It was a weekend of meadows and monuments for volunteers across the state of Nevada as we celebrated National Public Lands Day on the fourth Saturday of September. This event is the largest single-day volunteer effort for public lands and we saw the dedication of our amazing volunteers out in full force this year.

In southern Nevada, Friends of Nevada Wilderness partnered with the Bureau of Land Management and Friends of Gold Butte to host a Public Lands Day celebration in Gold Butte National Monument. Forty volunteers broke into three teams to tackle projects; while some erected road markers along the Gold Butte Backcountry Byway, the other two teams re-wilded sensitive spring habitat that was damaged by illegal off-roading. Often referred to as Nevada’s piece of the Grand Canyon, Gold Butte is a treasure trove of cultural, historic, and natural wonders well worth protecting. In the words of volunteer Lois Mills: “We need to protect our public lands now because once they’re gone, they’re gone.”

In northern Nevada, volunteers camped out in Soldier Meadows, part of the Black Rock Desert-High Rock Canyon Emigrant Trails National Conservation Area. Most of the team stayed in the meadow to install

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FRONTLINES
By Shaaron Netherton / Executive Director

Our state is still reeling from the horrendous event in Las Vegas that took so many lives and impacted so many more. I hope we can come together as a country to find a meaningful way to help America stop this senseless violence. Don’t let hate win.

This year has certainly presented some challenges. To say that 2017 has been trying would be the understatement of the year. Friends will continue to strive to protect Nevada’s Wilderness, her public lands and national monuments, maintain our Wilderness trails and engage our awesome volunteers. United, we can make a difference.

I have faith in people like you who love our huge wild places like the Sheep Range, who join us on stewardship projects across the state to care for our public lands regardless of personal politics. You restore my faith when I see you stand up for Wilderness, when I hear you speak out for our public lands, when I know you are out with a shovel and a hard hat volunteering on our backcountry trails. It gives me hope.

Adversity challenges us to be better people, whether helping Wilderness or hurricane victims. In this trying year, and for the years ahead, I am asking all of you to rise to the occasion – with your energy, with your giving, with your compassion. Start each morning by asking yourself, ‘What can I do at the local level to make the world a better place for all of its creatures?’ And don’t just listen to the answer – act on it.

KAREN MARIE TODD HONORS FRIENDS WITH LEGACY GIFT

Friends of Nevada Wilderness was honored to recently receive a generous legacy gift from Karen Marie Todd (1949-2016), a long-time member who passed away tragically June 16th of 2016 in a rafting accident in Northeast Alaska.

As a passionate lover of the outdoors, Karen had many, many close friendships in our northern Nevada circle of supporters and volunteers, and she is deeply missed by all.

Her partner Carol Sewell noted, “Karen never sat still and though her calendar was packed full, she always found room to squeeze in more.” In addition to her volunteerism, Karen wanted to give back to her northern Nevada community with legacy gifts to her favorite organizations.

All legacy gifts to Friends of Nevada Wilderness are directed to the Marge Sill Forever Wild Fund. This critical fund enables the Friends’ Board of Directors to direct special funding to unexpected emergencies and opportunities. The Forever Wild Fund gives Friends a much needed flexibility beyond grant funding.

Since its founding 34 years ago, Friends of Nevada Wilderness has achieved an impressive legacy of over 3.4 million acres of protected Wilderness in Nevada. Please consider Friends for your personal legacy by designating Friends in your will or bequest for a gift from your estate. You can continue to protect the places you love with a legacy gift to the Marge Sill Forever Wild Fund.

Karen Todd enjoying the Black Rock Desert Playa.
temperature monitoring devices in the springs and survey for invasive weeds. This is part of an on-going study that helps monitor the habitat for the threatened desert dace, a fish that is only found in the springs at Soldier Meadows. Another team gave the public-use Soldier Meadows cabin a good scrub and repair. A hardy group of hikers headed up to the North Black Rock Range Wilderness to mark eight miles of Wilderness boundary.

After a hard day of work, volunteers celebrated with a Dutch Oven Cook-off and potluck, and shared stories under the stars about the region and its history.

“A lot of people don’t ever see the stars, the sun that comes up over the mountains, the moon that comes up, the sunsets,” said Laura Blaylock. “You are so in touch with Mother Nature when you come out to our public lands.”

In addition to celebrating National Public Lands Day, Nevadans also celebrated the first Nevada Public Lands Day, thanks to the passage of Senate Bill 413. This bill, introduced by Nicole Cannizzaro and thirteen co-sponsors and signed by Governor Brian Sandoval during Nevada’s last Legislative session, establishes the last Saturday in September as Public Lands Day in Nevada. SB413 celebrates public lands in our state, and specifies that Nevadans do not want our public lands to be transferred to state control. An official Nevada Public Lands Day serves as an annual reminder to our elected officials that Nevadans value our public lands and want to keep them in public hands.

Michael Sprinkle, who spent the last summer as an AmeriCorps service member with Friends of Nevada Wilderness, joined the Public Lands Day celebration in northern Nevada and agreed that Nevada needs to keep public lands in public hands.

“Public lands are for the people of the United States,” Michael Sprinkle said. “It’s something that we all share, that we all can experience and it’s for the benefit of all of America.”
Mike Sirianni spent his third summer on the Sheldon National Wildlife Refuge hauling out fence, photographing wildlife, and getting out of touch with the rest of the world.

“The Sheldon is a place that brings you down to your most basic level of being. You get in touch with the wilderness on a level that you could never do on visitation basis; you are living there full time, away from society, phone signal, internet,” said Mike. “I’ve totally fallen in love with escaping from the world.”

During the 2017 season, the three-person crew – comprised of Mike and two AmeriCorps service volunteers – removed 32,749 pounds of metal debris and almost nine miles of leftover range fence. Livestock grazing was phased out of the refuge in the 1990s, but relics from the era still mark the refuge. Since 2009, Friends of Nevada Wilderness crews and volunteers have removed almost 300 miles of fence in partnership with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Greater Hart-Sheldon Conservation Fund, Oregon Natural Desert Association, and the Sierra Club.

Mike’s first summer on the Sheldon in 2013 as a service volunteer through the Nevada Outdoor School AmeriCorps program was one of discovery – and sun.

“Being from Florida, for years, I had no idea what I was walking into. But I signed up,” Mike said. “And I asked Pat, you know, ‘Should I bring my hammock? I wanna hook my hammock up on some trees.’ And he said, ‘There’s no trees out here.’

Now, the sagebrush sea of Nevada’s high desert is like a second home to Mike, with the Sheldon’s wildlife as an ever-present neighbor. Early in the season, the crew woke up to a surprise aerial invasion.

“One day we had over, like, two hundred bees in the front yard digging little individual holes,” said Mike. “It increased to almost maybe the thousands and surrounded the entire house.”

The bees that were invading the yard of the Little Sheldon House were Alkali Bees, a solitary, ground-nesting species that are native to dry regions of the Western U.S. The Sheldon Refuge is an ideal area for Alkali Bees who prefer to nest in moist basin-type soils with salty surfaces. Though, due to the wet year and the flooded flats in the valley below, the bees found the next best option in some higher ground.

“I mean, I’ve never seen that kind of behavior before. They were digging individual holes and laying eggs and leaving them behind,” said Mike, describing the buzzy little visitors’ frantic activity. “But they were harmless. Within a week, they had done their job and left.”

Now an experienced conservation crew leader with three years under his belt, Mike says the Sheldon has given him purpose and a direction in life.

“I’ve always dreamt about working like this, I never knew how I was going to do it and it’s definitely opening up gateways that are going to take me so much further in this industry.
As a New York native, I had little notion of what wild Nevada actually consisted of when I accepted the job as the Trail Crew Leader at Friends of Nevada Wilderness. My preconceived notions included sand, heat, and lots of open and flat space. Though there is plenty of that, there are also areas that are the stuff of Narnia or Middle Earth. Once you pull off the main highway, leaving the paved road to start rambling down a dusty single track, lush landscapes begin to rise from the horizon. In some places, like the High Schells Wilderness or Jarbidge Wilderness, I felt as though I was in upstate New York or New Hampshire. Ancient aspen, towering firs, junipers and pines dominate gushing creeks and rivers that are fed predominantly by springs and snow melt. We never struggled to find water that was icy cold, crystal clear, and perfectly refreshing. Each hitch only continued to prove how wrong I was about wild Nevada.

Our crew had a fair share of exciting and terrifying moments concerning wildlife. Bird watching was a great pastime over the summer, and we were fortunate enough to identify over 65 species including Golden Eagles, Northern Harriers, Red Tailed Hawk, Burrowing Owls, Nighthawks and many warblers and hummingbirds. In the Table Mountain Wilderness, I saw my first bull elk. It was quite a sight to see a 650+ lb., six point behemoth in the midst of a barren canyon. In the Santa Rosa-Paradise Peak Wilderness, on numerous occasions we had to wait for rattlesnakes to leave the trail. We even found fresh mountain lion tracks leading up to our camp in a few Wilderness areas. Although somewhat terrifying at times, these experiences reminded us that we humans are the guests out there.

The change in perspective I’ve experienced this summer has kindled a deep love for Nevada Wilderness in me. Every area provided such variety and beauty, I can’t help but look forward to what next season holds. Out of all the places I’ve hiked, backpacked, or built trail, Nevada has been my favorite. Whatever you are looking for, be it solitude, elevation, caves, hot springs, wildlife, alpine fishing, horseback riding, or just a quick overnight, Nevada has options in spades.

Are you interested in spending a summer making the Sheldon Refuge a wilder place? Contact Pat Bruce, pbruce@nevadawilderness.org for information on paid and volunteer opportunities for the 2018 season.
The Sheep Range Proposed Wilderness Complex, looming just north of Las Vegas, is the largest roadless area in the state and part of the Desert National Wildlife Refuge, the largest refuge in the lower 48 states. And the massive, magnificent Sheep Range is under threat. Our Joshua trees and bristlecone pine, and our Burrowing Owls. Our bighorn sheep - one of the largest herds in the nation and our iconic Sagebrush State animal – all under threat from a military eager to gain primary jurisdiction over the Desert Refuge.

Without permanent protection as Congressionally-designated Wilderness, the military will continue gaining ground in the fight for the Sheep Range’s 462,000 acres, the very soul of the Desert National Wildlife Refuge. They will continue inhibiting wildlife migration with fences and roads continue eliminating public access for the backpackers, birders, scouts, and jeepers hoping to discover the area’s wild secrets.

As the military gains more jurisdiction over the Desert Refuge, we lose Nevada’s wild lands and Nevada’s wildlife. We lose our wild life.

The Sheep Range Proposed Wilderness Complex – which also includes a portion of the Las Vegas Range and Gass Peak – provides visitors the ability to experience the full spectrum of the seven life-zones that characterize the Desert Refuge. Elevations span from 3,000 to nearly 10,000 feet on Hayford Peak. For visitors with the skills and stamina, the opportunities to explore the limestone cliffs and hidden forests of the Sheep Range are endless. The area’s indigenous peoples have utilized the Sheep Range for thousands of years, leaving beautifully preserved agave roasting pits, petroglyphs, rock shelters, and other artifacts.

We recognize the importance of national security. We also believe the military’s agenda to increase their training capacity can coexist with a Congressionally-designated Sheep Range Wilderness Complex. By sound management and systematic cleanup of the current multi-million acre Nevada Test and Training Range, our military can ensure it has the space it needs, while the American people are not deprived of the irreplaceable treasure that is the Sheep Range Wilderness Complex.

This isn’t the first attempted coup on the refuge by the military. And it won’t be the last. There is only one permanent solution, and that’s Wilderness. By protecting
the Sheep Range as Wilderness, Congress will assure Americans that they recognize this untrammeled treasure and it receives the highest level of protection in our public lands system.

“There are few places I would call pristine, but the Sheep Range Proposed Wilderness Complex is one of them,” said Shaaron Netherton, Executive Director of Friends of Nevada Wilderness.

We need you to speak out for the Sheep Range when the Legislative Environmental Impact Study (LEIS) is introduced, and tell your Congressional representatives they must permanently protect the pristine Sheep Range Complex as Congressionally-designated Wilderness.

Visit the Sheep Range and Fall in Love with its Beauty

There are several ways to access the Sheep Range. The Alamo Road runs north to south along the Sheep Range. The Mormon Well Road runs primarily west to east. It is strongly recommended you check with Desert Refuge staff on road conditions before venturing out.

Access Point 1: Corn Creek Visitor Center – This main entry point is only 20 minutes away from the northern side of Las Vegas and it is the best access point for first time visitors. From Las Vegas: Drive north on US-95 and make a right turn onto the signed Corn Creek Road. Take the paved road to the visitor center. Corn Creek Road provides access to Alamo Road and Mormon Well Road.

Access Point 2: Mormon Well Road East – This road requires high-clearance, 4-wheel drive vehicle. From Las Vegas: Drive north on US-93, and make a left-hand turn just north of mile marker 80. There are no signs until driving further up the road.

Access Point 3: Alamo Road North – This road requires high-clearance, 4-wheel drive vehicle. From Las Vegas: Drive north on US-93 for approximately 64 miles. Make a left-hand turn into the Pahranagat National Wildlife Refuge visitor center entrance. Continue through the visitor center road to access the Alamo Road.
Overnight Projects Get Some Backing From Backcountry Horsesmen

By Shi-Lynn Campbell

Summer in Nevada means time for some much-needed trail maintenance across the state. In northern Nevada, warmer temperatures melt the snow and reveal the damage caused by winter weather; downed trees, indistinguishable trail boundaries, and brush overgrowth come peeking out of their wintry blanket. In southern Nevada, staff and volunteers escape the soaring summer temperatures by working in the 57,000-acre Mt. Charleston Wilderness, where it’s 20 degrees cooler than the Las Vegas valley.

Taking advantage of weather windows and organizing the correct team to get the job done is something Friends of Nevada Wilderness and agency partners plan months in advance. With work more than two miles into designated Wilderness areas where mechanized transport is forbidden, it was a long haul to get tools and supplies to the project sites – but the Backcountry Horsemen of Nevada came to the rescue!

In northern Nevada, trail crew master and Associate Director Kurt Kuznicki enlisted the expertise of the High Sierra and High Desert chapters of the Backcountry Horsemen of Nevada to help the Friends of Nevada Wilderness seasonal trail crew. After organizing and packing the trail crew’s tools, Backcountry Horsemen like Jerry Williams and Larry Fenkell lead a mule team up the trail. Mule teams helped create a base camp for Friends’ trail crew, working on remote trails hidden deep within beautiful areas like the Jarbidge Wilderness in northeastern Nevada. Thanks to the Backcountry Horsemen, our trail crew enjoyed cooked meals, plentiful water, and snacks.

In southern Nevada, the Bristlecone Chapter of the Backcountry Horsemen assisted Southern Nevada Stewardship Coordinator Grace Larsen with setting up her base camp on Mt. Charleston for a series of volunteer projects. Packers known as Big Jim and Mikey hauled multiple loads of tools and water several miles into the Wilderness. Volunteers including our Backcountry Horsemen partners were treated Saturday evening to a hearty dinner – a satisfying thank you to those who spent the day working on maintenance projects on the North Loop trail leading towards Mt. Charleston Peak. Dining at 9,000 feet while watching the sun set as wildlife scurry around base camp made the trail work that much more satisfying.

“The Backcountry Horsemen’s support meant we got to gaze at the clear night skies found in Wilderness while enjoying delicious meals and all the comforts of glamping!” said Grace, who led the Mt. Charleston trail projects.

Each Sunday, after working on the trail until lunch, volunteers head back down the trail to Las Vegas, knowing there will be a cache of tools and water for the next weekend’s work.

Users of Nevada’s public lands trails have complimented the tireless work our seasonal crew, staff members, and volunteers have put into Nevada’s Wilderness trails – but that work would not have been possible without the support we received from the amazing men and women of the Backcountry Horsemen of Nevada.

“I love the Backcountry Horseman of Nevada,” said Kurt, who manages the seasonal trail crew. “I appreciate the heart they have for wilderness and for keeping traditional skills alive. We could not do what we do for Nevada trails without their hard work and support.”
INTO THE DARKNESS

By Richie Bednarski

Massacre Rim Wilderness Study Area inspires and intrigues. From sweeping desert vistas to an exquisitely dark night sky, this area provides a unique wilderness experience. Located just southwest of the Sheldon National Wildlife Refuge and north of the Black Rock Desert, this area is part of nearly 3,000 square miles of undeveloped desert wonderland that provides a haven for bighorn sheep, mountain lions, and raptors. After the sunset, another dimension of Wilderness reveals itself; the night sky is rich with burning stars and the opportunities for star gazing are unprecedented.

Friends of Nevada Wilderness is currently working with the Bureau of Land Management Applegate Field Office to draft a proposal to the International Dark Sky Association to make the Massacre Rim Wilderness Study Area the first Dark Sky Sanctuary in Nevada. (The area has an average reading of two on the Bortle Scale. Additionally, we quantified the darkness with a unihedron sky quality meter, a device that measures the luminance of the night sky and the average reading was 21.76 mag/arcsec². A quick Google search for “The Bortle Scale” and “Magnitudes/Square Arc Second” will help in understanding how dark this is.) At over 160 miles north of Reno, the light pollution is near non-existent and the average viewer can see our neighboring galaxy, Andromeda, with the naked eye!

It is our hope that the Massacre Rim Wilderness Study Area will not only become the first Dark Sky Sanctuary in Nevada, but that eventually it will become the first Dark Sky Wilderness in the world. An official Dark Sky Sanctuary designation will garner more support for a Congressional designation of Wilderness.

Check out the International Dark Sky Association for more information at www.darksky.org. They are dedicated to preserving the remaining night sky from the onslaught of growing light pollution. If you have further questions or would like more information, please contact Richie Bednarski at richie@nevadawilderness.org.

THANKS TO YOU, WE’RE TRUCKIN’ ON

By Dan Alvey

We are excited to announce that Friends of Nevada Wilderness was able to purchase a new stewardship truck with the generous donations made through our Nevada’s Big Give fundraiser last March!

We needed an additional truck to take volunteers and gear to project sites across Nevada and into the backcountry. For years we relied heavily on expensive rental vehicles but now we can cut rental costs and increase our stewardship capacity with this heavy duty work truck. Whether it’s planting native seedlings in the Santa Rosa Mountains, maintaining hiking trails in Jarbidge Wilderness, or transporting students on our popular Alternative Spring Break program, this truck will help us navigate the rugged roads necessary to keep Nevada wild!

Thank you so much to everyone who supported this year’s Nevada’s Big Give fundraiser by sharing or donating. We couldn’t do the work we do across Nevada without awesome supporters like you.

Volunteers pose with the new stewardship field vehicle, a 2017 Dodge 2500, after a fence pull project in High Rock Canyon Wilderness. Photo by Kurt Kuznicki.
2017 Stewardship Accomplishments

Northern Nevada

- Pulled over 30,000 invasive Musk Thistle plants from the Mt. Rose Wilderness.
- Installed 47 Wilderness boundary markers in the Black Rock National Conservation Area.
- Disassembled and removed approximately 2,000 lbs. (that’s 1 ton!) of metal fencing from High Rock Canyon Wilderness.
- The Northern Nevada Trail Crew maintained 70 miles of trail in the following Wilderness areas: Arc Dome Wilderness, East Humboldt Wilderness, High Shells Wilderness, Jarbidge Wilderness, Santa Rosa Wilderness, and Table Mountain Wilderness.

Southern Nevada

- Restored 1.3 miles of damage incurred from illegal motorized intrusions, which will lead to the passive restoration of an additional 8.1 miles from illegal routes.
- Installed 9 barriers, consisting of 148 posts, to prevent further illegal motorized intrusions.
- Improved habitats in four springs.
- Removed 12,690 lbs. (that’s over 6 tons!) of litter.
- Maintained 16.2 miles of trails in the following Wilderness areas: Mt. Charleston Wilderness, La Madre Mountain Wilderness, and Pinto Valley Wilderness.

Donate Today and Make a Difference That Will Last a Lifetime.

Your tax-deductible gift to Friends of Nevada Wilderness is an investment in the future of Nevada’s air, water, healthy wildlife, community health and quality of life, and opportunities to explore and discover for the children of the future. Please consider Friends of Nevada Wilderness in your charitable giving and estate planning. Contact Connie Howard for more information: E-mail connie.howard@nevadawilderness.org. Tax ID: 88-0211763.
REMEMBERING OUR HEROES

It’s hard to believe that it has been a year since we lost Marge Sill, the Mother of Nevada Wilderness. We also lost three other Wilderness, wildlife, and cultural resource champions in 2017 that were very close to Friends of Nevada Wilderness.

The father of our former associate director, Brian Befort, Lee was a champion of Gold Butte, a site steward for some of our precious cultural resources, and he and his partner, Wally, always provided a home away from home for Friends’ staff. Lee was an actor, an artist and a lover of wild places. Nature was in his soul, and Lee was proud and grateful to support Friends’ efforts to protect the wild.

Howard has been testifying on behalf of Nevada’s wild places as early as the 1970’s, defending the Desert National Wildlife Refuge and helping guide Friends’ early days. His incredible photos have documented most of southern Nevada’s wildlands. This spring, even at 90 years old, Howard was testifying in support of public lands bills at the state legislature. Howard was a true Wilderness hero.

Lee was well known in the scientific and conservation community for the great work he did with desert fish, especially the Devil’s Hole pupfish. He was a biologist with the US Fish and Wildlife Service and a popular speaker at Friends’ Wild Speaker Series. Lee loved spending time exploring with his family, including his daughter, Jesy, our former Programs Coordinator.

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2018 Wild Nevada Calendar

Order today at NevadaWilderness.org/shop or by calling (775) 324-7667
Or send this form with your check to Friends of Nevada Wilderness, PO Box 9754, Reno, NV 89507

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Donations (not purchases) are tax-deductible! Proceeds benefit wild places across Nevada!
Friends of Nevada Wilderness

Friends of Nevada Wilderness is dedicated to preserving all qualified Nevada public lands as wilderness, protecting all present and potential wilderness from ongoing threats, educating the public about the values of — and need for — wilderness, and improving the management and restoration of wild lands.

UPCOMING TRIPS AND EVENTS

Northern Nevada

Stewardship Hobnob, November 1
Join us at our northern Nevada office for the last Stewardship Hobnob of the year; get together with other volunteers over some delicious food and drinks. We will be gathering to go over this season’s accomplishments, generate ideas and comments for next year, and enjoy each others company.

Wilderness Wingding, December 8
This community event will be held at the California Building in Idlewild Park. It is open to the public and will honor all the great work accomplished by our volunteers, activists, and supporters in 2017. Please join us for a night filled with merriment, live music, hors d’oeuvres, light dinner, raffle prizes, and a silent auction.

Southern Nevada

Wild Speaker Series, November 2
Thomas Valencia, an Education & Outreach Specialist with the National Park Service, will be giving a presentation on unique places to see in the Lake Mead National Recreation Area.

Bridge Mountain Trail Project #3, November 4
Join us as we head to Bridge Mountain Trail in Rainbow Mountain Wilderness to help prevent erosion issues. We will be building natural steps and water bars to help keep the area pristine.

Wild & Scenic Film Festival, November 17
Join us for our 5th Wild & Scenic Film Festival, which will feature 10 short films each focusing on a subject that relates to nature, conservation, and outdoor recreation.

Veterans Day Appreciation Project, November 19
We’ll be heading to South McCullough Wilderness to install post and cable barriers that will prevent incursions into Wilderness and protect the vast array of species that call this wild place home.

Arrow Canyon Project, December 2
Arrow Canyon Wilderness is home to beautiful rock art and fossils. Help us install a post and cable barrier to keep this area protected and natural.

CONTACT OUR OFFICES FOR DETAILS!
RENO: (775) 324-7667
LAS VEGAS: (702) 515-5417

Follow Us! @friendsofnvwild

CHECK OUR WEBSITE FOR MORE EVENTS:
NEVADAWILDERNESS.ORG