FRONTLINES
By Shaaron Netherton / Executive Director

With the fall equinox now behind us, I am grateful for cooler weather and clearer skies, for the continuing generosity of our donors and the support from all of you. I’m also grateful that Nevada is so rich in public lands that people are able to safely seek the outdoors for healing during unprecedented trying times.

We’ve spent time this past summer examining ourselves and how as an organization we can more inclusively serve all Nevadans by improving and encouraging greater access to our public lands across the state. As you’ll read, we’ve also remained quite busy protecting the Desert Refuge and other wildlands from military overreach. Final decisions on the National Defense Authorization Act will be made after the November election. Your letters, calls and petition signatures are making a difference, so please, keep it up!

Also in this issue, I hope you enjoy Eric Poulin’s story and photos of his trek across eastern Nevada. We are deeply thankful that he generously shared his excellent photos and will soon feature them on our website.

Even though we have had fewer events with our amazing volunteers this year, we so look forward to being back out in the field with them to give back to the lands that have given us so much.

We were saddened by the loss in August of long-time member Don King, a retired fisheries biologist from Elko County who loved Wilderness and all its values. Because life is precious and uncertain, we hope all of you who share the extraordinary love of Wilderness that Don had will read about our new Wild Nevada Legacy Circle and reach out to us for more information.

Stay safe,
Shaaron

WELCOME
OUR NEW DEVELOPMENT TEAM!

RACHEL Morris’ love of the vast open spaces and beauty of wild Nevada inspired her to become Membership and Outreach Coordinator for Friends this September. She spent the last fifteen years fundraising for large nonprofit performing arts organizations, most recently with the Las Vegas Philharmonic where she managed the annual fund campaign and special events. Rachel enjoys hiking, skiing and camping and she also is an active volunteer with Girl Scouts. She is Friends’ point person for membership recruitment and retention and outreach events in Reno.

RALPH Phillips was drawn to the position of Director of Development at Friends because of his desire to preserve wild landscapes for future generations. A lifelong adventurer, Ralph was a National Park Service ranger for seven seasons, five as a backcountry river ranger, and many years as a whitewater rafting guide. His career spans three decades raising funds for conservation organizations and educational institutions focused on outdoor and experiential education. Ralph’s an avid skier, hiker and backpacker and lives in Reno. He primarily works with our loyal donors on major funding projects and legacy giving.
Desert National Wildlife Refuge

The fate of the Desert National Wildlife Refuge and that of public wildlands across the state will be determined by Congress in the next few months as part of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). Will the Nellis Test and Training Range be expanded into more of the Desert Refuge or will Congress just extend their current leases for another 20 years? Recent actions by Congress (after years of amazing efforts by people who care about the refuge and its wildlife and cultural values) appear to be leaning towards the status quo. Because only Wilderness designation for the Desert National Wildlife Refuge will give it long term protection from continued takeover attempts by the military, we will not give up the fight!

Fallon Test and Training Range

In northern Nevada, Congressional intent seems less clear for the proposed expansion of the Fallon Range Training Complex. Rep Mark Amodei introduced HR 6889, the Northern Nevada Economic Development, Conservation and Military Modernization Act of 2020, in May which included a major expansion of the Fallon Training Complex along with a Churchill County Public Lands Bill. This bill however failed to address broad recreational access issues for lands the military wants, strong conservation and mitigation measures and Tribal concerns. Discussions appear to be continuing on what a final solution might look like whether it would happen this year or in the future.

Pershing and Douglas Counties

HR 6889 also included public lands bills with strong bipartisan support in Nevada including Pershing and Douglas County as well as protection for the Ruby Mountains. Additionally, the Douglas County Public Lands bill had a hearing in the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee on September 16th. It remains to be seen which, if any, of the Nevada public lands bills will be included in the NDAA this year.

Maybe 2020 will be the year for Burbank Canyons Wilderness designation.

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Thank You, Congressman!

Congressman Steven Horsford with one of his young constituents at Kiel Ranch Park in North Las Vegas

On July 1, 2020, the western half of the Desert National Wildlife Refuge was almost lost through an underhanded amendment by Rep Rob Bishop and the Air Force. There was no consultation with the Nevada delegation or Congressman Steven Horsford whose District includes the Desert Refuge. Thanks to a wonderful coalition of caring organizations, tens of thousands of supporters quickly responded to a call to action at #DontBombtheBighorn and the Nevada delegation fought back with the “Horsford Amendment” that eliminated the horrible provisions in the “Bishop Amendment”. Through a complicated House Rules Committee process on July 17th the Horsford Amendment moved in a package to the House floor and was voted on and passed unanimously on July 20. Huge thanks to Congressman Horsford and Congresswomen Titus and Lee and our senators for their on-going support for the Desert Refuge.

“I fought tooth and nail for the continued protection of over 840,000 acres of the refuge for future generations to enjoy while ensuring our Air Force has the appropriate tools and technology to carry out their critical mission. The Desert National Wildlife Refuge has been a vital sanctuary for the Nevada state animal, the Bighorn sheep, and other precious wildlife. I...will continue to uplift the voices of our state.”

- Congressman Steven Horsford
What Else is New?

How Dark is Dark?

New program will help answer that question

We all know Nevada has some of the most stellar dark skies in the country and our protected public lands are a big reason why. Now, Friends of Nevada Wilderness gets to prove it. Because of our initiative in identifying and promoting Nevada’s dark skies, we were awarded funding this fall to set up a citizen-supported study using staff and volunteers that will collect, analyze and present the BLM with site-specific information and maps on the quality of dark sky resources. Consistent and standardized dark sky data for all the National Conservation Lands across the state is a tool land managers can use in making decisions that affect the quality of Nevada’s dark skies and determining appropriate mitigation measures. Wilderness, Wilderness Study Areas, National Conservation Areas and Monuments as well as National Trails in Nevada are considered National Conservation Lands.

Springs Monitoring

Springs probably are not the first thing that comes to mind when thinking about Southern Nevada, but these tiny ecosystems contain far more than their share of plant and animal diversity, providing much-needed water sources among the dry surroundings. Throughout history, humans have relied on them as well. But despite their importance, pressures like climate change, water diversion, and invasive plants and animals are threatening their health, and the scarcity of research on springs makes it hard to observe and address these problems.

This year, Friends of Nevada Wilderness received funding from the Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act to monitor the (more than 500!) springs of Clark County and the Desert and Pahranagat Wildlife Refuges. In June, Friends hired Chantal Iosso, who had been doing springs surveying work in Virginia, to lead the project as the Springs Monitoring Coordinator. Our spring monitoring involves collecting data about the spring location, water quality, flow, present animals and plants, and site condition, among other things, which we will use to inform future restoration efforts. In September, she was joined in spring surveying by two amazing yearlong AmeriCorps service volunteers, Tara Blake and Talia Bar Yaacov, and we’re hoping to engage volunteer “citizen scientists” in the coming months as well!

If you are interested in becoming a volunteer Spring Steward, please email snvstewardship@nevadawilderness.org or check our social media for opportunities.

{Chantal, the Springs Monitoring Coordinator, collects water quality measurements for a spring survey at Red Springs

Photo by Chip Carroon

@FRIENDSOFNVWILD
TRAIL TALES
GRIFFITH PEAK TRAIL IS OPEN!

WHHEW! After thousands of hours of staff and volunteer work in partnership with the US Forest Service, we’re proud to say that Griffith Peak Trail is fully rebuilt and open for use! It was devastated in 2013 when the Carpenter 1 Fire roared through the Spring Mountains National Recreation Area for weeks, burning 28,000 acres. We began this daunting task in 2018, continued in 2019 and again this summer with a small crew of staff and AmeriCorps service members who removed another 119 fallen trees and cut 1.5 miles of new tread.

We’ve missed all of the volunteers who’ve invested so much of their time and sweat into this project, but couldn’t work alongside us this year because of COVID-19. Since the start, a total of 80 volunteers have spent 2,145 hours high up in the mountains, camping for days at a time and working to reopen Griffith Peak Trail. All that effort adds up to a small forest of dead trees cleared and many, many feet of restored trail. In the end, it’s now a rebuilt trail that will provide a way for thousands of people to enjoy the Mt. Charleston Wilderness.

And that’s exactly what we encourage you to do: Go hike Griffith Peak Trail! The route offers views into the back of Red Rock Canyon and a glimpse into how our forests recover from catastrophic wildfires. And when you’re there, please take a moment to appreciate all the volunteers who helped make your hike possible!

A big thank you to our packing partners at Sage -n- Pine Guide & Outfitter as well as our amazing volunteers with Back Country Horsemen of America for ensuring a comfortable and well-fed crew during the 2020 trail season!
As an avid backpacker and long distance hiker from the Midwest, I’ve long been drawn to Nevada. Not because the state is well known for its hiking opportunities, in fact, just the opposite. A whopping 85% of Nevada consists of public lands, yet, I’ve heard very little about hiking here. Why is that? Is it too dry and harsh? Is there nothing to see?

I wanted to find out for myself, and so I laid out a 1,100 mile “Basin and Range Route” to satisfy my curiosities and finished this hike in 67 days this summer. It aimed to combine as many of the most beautiful mountain ranges in the state as possible in one long loop-style thru hike route. In much of the Great Basin, specifically central Nevada, the term “Basin and Range” is used to describe the topography... an alternating landscape of parallel mountain ranges and valleys.

Make no mistake, the route is a tough journey, suitable only for experienced hikers comfortable with route finding and off-trail hiking. There is little to no information available on hiking most of the areas I traversed, so it really does feel like walking into uncharted territory. You are almost never the first to step foot somewhere, but in Nevada, you often feel like you are. There aren’t many places left in the US (outside of Alaska) where you can experience that.

Make no mistake, this is a TOUGH JOURNEY. It’s a ROUTE, NOT A BLAZED TRAIL. THERE ARE FEW HIKING TRAILS ALONG THE ROUTE.

Each day in the field, I had no idea if my route down off that ridgeline would work out, or if I’d be stopped by an unclimbable pour off in a box canyon. I did my research on water as best as I could, but the reality is that each water source was a gamble. Never does one feel more alive than when being completely on your own and living life in the moment. Traversing these landscape, especially alone, is a very profound and empowering experience.
I walked countless miles of rarely visited ridgelines, discovered numerous caves (and even slept in one), swam in hot springs and summited the high points of several mountain ranges. I encountered hundreds of wild horses, many elk, deer, bighorn sheep, badgers, and only two rattlesnakes. I bushwhacked my way to hell and back, collecting rocks and minerals along the way. I dodged lightning strikes, saw the oldest living things on earth (Bristlecone Pine trees), discovered an F-111 plane crash, walked the Pony Express Trail, encountered numerous flowing creeks and small waterfalls, and cowboy camped under the starriest night skies imaginable. I visited a nuclear test site, discovered arrowheads and ancient artifacts, had 6am wake up calls from the sonic boom of military aircraft, explored forgotten mines, crossed dried lake beds and walked the rim of a massive volcanic crater. And yet, I feel I’ve barely scratched the surface of what Nevada has to offer.

It is my hope that my trip inspires others to explore more of Nevada. To find the same challenge, adventure and inner peace that I did. To understand and appreciate what’s out there, why it’s special, the issues those lands face and how we can protect and preserve them. Public lands are ours to explore, and ours to protect.

**Perhaps the ONLY thing that overshadows the intense beauty and wild nature of Nevada is the kindness and generosity of its PEOPLE.**
More than a hundred people virtually zoomed in on the Great Basin’s uniquely dark skies over the Labor Day weekend to learn more about what we can see when we step away from our artificially lit-up lives. Hundreds more got to share the experience via Facebook Live.

Professional as well as amateur astronomers from public, private and non-profit organizations shared photos and live shots of nebulae, galaxies, planets, moons, and stunning star clusters. Participants learned how to use a planisphere to navigate all of those celestial bodies and track their exploration across the vast expanse of sky. How cool is it that we can explore the universe as if we’re looking through the telescope lens from the comfort of our homes!

Our own Kirk Peterson showed a clip of KNPB’s “Wild Nevada” feature on the Massacre Rim Wilderness Study Area Dark Sky Sanctuary. See more on that in the accompanying story.

We also were reminded of why we call excessive artificial light “light pollution.” It’s not only a wasteful use of energy that causes the dark to disappear, it affects our physiological and mental well-being and removes the natural cues plants and wildlife need to thrive in their native habitats.

Thanks to the passionate folks at the Basin and Range Dark Sky Cooperative, the National Park Service, and the other Virtual Star Party hosts for reminding us that because we “are all one under the sky,” it is up to all of us to help preserve Nevada’s stunning dark skies.

Our own Kirk Peterson led the crew including hosts Dave Santina and Chris Orr on the trek to far northern Washoe County where they spent two days exploring, filming and gazing up at the star-studded dark sky.

The “Wild Nevada” feature debuted this summer and can still be seen online at knpb.org. Please tune in to see and learn more about this very dark and very special place.

KNPB’s “Wild Nevada” features Wild Washoe!

What better platform to showcase an International Dark Sky Sanctuary in a Wilderness Study Area than a show called “Wild Nevada!”

We were thrilled that the producers at KNPB Public TV in Reno chose the Massacre Rim WSA Dark Sky Sanctuary as the subject for one of their features in the popular series that showcases all of the wild wonders Nevada has to offer.

Will Baker be the First?

The town of Baker in far eastern Nevada may be tiny, but some folks there are determined to get on the map in a major way, as the first designated Dark Sky Community in the state. Situated near the entrance of Great Basin National Park, already an official Dark Sky Park, Baker is known locally and to the passionate community of serious stargazers for the magnificent dark skies overhead. Now, many in town believe that an official Dark Sky Community designation will help draw new tourists to the area and at the same time educate the greater public about the value of dark skies. It’s a community-wide effort. Local students, businesses, and outdoor enthusiasts are all on board and contributing to the rigorous effort to collect data and submit an application to the International Dark Sky Association. We applaud their efforts and wish them success!
The end of the 2020 field season on the Sheldon National Wildlife Refuge marked a full decade of partnership between US Fish & Wildlife Service and the Friends-managed crews who help keep the remote refuge wild and well-managed. Under the expert leadership of Crew Leader Justin van Wijk, crew members Eliana Ornelas and Tristan Kandarian were able to remove more than four miles of fence and two non-functioning water developments and haul out over 3.5 tons of metal garbage on their backs.

Very few folks will ever fully grasp the impact the Sheldon crew has on the Refuge. Friends’ Sheldon crew chief Pat Bruce has to tell the crew every year, “you will be doing very important work here, but most people will never know...you have to take satisfaction even though no one really knows how much hazardous fence is up here and so they don’t know how much you haul out to improve the habitat.”

“The best part of internal fence removal is that it is instant habitat improvement,” Refuge Manager Brian Day said at the end of the season. “There is no waiting for years to see the results. In most places, you would not even know there had been fences there.”

Friends also helped build or repair 4.5 miles of boundary fence that is needed to prevent the return of feral horses, burros and domestic livestock. There are just a few stretches of interior fence left to be removed and some other priority management work still to be done.

“We are grateful to Friends of Nevada Wilderness for their contributions and I hope the dedicated crews and staff will continue to help keep Sheldon wild,” Day said.

When asked what her favorite part of the summer was, she said, “Proving to myself that I’m tough enough to be part of a trail crew.” Jackie marked the experience by getting a tattoo of the crosscut saw she became so fond of.
The Great American Outdoors Act
Great News for Nevada

One of the rare pieces of good news in 2020 is the passage of the Great American Outdoors Act, which will expand outdoor recreational opportunities and pump billions of dollars into the care and maintenance of our public lands.

About $10 billion will be spent over the next 5 years to address the serious backlog of maintenance needs on federally managed lands nationwide, including U.S. Forest Service Wilderness Areas in Nevada. Because Friends has been such a reliable partner, assisting USFS with trail maintenance work for more than a decade, the Toiyabe National Forest reached out, asking if we had priority trails we’d like to work on using some of the GAOA funds.

Of course, we said! Trail Crew Supervisor Kurt Kuznicki submitted a proposal to work on more than 50 miles of overgrown and neglected trails in north central and southern Nevada in 2021. They include the North Twin and South Twin Trails, the Jett Canyon and Sheep Canyon Trails, all in the beautiful Arc Dome Wilderness in northern Nye County, and another six trails in the Mt. Charleston and the La Madre Wilderness Areas in the south.

So far, the Forest Service seems to like what we’re proposing, so stay tuned! We’ll be needing some volunteers next year to help complete these ambitious projects that will improve access and the overall outdoor experience in our amazing Wilderness Areas!

Nevada’s Hidden Treasure

Twenty-five years ago, Friends of Nevada Wilderness, the Sierra Club, and other organizations put together a stunning visual presentation to tell the story of the importance of wilderness protection. Using what now seems like antique equipment, the traveling road show was well-received and helped coalesce public support for new Wilderness Areas on BLM-managed lands in Nevada.

To mark the anniversary, Friends remastered the presentation because the message is still relevant today. “Nevada’s Hidden Treasure” can be viewed at youtube.com. Search for Friends of Nevada Wilderness to watch, wonder, and be re-inspired.

Seeds of Success

Friends of Nevada Wilderness was excited to at least take a small step forward this year in our Seeds of Success (SOS) partnership with the BLM. In June, stewardship staff joined Jess Kindred, Great Basin Native Seed Collection Lead, learning techniques in the collection of native seeds. Next year we are looking forward to our volunteer power really stepping up the collection efforts. SOS is a native seed collection program involving numerous federal agencies and non-federal organizations. The mission is to increase the quality and quantity of native seeds available for restoring and supporting native ecosystems.
JOIN THE WILD NEVADA LEGACY CIRCLE

A legacy gift shows your forward-thinking generosity to help ensure Nevada’s public lands remain Forever Wild! When you make the important decision to leave a legacy gift to Friends of Nevada Wilderness in your will, you demonstrate your commitment to our work to protect and restore Nevada’s wild lands in perpetuity. When you complete your estate plans, please let us know and we will thank you for your generosity by including you in the Wild Nevada Legacy Circle. Your membership involves no dues, obligations, or solicitations, but it allows us to recognize you for the plans that you have made. Of course, you may remain anonymous, and still be part of the Legacy Circle. If you do allow us to list your name, it may inspire generosity in others to make a similar commitment to keeping Nevada’s public lands protected and healthy for future generations.

“Mother of Nevada Wilderness”
Marge Sill
1923-2016

Proceeds benefit wild places across Nevada!

For more information: www.nevadawilderness.org/make_a_bequest or call Ralph Phillips, director of development, 775-324-7667 ext. 212 or email at ralph@nevadawilderness.org

New Wild Nevada Card Set prints by Peter Bradley (envelopes included blank inside)

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Wild Nevada Card Set
Wild Nevada Card Set prints by Peter Bradley (envelopes included blank inside)

FREE CALENDAR WILL BE SENT WITH GIFT MEMBERSHIPS

Giftee Name: __________________________ Address: __________________________ City: _________ State: ___ Zip: ______

Gift Membership _____ x $25 = ______
Membership _____ x $25 = ______
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Toiyabe Crest Map _____ x $12 = ______
Ruby Mtns Map _____ x $12 = ______
DNWR North Map _____ x $12 = ______
DNWR South Map _____ x $12 = ______
Note Cards(set of 4) _____ x $12 = ______
Calendar _____ x $15 = ______
Patch _____ x $5 = ______
Additional Donation ______
Total ______
(Prices include tax + shipping)

Short Sleeve t-shirt 100% cotton Marine Blue OR Eggplant
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Long Sleeve t-shirt 100% cotton Stone Washed Green
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Long Sleeve hoodie 70/30 cotton/poly blend Washed Indigo
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Payment by: _____ check _____ charge (Visa, Mastercard, and American Express)
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Donations (not purchases) are tax-deductible. Proceeds benefit wild places across Nevada!
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.

Friends of Nevada Wilderness
P.O. Box 9754 Reno, NV 89507

Winter Wilderness Wingding

See you in 2021!
What a year 2020 has been! Despite it all, our staff has kept busy, working to keep Nevada wild. At the same time, we sorely miss interacting with you, our volunteers and supporters.

In an abundance of caution and to keep our friends of Friends safe, we won’t be able to meet in person this year at our usual Wild and Wacky Winter Wilderness Wingding. We will find other creative ways to continue the tradition of expressing our gratitude for the many local and national donors who have supported past events. We look forward to working with all of these generous companies again in the future.

While we are so disappointed we can’t celebrate you, our volunteers, members, and supporters, at our annual in-person event, we will do our best to recreate that fabulous Wingding flare virtually. Keep an eye out on social media for some fun content full of thank yous and encouragement from our staff, and invitations to see you out in the field next year. So, fill your favorite glass with your favorite beverage and raise it in toast to all of our supporters, and to keeping Nevada wild in 2021!

Upcoming Virtual Events

Wild Speaker Series
The Wild Speaker Series is an exciting part of our southern Nevada outreach program. Held the first Thursday of each month at 6:45 pm, the Wild Speaker Series uses our platform to highlight other organizations, researchers, scholars and conservationists. Attendees will learn about volunteer opportunities, local environmental issues, Nevada history and other areas of interests concerning public lands and wildlife.

During the pandemic, you can join us online with Zoom or Facebook. We look forward to seeing you in person at REI Boca Park in the near future.

November 5, 6:45 pm - TBA - Watch our Website for more information!

December 3, 6:45 pm - Samantha Rubinson (Program Coordinator, Nevada State Historic Preservation Office)

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Cover Photo by Peter Sbraccia
Mt. Charleston Wilderness, Griffith Peak