

**OPEN SPACE ADVISORY COMMITTEE
STAFF REPORT**

MEETING DATE: February 27, 2012

AGENDA ITEM NUMBER: 3C

STAFF: Ann Bollinger, Natural Resource Specialist *AB*

REQUEST: For possible action to: recommend to the Board of Supervisors acceptance of the monitoring report for the Horsecreek Ranch Conservation Easement for 2011.

GENERAL DISCUSSION: The annual monitoring visit was conducted on October 25, 2011. Previous concerns with trespassers and vandalism were addressed in late 2010. With the assistance of two volunteers, weeds were hand-cut and removed. Weed monitoring and removal is anticipated to continue into future years and Mr. Fagen has extended his invite for scout troops to assist in this effort. The property continues in good condition, and the full report is attached.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: I recommend to the Board of Supervisors acceptance of the monitoring report for the Horsecreek Ranch Conservation Easement for 2011.

Carson City Open Space – Conservation Easement Monitoring

The above actions are permitted by the following conservation easement provisions:

Exhibit B, Permitted Uses and Practices:

3. *Improvements and Facilities*

(a) *Maintenance and Repair of Existing Improvements and Facilities. To maintain, repair, and improve existing structures, housing, fences, ... and other improvements and facilities anywhere on the Property.*

(b) *Construction of Additional Improvements and Facilities. Additional improvements and facilities..., and additional structures, such as inter alia, ... fences... shall be permitted.*

Exhibit C, Prohibited Uses and Practices:

3. *Construction. The construction, reconstruction, or replacement of structures, housing, roads, and other improvements and facilities except as provided in section 11 of this Easement and sections 1 and 3 of Exhibit B.*



Photo – At the upper gated entrance, a new three-strand barbed wire fence extends to the south.

Carson City Open Space – Conservation Easement Monitoring



Photo: At the southeast property corner with the USFS, a new gate was installed to control access.



Photo: At the southeast property corner with the USFS, private property and no trespassing signs were posted.

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4. Subdivision

No change. The landowner is in compliance.

5. Motorized Vehicles

The change is positive and in the desired direction. The landowner is in compliance.

The previous report mentioned a few areas of trespass and the off-road tracks caused by dirt bike use. Since installation of the gate and barbed wire fence, the trespass and unauthorized vehicle use have dissipated.



Photo: The previously photographed dirt bike tracks were not apparent. View from the conservation easement uphill to the adjacent USFS lands on the east.

N 39° 08' 11.4" W 119° 50' 09.9"

6. Tree Cutting

No change. The landowner is in compliance.

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7. Dumping

No change. The landowner is in compliance.

8. Soil Degradation

No change. The landowner is in compliance.

The following is an update and continued monitoring as referenced in the previous report: According to the Mr. Fagen, there was significant winter and spring runoff in the drainage located east of the cabins. Generally, the field conditions appear stable from last year and the vegetation seems to be establishing. Likewise for the lower meadow located south of the cabins. A few areas such as the headcut identified in Photos 4A – 4C should receive some stabilization work though, and Carson City will work with Mr. Fagen towards this goal.



Photo: The photo of this drainage, located south of the cabins, has been included to document current condition and vegetation growth. N 39 07' 42.7" W 119 50' 10.2"

9. Water Quality Degradation

No change. The landowner is in compliance.

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10. Surface Alteration or Excavation

The previous report recommended monitoring for revegetation along the excavated pipeline area. During this field monitoring visit, preferred grass and forb species were not yet apparent. Rather, annual weeds such as cheatgrass and redstem filaree were most common. If natural revegetation is not successful within a few years, a mix of meadow grasses may need to be purchased and raked into the soil during the late fall months.



Photo: The photo of the pipeline excavation area has been included to document current condition and vegetation growth.

11. Fencing Restrictions

No change. The landowner is in compliance.

The fence installation along the east property line, as discussed above, is not constrained by the fencing restrictions identified for specific areas of the property.

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Additional Comments:

- The irrigation ditch known as “Neil’s Flume” was dry during this field monitoring visit however everything seemed to be in working condition.
- The previous report mentioned the presence of bull thistle throughout the meadow and coordination for weed control. On August 24 and September 1, 2011, Mr. Fagen, Ann Bollinger, David Reese (Open Space Program volunteer), and Margie Evans (Carson City Weed Coalition) spent three to four hours each day clipping stems of near-flowering bull thistle plants. Approximately 17 bags were collected and disposed. Unfortunately, there was insufficient time to complete the job. The crew had focused on removal of flowering plants hence the smaller rosettes were generally left behind. Bull thistle is a biennial plant so flower development and seed production should be anticipated next year. In addition, there is an existing seed source and several years of weed control should be planned.
- Mr. Fagen inquired about rvegetation and management of the cattle loafing area located just outside the gated entrance to the cabins. This area is higher and drier compared to the rest of the meadow and it is highly desirable to the cattle. The high intensity use has resulted in bare ground and some growth of annual grasses (cheatgrass and foxtail). Perennial grasses and forbs were nonexistent. Staff discussed various options with Jay Davison (University of Nevada Cooperative Extension), Steve Walker (Walker and Associates), and Mr. Fagen. At this time, the decision was to “sacrifice” this area in exchange for protection of others areas. The loafing area will be monitored with the goal of limiting further expansion.
- Staff is pleased to report on an incident which occurred after the inspection and while driving off the property. At the uppermost gate near Kings Canyon Road, a driver had stopped and waited. He asked if we were aware that we were on private property and stated that trespassing was not permitted. We responded regarding Mr. Fagen’s knowledge and permission and stated our task of conducting a monitoring inspection of the easement. It was good to observe someone understanding the protection and enjoying scenic beauty of the conservation easement from Kings Canyon Road.
- Stewardship Account: Carson City shared the cost of gate and fence installation. The account has a current balance of \$47,875.

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Summary:

The results of the 2011 audit of the Horsecreek Conservation Easement by Carson City demonstrated that the property continues in good condition and that the landowner is in full compliance with both the letter and the spirit of the Easement. The landowner continues to improve the property in a number of ways, all consistent with the purpose of the Easement. The landowner is cooperative about addressing, over time and in consideration of available resources, additional improvements to the conditions on the property in a joint effort with Carson City and other local agencies. Previous concerns with trespassers and vandalism were addressed in late 2010. Weed control will require annual monitoring and removal, and Mr. Fagen has extended his invite for scout troops to assist in this effort, with July and August being the optimal months. Additional scout projects may include brush clearing along the road and repair of the water bars.

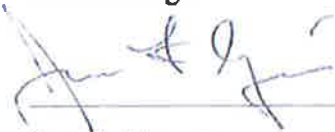
Written by:



Ann Bollinger

Date: 1/23/12

Reviewed by:



Juan F. Guzman

Date: 1/23/12

Landowner:



William Michael Fagen

Date: 1/25/12

Carson City Open Space – Conservation Easement Monitoring

Please indicate the number of the following attachments to this report. Be sure to date and sign all materials and provide a description or map showing where on-site photos and illustrations were taken:

Aerial photos

Ground photos (digital or other)

- 17 ground photos – Repeat Photo Documentation
- Digital photos taken, copied into a written report

Maps and illustrations

Other:

- Walker & Associates, Horse Creek Ranch Annual Pasture Utilization and Condition Assessment

Date Inspection Report Sent To Landowner: _____

Repeat Photo Documentation (as compared to the Baseline Condition Report)

Photo 1A (north)



Photo 1B (north)



Repeat Photo Documentation (as compared to the Baseline Condition Report)

Photo 2 (south)



Photo 3 (south)



Repeat Photo Documentation (as compared to the Baseline Condition Report)

Photo 4A (north)



Photo 4B (detail)

