

Keep Washoe Wild!

Washoe Valley and Steamboat Creek

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Steamboat Creek originates at the outflow of Little Washoe Lake and enters Washoe (Allen) Canyon there. Following the creek through private, undeveloped land has been a favorite ramble for Washoe County and Carson City residents. The canyon supports an attractive combination of wildlife and native plants including cottonwood and aspen; and the vestiges of the Virginia and Truckee Railroad (V&T) are found there, including the remains of at least two trestles. Some of the land at the outflow may be sold by willing sellers to Washoe County for a trailhead. The V&T operated from 1869 to 1950, and ran from Virginia City, where it was built to serve the Comstock lodes, to Carson City and through Washoe Valley before it headed all the way to Reno, by first traversing Washoe Canyon.



Photo by Kurt Kuznicki.



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Highlights:

- Major historical significance from Comstock days. V&T railroad bed remains in Washoe Canyon.
- Hydrologically significant streams flow to the Truckee River, the most significant natural resource in the Truckee Meadows and drinking water source for thousands.
- Recreational opportunities include hiking, cycling, ORV and jeep touring, bird watching and fishing.
- Significant archeological sites.
- Wildlife dependent on the Washoe Lakes and Steamboat Creek include amphibians, mammals, and fish, among them rare and listed species. The Washoe Lakes are an Audubon Important Bird Area, a critical stop for migrating water birds on the Pacific Flyway and a rookery for other regionally rare birds.
- Land stewardship is BLM and private.
- Private trails in proposed Sierra Reflections development will connect to existing and planned public trails. Opportunities to consolidate many trails east of the valley.

Issues for Steamboat Creek and Washoe Valley:

- Most of Washoe Canyon and the southern stretch of Steamboat Creek are enclosed within the pending Sierra Reflections development. Because Steamboat Creek and Browns Creek, which comes down from the Carson Range to meet Steamboat Creek within the development, are designated significant hydrological resources, the special-use permit which

allows the developer to grade within stream buffer zones contains many provisions relative to control of sedimentation, erosion, and conservation of natural vegetation, wildlife habitat, and fisheries. However, the provisions do not maintain the integrity of the canyon as a whole.

- Sierra Reflections' plans include a complex of trails to be open to the public along the creek beds and pond. It is vital to protect the wildlife values and water quality while building and maintaining the creek-side trails.
- The City of Reno identified the Steamboat Creek corridor as one of the greatest remaining opportunities in the Truckee Meadows for a linear recreation and open-space corridor adjacent to the creek. Their 2007 Reno Open Space and Greenways Plan suggests this linear open space could conceivably connect valuable wetland areas heading north through the Truckee Meadows to Rosewood Lakes, Hidden Valley and Hidden Valley Regional Park, then proceed all the way to the Truckee River.
- Steamboat Creek flows ultimately to the Truckee River and Pyramid Lake after meandering through the Truckee Meadows. Restoration of the creek is ongoing because the creek carries both mercury deposits from Washoe Lake (from Comstock-era mining activities) and is the largest source of non-point pollution in the Truckee watershed.
- The noxious weed problem along Steamboat Creek in some areas eliminates some of its value as wildlife habitat; the problem is being addressed by a major cooperative program. Steamboat still provides habitat for sensitive and listed plant species along its length, as well as recreation opportunities for locals and visitors alike.
- Flooding still remains a threat to residences along Steamboat Creek, and restoration plans include bank and wetlands restoration as tools to contain the creek during flooding periods.
- A successful open-space plan relative to Washoe Valley and Steamboat Creek will maintain and enhance the wildlife values and protect historical artifacts while maintaining and enhancing the bounty of recreational opportunities here.

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Mount Rose Open Space District

County Commission District Two – Commissioner David Humke

Keep Washoe Wild

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