Investments properties include two parcels consisting of approximately 355 acres located along the north side of Highway 50 west. While identified on the Open Space Plan and Opportunities Map for protection, staff has not actively been working with the family on an acquisition plan. Rather, the preferred option would be acquisition by the U.S. Forest Service since they are the adjacent landowner/administrator. The family is researching options for limited development on the properties. Staff has provided comments on the proposals, including the desire to keep the hillside undeveloped and protect the scenic views between Carson City and Lake Tahoe.

U.S. Highway 50 West - Michael Fagen

In January 2019, the Open Space Division became the proud new owners of 20 acres along U.S. Highway 50 West, previously owned by Mr. Michael Fagen. The purchase was completed at a total cost of \$292,465.



Newest fee-title acquisition - 20 acres.



Mayor Crowell signs the closing papers.

As of December 2019, approximately 6,958 acres of land have been protected or obtained through purchases, donations, or transfers using the Quality of Life/Question 18 funds at a cost of \$11,006,277. Grants or other supplemental funding have provided \$8,856,757 for a total of cost of \$19,863,034!

Land Management

Ash Canyon

Carson City continues to manage and maintain Ash Canyon Road, following up on the significant erosion and damage that resulted from heavy precipitation in 2017. Since then, the City has been implementing seasonal closure of the road to prevent motorized travel on the road during the winter months. This prevents additional damage to the road by traveling under wet conditions, as well as ensures the safety of motorized users as the road can be unsafe to travel on when snow is present. Moving forward, the gate will remain open throughout the summer season, and will be closed again in the late fall as winter precipitation begins to prevent damage to the road caused by travel on wet soil conditions. Typical closures have taken place from November – May each year.

Carson City Weed Coalition

The Carson City Weed Coalition (CCWC) consists of state, federal, local agency professionals, along with private citizens and landowners, all concerned with the spread of noxious and invasive weeds in our city. The Open Space Division supervises a part-time position to manage the CCWC and noxious weed invasions in Carson City. The Carson City Weed Coalition Coordinator, Marena Disbro worked diligently throughout early 2019 to prepare treatment calendars for the upcoming treatment season. This year, the CCWC worked to utilize integrated pest management (IPM) strategies as much as possible in the treatment areas to maximize efficacy; as a result, both mechanical and chemical treatments on noxious weed populations were applied whenever possible. Additionally, Ms. Disbro worked to develop education and outreach materials to aid the public in identifying and treating noxious weeds on their properties. In June 2019, Ms. Disbro, accepted a full-time position as the Urban Agriculture and Noxious Weed Coordinator for Jefferson Conservation District in Denver, Colorado. After her departure, Carson City revised the position description and job title to be called Invasive Plants Coordinator, and another individual was hired in Ms. Disbro's place. Ms. Shyla Pearson started her position as the Invasive Plants Coordinator in September 2019 and worked diligently throughout the fall and winter to digitize all mapping data into ArcGIS in order to create a comprehensive database for noxious weed infestations in Carson City.

Eurasian Watermilfoil Project

Eurasian Watermilfoil, a category A aquatic noxious weed, was identified in the Mexican Ditch and Carson River in 2018. This plant was first observed in the Mexican Ditch in 2015 but the population remained small at that time. Since the floods of 2017, this plant has established a significant population in the Mexican Ditch. This plant is extremely aggressive and has the potential to negatively impact waterways by outcompeting important native riparian vegetation and clogging up culverts and irrigation structures. After exploring and ruling out a variety of treatment options, including mechanical and chemical removal, staff spent the summer of 2019 looking into other options. The Natural Resource Management Intern, Kara Berggren worked throughout the summer to research, monitor and develop a management plan to address the Eurasian watermilfoil infestation in the Mexican Ditch. Additionally, as a component of this management plan, Ms. Berggren also worked on an experiment examining various treatment methods for Eurasian watermilfoil and evaluating their efficacy in our system. Specifically, Ms. Berggren evaluated the following treatment methods: occultation, solarization and UVC light treatments. In order to evaluate this, Ms. Berggren set up an experiment using five-gallon buckets filled Eurasian watermilfoil from the Mexican Ditch and covered the buckets with black Visqueen plastic (occultation), clear plastic (solarization) and conducted a UVC light treatment. The UVC light treatment is the main method that has been employed in Lake Tahoe. Initial results from the experiment indicate that occluding the plant with black Visqueen plastic is the most effective method of removal. Based on these results, staff will work to set-up a treatment trial using black plastic on the Mexican Ditch in 2020.



Eurasian watermilfoil experiment: occultation, solarization and UVC light treatments are respectively evaluated.



Eurasian watermilfoil from the Mexican Ditch.

Carson River Canyon Open Space

In late December and early January, staff worked to complete reseeding of the area that was burned in the 2018 Rifle Range Fire. Due to topography, staff completed revegetation activities in easily accessible areas to prevent establishment of cheatgrass and mitigate erosion and sediment entering the river. Staff completed a ‘traditional’ seeding, as well as an experimental ‘seed bomb’ treatment. Seed bombs are a novel restoration technique that staff are exploring. The ‘bombs’, or discs, are made of clay, soil and compost, which protect the seeds from birds, rodents and insects. Additionally, since they are protected from the elements, they should have a high success rate of germination. Open Space staff will be monitoring the efficacy of these bombs to see if they can be used in other areas in the future. The bombs are simple and cheap to create and are easier to distribute on the landscape than seeds alone.

Capitalizing on that effort, in February 2019, the Open Space Division was awarded \$10,000 from the Community Foundation of Western Nevada, Dream Tags Charitable Fund Grant to support a large-scale revegetation effort in Carson River Canyon. Originally \$29,486 was requested, but only partial funding was awarded. Open Space allocated a matching amount of \$9,800 (cash match and in-kind) in order to leverage awarded funds further. Plateau herbicide treatments were completed in the spring to prevent cheatgrass establishment and the aerial reseeding was completed in winter 2019. Vegetation and photo point monitoring was also completed prior to Plateau application, and additional monitoring was completed before and after reseeding to evaluate success. Lastly, aerial reseeding with a native seed blend using a helicopter was completed in early November 2019. Staff will complete additional monitoring in spring 2020 to evaluate success and determine if additional treatments are required.

Carson River Trash Walk

In August, Open Space staff walked from East Silver Saddle Ranch to the Ambrose Carson River Natural Area picking up trash, mapping for noxious weeds, and removing ten vehicle tires and other large debris from the Carson River. This is the second year of completing this trash clean-up with staff, and we have already noticed a difference in the volume of trash found.



Lyndsey Boyer and Ann Bollinger picking up trash in the Carson River.



Open Space Team wade the Carson River with trash grabbers and bags to pick up several hundred pounds of garbage.

East Silver Saddle Ranch

Staff worked throughout 2019 to continue to implement the East Silver Saddle site improvement plan. Specifically, staff worked to close all motorized access points to the river, and the site has been fully secured. Staff routinely monitored the area for vandalism and trespass into these decommissioned areas, and over time we saw a significant decrease in the vandalism and negative responses to our improvements. In addition to restricting motorized access, staff also worked to decommission old roads and revegetate them with a native seed blend.

In addition, a small fire started at East Silver Saddle Ranch in June and burned a portion of the property from Sierra Vista Lane down to the Carson River. Reports from the Carson City Fire Department concluded that the fire was likely human caused. Fencing was installed around the burned area of East Silver Saddle Ranch to prevent motorized vehicle trespass and additional disturbance. In November, Open Space staff worked with an Eagle Scout, Mr. Ryan Cooley to complete a revegetation project in this area. Mr. Cooley worked with other Boy Scouts to scatter native seed and plant native shrubs, including sagebrush and bitterbrush, as well as install several tree boxes to create habitat for Wood Ducks.



Burned and damaged cottonwoods and shrubs from June 2019 fire.

Fuels Management with Sheep

Fuels management on acquired lands, as well as natural parks and the wildland-urban interface, continues to be a top priority for the Open Space Division. The 14th consecutive year with targeted sheep grazing was conducted for 6 ½ weeks between April and May. One band was used to graze herbaceous fuels on approximately 2,000 acres. Additionally, staff worked with consultants to update the Carson City Integrated Grazing Management Plan for Fuels Management. As a component of this project, staff and consultants held meetings with all the partners involved in the project to get their feedback, and then once the plan is complete, stakeholders will be brought back together to review the updated plan and discuss the project as a whole. The goal is to improve our efficacy with the project while ensuring that we are meeting the needs of all the individual stakeholders involved. This meeting is anticipated for winter of 2020, prior to the next grazing season once a draft of the updated plan is available. With the addition of the updated plan, the sheep will continue to be an effective tool to help reduce the fire risk to our community.



Lambs and ewes grazing and watering while on C-Hill.

In addition to the targeted grazing project, staff led the 2nd annual “Trail Graze” hike in early May at the C-Hill Trailhead off McKay and Ormsby. Approximately 70 people, including children attended this event! We focused on teaching participants about the purpose and history of the sheep project in Carson City, natural history of sheep and much more.



Nearly 70 participants came out to our “Trail Graze Hike” to learn about the sheep project (sheep pictured in the background).

Hamm Property AKA Eagle View Open Space

In 2018, Carson City purchased 206 acres located between Ash Canyon and Vicee Canyon from Gerald and Luann Hamm. The purchase was made possible from Open Space and trail advocacy groups, significant volunteer efforts, and a generous grant award in the amount of \$250,000 from the Land and Water Conservation Fund. Once Carson City obtained the property, Open Space staff were excited to formally name the property. In consideration of the resolution for naming Open Space properties, staff developed a list of names featuring notable wildlife on the property. The public was notified via several local media outlets of the opportunity to vote. There was a total of 143 people who responded to the survey. In the fall of 2019, taking recommendations from the Open Space Advisory Committee, the Board of Supervisors passed a motion to officially name the property as the “Eagle View Open Space.”

Horsecreek Ranch Thistle Dig

Each year, Carson City Open Space partners with Muscle Powered for one of their monthly “Trash Mob” volunteer events to pull the invasive plant bull thistle from the meadows of Horsecreek Ranch. This pristine and beautiful property is under a conservation easement held by Carson City, and typically public access to this property is prohibited. However, every July, we allow a small group of volunteers the opportunity to see this amazing place while assisting with important invasive plant removal work on the ranch. This year, there were a total of 10 volunteers, including staff. Together, this small but mighty group removed 28 bags of bull thistle from the meadow.



Volunteers stand behind the 28 bags of bull thistle they worked to remove.

Kings Canyon Road

Dirt Road Repair Project

Like many areas and roads around Carson City, Kings Canyon Road was extensively damaged during the 2017 floods. The U.S. Forest Service (USFS) administers most of the road; however, Carson City owns approximately two miles along the Horsecreek Ranch fee-title property acquisition. The Kings Canyon area is popular for numerous recreation activities such as hiking, mountain biking, equestrian, camping and motorized uses. Each year, unfortunately, there are a few vehicle accidents and stranded motorists due to unmaintained road conditions. Due to lack of federal funding for repair, Carson City worked with the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) on a grant application and the USFS was awarded \$47,000 from the Nevada Commission on Off-Highway Vehicles in 2017 to fund the planning and cultural review process for repair of the road. In 2019, Carson City was awarded an additional \$142,000 grant from the Recreational Trails Program to fund the construction and repair of the dirt road. The repair strategy for the road includes re-establishment of the ditch that parallels the road to mitigate water erosion that has caused much of the road damage. In addition, some sections of the road that have significant rutting or erosion will be reconstructed. Lastly, the plan will also address and repair several slope failures along the road. Cultural review of the road will be completed in 2020

and implementation of the road repairs is anticipated for fall of 2020, or summer of 2021.

Waterfall Trailhead

In 2018, the Carson City Regional Transportation Commission (RTC), the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) signed a Memorandum of Agreement to move forward with a Federal Land Access Program (FLAP) project to make improvements to the Kings Canyon Road. A portion of this project includes construction of a new Waterfall Trailhead Parking Area, which includes the following improvements: expanding the parking area to accommodate approximately 30 cars, including ADA parking and two additional trailer parking stalls, as well as a vault toilet. These improvements will result in more effective management of visitors to the site by securing parking that matches current demands, as well as managing for multiple recreational uses at the site. Approximately \$35,000 from the Quality of Life (Open Space) fund has been allocated to serve as a portion of the required 5% local match to a Federal Lands Access Program grant (total project cost approximately \$3.7 million) for trailhead/roadway improvements in Kings Canyon.

Mexican Dam – Safe Passage

In 2018, Open Space staff began working to develop a plan to provide safe passage around the Mexican Dam. This would enable a longer Aquatic Trail and provide connectivity for the Mexican Ditch trail to the south end of the Prison Hill Recreation Area, as well as provide safe passage around the dam for hikers, mountain bikers, runners and equestrians, and will enable portage of small watercraft. In 2018, an engineering plan was developed, and \$25,000 was awarded from the Carson Water Subconservancy District for the proposed project in 2019. This project is supported by both Douglas County Community Services and the Carson Valley Trails Committee because it will extend float trip opportunities from Carson Valley and improve options for trail connectivity between the two counties. Construction will begin in 2019 and should be completed in the summer of 2020.

Moffat Fire

Between August and November 2019, two separate fires have started on the slopes of Moffat Open Space, adjacent to the paved pathway that runs through the property. Both of these fires were small in size (less than one acre), however the frequency of the fires has suggested an anthropogenic cause. Later investigation by the Carson City Fire Department revealed that the most recent fire was intentionally started by juveniles, who have since been apprehended. Staff plan to treat the burned area with a pre-emergent herbicide in the winter of 2019 to prevent annual invasive establishment and will follow-up with a native seeding in the fall of 2020.



August fire at the Moffat Open Space.



November fire at Moffat Open Space.

Old Buzzy's Ranch

Conservation Plan and Water Rights

When Carson City purchased the two properties (Anderson Ranch and Jarrard Ranch), collectively and commonly referred to as the Old Buzzy's Ranch, there was not enough funding to purchase water rights as well. In both transactions, the owners kept the water rights. The terms stated that as long as water rights are applied to

the land, the owners also reserve the exclusive rights for grazing. At the time of acquisition, the Open Space Advisory Committee and the Board of Supervisors agreed to the terms and acknowledged that water will need to be acquired in the future. Recently, Vidler Water Company purchased the water rights on the Jarrard Ranch. Through complex negotiations and transactions, Vidler agreed to a temporary water use back on the ranch.

In anticipation of a future reduction in irrigation water applied to the property, staff have been working with consultants to develop a conservation plan for the Old Buzzy's Ranch property related to water rights, sustainable grazing regimes and restoration of the property. The property has been extensively surveyed in order to identify which areas of the ranch are most productive, which areas are naturally receiving the most water, and which areas will need to be restored to a more natural condition after they are no longer irrigated. One goal of the plan is to work to maintain the aesthetics of the ranch, keeping the fields green if possible. As a component of this project, test plots have been established – both in wet and dry areas of the ranch in order to evaluate the various rehabilitation strategies across variable moisture regimes – and to identify the most successful rehabilitation strategy. Strategies include interseeding, plow and plant, and/or increasing irrigation efficiency by updating irrigation infrastructure. Seeding of both test plots was completed in October 2019, and a glyphosate treatment was completed prior to seeding in order to remove competition from current pasture grasses and weeds. Staff and consultants will continue to monitor the test plots in the spring and subsequent seasons to identify which species successfully establish. With these results, staff hopes to effectively restore portions of the ranch to native conditions to combat future reductions in water rights. Additionally, using the conservation plan staff will be able to better understand the amount of water rights that need to be purchased for the property to sustain current agricultural operations.

Test Wells

In April 2019, Vidler Water Company hired a contractor to conduct soil boring at three sites on the Old Buzzy's Ranch. The project was to determine the feasibility of a water production well. Results of the analysis showed that two out of the three well sites that were examined were not suitable for drinking water, due to presence of arsenic or other undesirable compounds. The third site, which was located at the northernmost point of the ranch was identified to be suitable, based on soil conditions, however, given its proximity to the existing well infrastructure in Riverview Park, was also eliminated. Currently, there are no subsequent plans to complete soil testing or other activities at this location in the future.

Prison Hill Recreation Area

Motorized area

The south end of the Prison Hill Recreation Area comprises about 900 acres which are open to motorized vehicles. In response to previous recommendations in the Carson River Management Plan, the Open Space Division identified the need for a comprehensive strategy to effectively manage this area. In 2017, staff began working with the National Off-Highway Vehicle Conservation Council (NOHVCC) on a phased, multi-year project to improve the recreational opportunities in this area while respecting local homeowners and protecting the natural resources for long-term sustainability. NOHVCC was awarded a grant from the Nevada Off-Highway Vehicle Commission to help fund this planning effort (Phase I). In 2018, through a process that included a comprehensive site assessment and various opportunities for public involvement, the team produced the Prison Hill Recreation Area OHV Management Plan that provided staff with a framework to proactively manage this area (Phase II). Through this process, staff hope to also develop partnerships with groups and organizations who can help with clean-ups, education, monitoring/patrolling, and be advocates for protecting the natural resources. Later, in fall 2019, two additional grants were received from the Nevada Off-Highway Vehicle Commission and the Nevada Recreational Trails Program to begin assessment, layout and design of the trails and trailhead; initial construction elements including the installation of boundary fencing; and education campaigns (Phase III). In addition, our project consultant with RecConnect, also conducted two "Tech-Check" trainings with our Parks Rangers. The Tech-Checks included inspection for OHV registration, spark arrestor, and sound check (96 dB). These periodic Tech-Checks are something the Park Rangers will continue to implement as we work to educate users on Prison Hill on the rules and regulations of OHV use.



Jack Rail fencing installed to identify boundaries and restricted areas.



Park Ranger Costello and Kerver work to complete Tech-Checks on Prison Hill.

In addition to these project improvements and education, the Open Space Division also began working with agency staff from the Nevada State Parks and Nevada Department of Wildlife to gather resources and information related to Golden Eagles around the Prison Hill Recreation Area. In April, staff conducted field surveys with these professionals and discussed critical habitat areas. With this information, staff are working on a strategy moving forward to balance wildlife management with the recreational improvements.

Non-motorized area

In addition to the improvements being made to the southern portion of Prison Hill, staff have begun working on a holistic plan for all of Prison Hill as it relates to trail connectivity, travel management and signage. Specifically, staff have been working to address management issues and identify a solution for the west side of Prison Hill. This area encompasses approximately 100 acres and is located on the west side of Prison Hill (east of Edmonds Drive and generally between Sinbad Street, Koontz Lane, Valley View Drive, and Clearview Drive). The land was conveyed to Carson City from the BLM in 2015 under the Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009 for “Parks and Public Purposes”. The area is not subject to the terms of the Conservation Easement; however, uses are limited to those identified in the “Recreation and Public Purpose Act of June 14, 1926”. The area serves as access points and trailhead facilities to the greater Prison Hill Recreation Area managed by the Open Space Division. Currently, the area does not include 28 acres retained by the BLM along the frontage of Edmonds Drive.

Throughout recent years, the area has experienced increased recreational use, negative impacts of significant weather events, and deferred maintenance. Based on this, Carson City staff have identified the need to develop a conceptual plan for the layout design and management of this area. The process towards a conceptual plan included a review of allowable uses, assessment of past master plans, a public survey and a public meeting. The survey, which received 190 responses, included questions about the trailheads (including parking), access points, and thoughts about the area on the west side of Prison Hill near Koontz Lane, specifically. The results will help guide future improvements, prioritize expenditures, and will be used to seek grants and donations for implementation of various site improvements. The public meeting held in the fall of 2019, had over 100 people in attendance and residents gathered to review draft design renderings and to provide comment on future developments and improvements to the site. The goal is to develop a conceptual plan and potential management strategies for the area, which will be useful when grant funds are sought for improvements.

Signage Master Plan

After completing the Signage Master Plan for Parks, Recreation & Open Space in 2018, staff have been working hard over the last year to update our existing signage or install new kiosk signage throughout our Open Space areas. Signs located in public outdoor facilities perform the integral function of connecting a site and its visitors. They can identify, direct and interpret features within a park, open space or along a trail and provide the users with a sense of knowledge and safety. Signs also identify the location as a Carson City site, which evokes images of Carson’s rich history, well-maintained facilities, and excellent outdoor recreation.



Newly installed kiosk signage and monument sign retrofit at Prison Hill, 5th Street.

Silver Saddle Ranch

Staff have been diligently working on maintenance projects and improvements around Silver Saddle Ranch. Some activities include: weed abatement, beaver activity management on the Mexican Ditch, and vegetation management such as working to clear the travel corridor along roads and trails. Additionally, staff worked throughout 2019 to install a new furnace inside the “Red House” in order to improve heating efficiency in the winter.

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