

**OPEN SPACE ADVISORY COMMITTEE
STAFF REPORT**

MEETING DATE: February 27, 2012

AGENDA ITEM NUMBER: 3G

STAFF: Juan F. Guzman, Open Space Manager



REQUEST: For possible action to recommend to the Board of Supervisors approval of the annual activities report of the Open Space Advisory Committee in calendar year 2011.

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 enclosed has been organized into four main categories: 1) Land management, 2) Activities with volunteers, 3) Preservation of land, and 4) Financial considerations. Staff suggests a letter format as follows:

Dear Mayor Crowell and Board of Supervisors,

As required by Section 13.06.090 of the Carson City Municipal Code, it is my pleasure to present to you the following report containing four broad categories of information.

1) Land Management

The management of fuels on acquired lands is a top priority for the program. With the assistance and through the implementation of the Fire Department, we continue to use grant funds obtained through the Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act for fuels reduction within the Carson Range. In addition, our well-received fine fuels management program through the use of sheep continues along the wilderness interface. That project receives the strong support and cooperation of the U.S. Forest Service, the Nevada Division of Forestry, and the flock of sheep owned and managed by Ted Borda and his family. We understand that Supervisor Walt and her children look forward to this event every year.

In 2010, taking advantage of an unexpected opportunity and through a private consultant, Carson City was successful in planting approximately 9,000 trees within areas of Lakeview and VC Canyon previously burned by the Waterfall Fire in 2004. For that project we also wish to express our gratitude to the Nevada Division of Forestry for facilitating a grant that was used for reducing the cost of this project to Carson City. We are pleased to report that the Jeffrey Pines planted exhibit a 30% survival rate, which is very high for our area.

Staff was successful in completing the second annual monitoring of the 225-acre conservation easement at Horsecreek Ranch. We found no violations of the easement. Third party encroachments and trespassing incidents required the reconstruction and extension of fencing, and we are pleased to report that vandalism at the property has been reduced. Monitoring of the easement is an annual

activity in order to ascertain compliance with the terms of the transaction. It is our privilege to monitor the easement, and it is important to inform you that the stewardship account donated by the owner has a balance around \$47,000 to be used exclusively for this purpose. Please refer to the attached photograph (Exhibit A) illustrating areas monitored within the meadow area of Horsecreek Ranch protected by the easement.

It is with a great sense of accomplishment that the committee informs you that the Fulstone wetlands property was enhanced through the completed construction of 0.5 miles of Class 4 trail and 1/4 mile of full frontage meandering sidewalk. The design included tree planting, rocks, and fencing and is significant since it ties the park side with formal improvements and the rural design of open space. The cost of this effort was leveraged through grants. Please see attached photographs (Exhibits B and C).

2) Activities with Volunteers

The Open Space Advisory Committee is very pleased to report that our activities and work have immensely benefited from the contribution and assistance of volunteers and groups. Dr. Rob Bauter and Mr. Dick Wipfli regularly assist our full-time Ranger position by providing a presence within open space lands. Dick and Rob particularly enjoy their tours on Ash Canyon Road and Kings Canyon Road. They wear shirts identifying them as being volunteers through the Open Space Program and they offer water and assistance to hikers and visitors. They frequently stop and introduce themselves and point to the landscape while narrating to their listeners the ownership patterns, the effects of the Waterfall Fire such as erosion, and many other subject pertinent to the Open Space Program.

Two organizations whose work was incredibly useful to the Open Space Program were the Friends of Silver Saddle Ranch and Muscle-Powered. The Friends of Silver Saddle Ranch (FOSSR) have been very involved with management of lands along the Carson River, particularly the Silver Saddle Ranch. FOSSR was also responsible for initiating the charrette process that culminated in the cohesive vision for the management of the lands along the Carson River corridor. FOSSR also engaged the services of the Sierra Business Council in order to increase their organizational capacity and develop marketing materials that can be used to generate funding that will facilitate them to become a better organization. It is their goal to be able to continue working with Carson City in the management of not only Silver Saddle Ranch but also adjacent acquisitions and open space areas along the river corridor.

Muscle-Powered has been instrumental in the development of primarily single-track trails along the Carson Range. Within property owned by Carson City, Muscle-Powered developed a trail that is extremely popular with cyclists on Ash Canyon Road. The same trail continues into lands owned by the Masonic Lodge that borders the State of Nevada Forest Service and the University Board of Regents (Western Nevada College). One of our efforts currently is to formalize and incorporate that system of trails into Carson City facilities. Muscle-Powered has volunteered to continue to maintain and patrol these trails as well as providing the labor for maintenance of such facilities. In addition and with the assistance of the U.S. Forest Service Carson District Ranger, we have under the leadership of Muscle-Powered advanced the process of planning and design of a trail from Ash Canyon to Kings Canyon. This trail will require compliance with the National Environmental Protection Act. Some of the work completed included a cultural resource assessment along the proposed route. The expertise to conduct that work requires a registered archeologist in compliance



Exhibit A



Exhibit B



Exhibit C

with federal and state guidelines. Vidler Water Company very generously donated their staff archeologist to conduct that work. Lumos and Associates have provided surveying, mapping, engineering, and flood regulation compliance for the proposed creek crossings. The assessment of biological resources was completed by the U.S. Forest Service with the assistance of Ann Bollinger, our Resource Specialist. Muscle-Powered is very hopeful to begin construction of this trail in portions of lands under the jurisdiction of Carson City. We wish to express our gratitude to Supervisor Molly Walt who participated in one of the initial meetings with the U.S. Forest Service and the letter of support signed by you, Mayor Crowell. The entire Board of Supervisors was effective in explaining the importance of open space and this type of project to U.S. Forest Service Supervisor Higgins. At the present time, the Forest Service has incorporated this project into their work program and we continue to work on the development of the documents necessary to be able to construct the trail in its entirety.

There were three other efforts that resulted in very successful accomplishments. Dion Copoulos, with an Eagle Scout project, managed to gather 45 friends that on a Saturday morning, and under the direction of now-Supervisor John McKenna and Planning Commissioner Mark Kimbrough, assisted in constructing an alternative route into the Waterfall site at Kings Canyon. Please see the attached photograph of this activity (Exhibit D). The effort initiated in 2010 was completed as to the first leg from the trailhead at the end of the pavement on Kings Canyon Road to the Waterfall. The upper trail is presently 75% developed through the assistance of the Great Basin Institute. We anticipate to complete the upper trail with the help of volunteers this summer. Please see the attached photograph of the scouts from Troop 422 and friends constructing the lower trail (Exhibit E).

Dave Reese, also in order to fulfill the requirements for an Eagle Scout project, designed and constructed interpretive signage that is to be placed on Ash Canyon Road. Dave was successful in installing the sign frames in 2010 and the signs in the summer of 2011. David returned last summer and volunteered to be our motorized ambassador, visiting all of the properties on a rotation schedule.

Through the efforts of an equestrian group and Beth Scott, grant monies were set aside a few years ago for a preliminary engineering study to be used for the construction of a non-motorized multi-purpose crossing the Carson Freeway at Valley View Drive. In 2011 the services of Lumos and Associates were obtained through the assistance of the Regional Transportation Commission staff in order to conduct this preliminary study. This study is to facilitate the search for grant funding for future permitting and, hopefully, eventual construction of the multi-purpose crossing. The study was completed and recently presented to the Regional Transportation Commission.

3) Preservation of Lands

During the year 2011, Carson City closed escrow on the Serpa property acquisition containing 418 acres and opened escrow for the purchase of the Bently property containing 497 acres. These two projects were advanced as a joint ventures with the Virginia & Truckee Railroad Commission. Due to statutory limitations of the grants and the Question-18 funding itself, there was extreme care placed on the structuring the transactions to demonstrate that the lands purchased with Open Space funds are separate from the lands purchased or reserved by the V&T for future use. In common to these lands is the presence of mercury contamination. The designation with the Superfund area presented difficult challenges in completing these acquisitions, particularly the demonstration to the agencies providing for grants that, the land may be used for open space and that remediation is not



Exhibit D



Exhibit E