

## *Keep Washoe Wild!*

### Virginia Range

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For more information: Susan Juetten at [wildwashoe@gmail.com](mailto:wildwashoe@gmail.com)  
[www.keepwashoewild.org](http://www.keepwashoewild.org)      [www.washoecounty.us/comdev/open\\_space](http://www.washoecounty.us/comdev/open_space)

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#### **Highlights:**

- Historically and archeologically significant
  - Mule deer winter habitat; raptor, amphibian, Monarch butterfly, mountain lion, bobcat, estray wild horse herd
  - BLM Area of Critical Environmental Concern: William's Combleaf ACEC (listed as Critically Endangered by state)
  - Recreation opportunities: Many interconnected horse, hiking and off-road vehicle and Jeep trails, Jumbo Falls. Opportunities for interconnection to proposed trail networks. Gold panning. Huffaker Park trails, potential trails to Alexander Lake
  - Possible acquisition opportunities: Jumbo Creek riparian area, Weston/Lowden property in Washoe Valley, portions of the plateau above Geiger Grade
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The Virginia Range played center stage in the dramatic saga of the Comstock silver and gold booms in the late 1800's. Virginia City lies just over the county line in Storey County. Hunting for gold flakes and artifacts, hiking, horseback riding, and driving the many roads left from mining days are major recreational activities in the Virginia Range.

The Washoe County portion of the Virginia Range stretches roughly from the Carson City line to Highway I-80, and west from the Storey and Lyon County lines to the urban interface along the eastern borders of Washoe Valley and the Truckee Meadows.



photo by Kurt Kuznicki

Worth careful treatment for its historical significance alone, this wild and mostly undeveloped urban interface range provides the context for recreation activities and the magnificent visual backdrop for the Truckee Meadows to the east. Mule deer, big cats, raptors, butterflies and frogs, aspen groves and many high country wildflowers including the rare William's Combleaf call these high hills home.

Both the Virginia Range and the Carson Range to the west provide water runoff to the Washoe lakes and Steamboat Creek. Flooding can be a serious issue in "pineapple express" winters. The Washoe Lakes are

critical to continent-traveling migrating birds and include regionally rare heron rookeries. Therefore, development in the range must be carefully considered for its effect on water and wildlife.



Photo by Roxanne Cheney.

Many people don't realize how much of the Virginia Range is still privately owned. The BLM concluded the LeBorde land exchange in 2000, which consolidated 11,000 of the checkerboard ownership pattern into the public trust and resulted in 25,000 acres of unobstructed viewshed. Areas included portions of the Jumbo Creek watershed, a significant hydrological resource which provides key habitat for all the species mentioned above.

Bailey Canyon to the north needs to be managed for flood control. The bottom portion of Jumbo Creek below the Washoe County ORV trailhead is privately owned, and much of the plateau itself north of Geiger Grade.

Archeological sites from indigenous peoples as well as the Comstock days are scattered throughout the range, though the best known, Lagomorsino Canyon, is in Storey County, just east of the county line. Some sites are still protected by secrecy, others are in danger of being destroyed by vandalism and insensitive development.

Major recreational areas include the old Toll Road off State Highway 341 used by hikers, horsemen and offroad vehicles to access the Virginia Highlands, The Jumbo Creek watershed out of east Washoe Valley, and the Huffaker Hills trail system.

A successful Open Space Plan update relative to the Virginia Range will result in development and protection of informal trail systems protect the range's archeological and historic values, provide for flood mitigation, acquisition of additional lands for water and wildlife protection, and preservation of the undeveloped viewshed.

## Virginia Range

Washoe County Comstock Open Space District

Washoe County Commission District One – Commissioner David Humke

City of Reno Ward 2 - Councilperson Sharon Zadra

City of Reno Ward 3 - Councilperson Jessica Sferrazza

Keep Washoe Wild

A Project of Friends of Nevada Wilderness, Scenic Nevada, and the Toiyabe Chapter of the Sierra Club

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