



FRIENDS *of*  
NEVADA  
WILDERNESS

FALL/WINTER 2023



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# FRONTLINES

By Shaaron Netherton / Executive Director

Crazy weather here in Nevada this summer with extreme downpours washing

out roads and trails across much of the state, floods closing the Spring Mountains Recreation Area and the Desert National Wildlife Refuge, and then there was the Burning Man quagmire. We are definitely experiencing climate change. While the weather slowed us down, it didn't stop us from working on trails and stewardship projects. Our crews and volunteers have done some great work this season. Read more inside.

I am happy to announce that we have added more capacity at Friends of Nevada Wilderness to advocate for our public lands. Julien Pellegrini (more below) joined our team in late August to help with our legislative campaigns, BLM planning and fighting ill advised projects threatening wildlands across the state. With his help, we hope to be even stronger advocates. Our most immediate efforts focus on

getting Wilderness protections for the Desert National Wildlife Refuge in this year's National Defense Authorization Act. The Air Force is pursuing more military developments in the joint use area and so it's critical that those impacts be mitigated with strong wilderness designations to protect habitat and public access in the eastern Refuge.

We continue to work on new federal legislation that includes extensive conservation protections in Washoe and Nye Counties, as well as existing bills to protect the Ruby Mountains and wild lands in Pershing and Douglas counties.

We invite you all to join us as stewardship volunteers this fall, and attend our Wild and Scenic Film Festival in Las Vegas October 7th and our Wilderness Wingding in Reno scheduled for December 15th.

Shaaron



## WELCOME JULIEN AND WELCOME BACK CONNIE!

Julien Pellegrini is back on the Friends of Nevada Wilderness Team, this time as our Wildlands Policy Manager. Earlier in his career, Julien conducted extensive Wilderness inventory across the state as part of our inventory crew. As a 5th generation Nevadan hailing from Yerrington, Julien's



extensive knowledge of natural and cultural resources and his connections around the Silver State make him a perfect fit for fighting for wildland protections.

We are also thrilled to re-introduce Connie Howard, who recently joined our Board of Directors. Longtime Friends supporters will recognize Connie from her time as our Development Consultant. Prior to that,

Connie worked for the University System for 15 years, serving finally as the Director of Corporate and Foundation Relations for the University of Nevada, Reno.

A transplant from back East, Connie fell immediately in love with our rugged and wild state the moment she arrived.

Connie believes that public lands protections are essential to the ecological health of our planet, biodiversity and human society, and hopes to help Friends of Nevada Wilderness continue its incredible record of 40 years of success in protecting the places we love. Welcome back, Connie!



# WE ADVOCATE

*To Keep Nevada Wild*

## ESMERALDA/FISH LAKE VALLEY NEEDS PROTECTION

Friends researched, prepared and submitted a thorough Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) proposal to the BLM in September in order to protect an incredible landscape from being dissected and inundated with solar farms.

The Esmeralda ACEC covers 849,170 acres and comprises 508,867 acres of lands formally identified as significant for their natural integrity and intactness. The remaining 337,303 acres include interconnected valleys, watersheds, important springs and aquifers, and playas that provide ecological connectivity, intactness, ecological resiliency, and protect the world-class visual resources of this outstanding ACEC. Protecting this landscape is one of our high priorities.

## AIR FORCE "HAPPY" TO HAVE WILDERNESS DESIGNATED IN THE DESERT REFUGE!



*Desert National Wildlife Refuge*

*Photo by Tara Nasvik*

During a late August meeting of the Intergovernmental Executive Committee (IEC), created to resolve issues surrounding management of the Nellis Test and Training Range (NTTR) and the Desert National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge), the military said they would be "happy" to have Congress designate the eastern part of the Refuge as a Wilderness Area (as long as overflights would be allowed).

It wasn't that long ago that the Air Force instead wanted to take over a large chunk of the eastern Refuge that remains open to the public (the western portion of the refuge is closed to the public by the military). In response and to ensure that the public doesn't lose access and that wildlife habitat is not compromised, we have pushed hard for Wilderness protection in the east.

*Read more about this ongoing issue and learn how to help on page 10!*



*Rhyolite Ridge LWC within the proposed Esmeralda/Fish Lake ACEC*

*Photo by Kirk Peterson*

## DEFENDING WILD WASHOE

We remain incredibly grateful to Senator Jacky Rosen and her staff for crafting a Washoe County public lands bill that would conserve nearly a million acres of wide open landscape, primarily in the northern half of the county. They have been reviewing all the public comments on their draft bill as they iron out issues before hopefully introducing legislation this fall. This bill will address the needs of local governments, Indigenous community leaders and the thousands of locals and visitors who appreciate our public lands for their recreational and conservation values.

Both the City of Sparks (7-24) and Washoe County (9-19) passed resolutions supporting the introduction of the Truckee Meadows Public Lands Management Act. We hope to see the City of Reno pass a resolution as well so Congressman Mark Amodei can help move the bill through the House of Representatives.

Friends has assisted by facilitating discussions, creating maps and helping to educate the public. We eagerly await formal introduction of the bill in both the House and Senate!

# WE STEWARD

*In Northern Nevada*

## WORKING TO SAVE A THREATENED SPECIES



*Protecting precious whitebark pine seeds high up in the Pahute Peak Wilderness  
Photo by Olivia Wolff*

Less than a year ago, the US Fish and Wildlife Service officially declared one of our high-elevation forests' keystone species, the whitebark pine, a threatened species. Millions of whitebark pines in the US and Canada have died in recent years due to warming temperatures that have triggered epidemic outbreaks of disease. So this year, the Friends' Stewardship Team wasted no time in partnering with federal agencies to get out into the field to help prevent further population declines.

In the first of the two-phase project in June, Friends staff and volunteers and BLMers split our time between the Pahute Peak Wilderness and Pine Forest Wilderness in northwest Nevada. We hiked to small, isolated, and healthy populations of the whitebark pine and deployed 119 cages around young pine cones to keep the Clark's Nutcracker from eating the seeds as they mature over the summer.

Phase two this fall will involve returning to the same trees to remove the cages, and collect the pine cones. The goal is to provide the BLM with healthy whitebark pine seeds so they can study this specific population's resilience towards known killers, and propagate and bank seeds for dispersal at a later time in the event of a fire or further population die-off.

The whitebark pine is considered "keystone" because it contributes so much to the biodiversity of the surrounding ecosystem. This project was a first for us, and so very gratifying knowing we are helping save a critically important species in our Wilderness Areas.

## TABLE MOUNTAIN PROJECT

In mid-July, the Stewardship Team led volunteers from Backcountry Hunters and Anglers seven miles into Table Mountain Wilderness where we cleaned up trash, cleared downed and hazardous trees, leveled tent pads, and checked the condition of the pasture fence. We also bucked 24 trees along Barley Creek Trail on our way to and from camp.

Hard work makes one hungry, and thanks to a small herd of pack goats who willingly hauled our kitchen gear to the campsite, we ate pretty darn well! Wyatt, Bruce, Tank, Herald, and Yoda all had strong backs - and strong personalities, too! We hope they enjoyed the backcountry as much as we did.

After our work day, we hiked up to the table and saw numerous Greater Sage-Grouse and a big herd of elk. The Backcountry Hunters and Anglers of Nevada sure know how to find the wildlife!

All in all, this project included 18+ miles of hiking. Thanks so much to the volunteers who showed up ready to hike and work hard.



*Teamwork!*

*Photos by Olivia Wolff*



## SAVING SPRINGS

Spring ecosystems are some of the most complex and biologically diverse ecosystems on Earth.

Home to thousands of species of plant and animal life, spring sites serve as a significant source of fresh water flowing up from many of our planet's underground aquifers. They also hold an incredible amount of cultural significance for many Indigenous cultures throughout the Southwest. And yet they remain some of the most threatened ecosystems in the world.

Springs face numerous threats from human encroachment, invasive species, and climate change. These sites have often been used intensely for human purposes which leaves many of them heavily damaged. Fortunately, at the same time, spring ecosystems are tremendously resilient. As long as the aquifer that supports them is left intact, these ecosystems can be restored and managed to serve both human and natural functions.

That's where we come in. It is incredibly important to monitor and manage these ecosystems, especially since almost ten percent of the freshwater consumed in Las Vegas comes from the spring sites located in the Spring Mountains National Recreation Area. Working with federal land management and other nonprofit agencies, like the Springs Stewardship Institute, Friends is helping to steward these ecosystems and get a baseline understanding of what sites throughout Southern Nevada need in order to remain healthy and productive in the face of threats like climate change and drought.

Again, we couldn't do this valuable work without our amazing volunteers.

## In Southern Nevada



*Stream fed from Mack's Canyon Springs Complex, Spring Mountains National Recreation Area*

We invite new volunteers to come out with us and discover these special places!

We welcomed Brian Valle and Rachael Rogers to our Southern Nevada team this summer! Brian is our new Lead Springs Technician and will lead our AmeriCorps crew to monitor and occasionally restore springs in Clark County.

*Learn more about our new team members on page 10!*



*Brian springing from under the rocks*

## MONITORING OUR WILDERNESS

This summer, our two AmeriCorps Valerie Valdivia and Rachael Rogers hiked almost every trail in the Spring Mountains National Recreation Area (NRA) in order to assess the quality of opportunities for solitude in the Mt. Charleston Wilderness. They tallied encounters with people and made notes of trail maintenance needs. They also chatted with folks and helped the hiking public better understand the benefits of and resources in the Wilderness. The data collected will help the U.S. Forest Service with Wilderness management decisions. Their work was funded by a newly signed agreement with USFS to assess how trails in the Spring Mountains NRA are being used as the urban area continues to rapidly grow, and how higher use will impact the Wilderness qualities.



*Rachael (left) and Valerie*

Rachael and Valerie were both enthusiastic about learning about the flora and fauna of the Spring Mountains. Valerie is studying environmental engineering at UNR, and she said that this summer solidified her desire to pursue a career path in conservation. Rachael felt similarly and even transitioned to our new Southern Nevada Programs Technician at the end of her term! We wish Valerie good luck in her studies and give Rachael a warm welcome to Friends!

## BORDER TO BORDER, FRIENDS MAINTAINS FOREST TRAILS



*Our trail maintenance helps keep places like the stunning Santa Rosa/Paradise Peak Wilderness accessible to the public*

*Photo by Tara Nasvik*

Our professional trail crews maintained over 50 miles of trail throughout the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest this summer. Much of their effort was focused in central and northern Nevada, including the Toiyabe Crest trail within Arc Dome Wilderness in central Nevada and the Summit Trail in the Santa Rosa/Paradise Peak Wilderness in Humboldt County.

The backcountry was full of challenges this year including waist deep river crossings and many washed out roads. Despite these challenges, the crews found their way deep into the Wilderness and made great progress on our never ending goal of keeping Nevada's wildest trails accessible to the public.

While our crews have historically worked to keep our most rural Wilderness trails open, this summer they got a chance to improve popular trails in both Mount Rose Wilderness near Reno and Mount Charleston Wilderness near Las Vegas. These projects showcased the crews' exceptional ability to perform more technical trail work in high use areas.

All in all, a very busy and productive season!



Staff and volunteers this summer completed a multi-day project to improve White's Creek Trail, making the highly-popular trail in the Mount Rose Wilderness much safer for hikers and equestrians.

Storms and heavy snowmelt had caused serious erosion, making use of three creek crossings difficult and dangerous. Using hand tools, crews removed obstacles and regraded approaches to the crossings. They built a new switchback and retaining wall, and also created new check steps and placed stepping stones to make the crossings much safer.

In between creek crossings, crews widened narrow and uneven trail, decommissioned old eroded trail, built a new route, and improved drainage dips. Once again, thanks to our volunteers, this special place will remain accessible to folks who love the outdoors.

## 2023 SEASON ON THE SHELDON

It was another great year of interesting weather and hard work up on the Sheldon National Wildlife Refuge, where the beautiful landscape never disappoints.



Photo by Dakota McCullough

Back in the 70s, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service recommended that large swaths of the Sheldon be designated Wilderness Area. Now, some 50 years later, Senator Jacky

Rosen's proposed Truckee Meadows Public Lands Management Act would permanently designate more than 100,000 acres of the Refuge as Wilderness. We're working hard to help get that Act passed.



Photo by Mike Sirianni



Photo by Kurt Kuznicki

Ranching ended decades ago but old infrastructure remains. It's got to be taken apart and hauled out.

The Refuge was originally created to protect dwindling pronghorn populations. Other wildlife that now also thrives includes California bighorn sheep, mule deer, pygmy rabbit, sage grouse, prairie and peregrine falcon, reptiles, Lahontan cutthroat trout, Alvord chub and Sheldon tui chub.

## TONY LEVEILLE MEMORIAL PROJECT

In honor of Tony, a former Forest Service ranger who passed away last year, his family, friends, and coworkers gathered for a volunteer project to honor his legacy in one of his favorite places: Jarbidge Wilderness. A group of about 50 people gathered at the Slide Creek Trailhead from July 13th through 16th. We held a memorial service, worked hard, and ate some delicious food. Work accomplished included the construction of two metal horse corrals and the maintenance of about three miles of the Slide Creek Trail. Friends of Nevada Wilderness was honored to be a part of this memorial and inspired to see the impact that one person who cares for the land can have.



Paying tribute to Tony in the beautiful Jarbidge Wilderness  
Photos by Chris Cutshaw



# A WILDERNESS LEGACY

ESSAY BY PETE BRADLEY

Pretend it is 1963. Or, if you're really old, think back to 1963. And simultaneously, imagine one of your favorite wild species. Take Ernie\* for example. He's an 81-year-old Desert Tortoise who's been mostly minding his own business in the wildest Mojave Desert valley on Earth for what, to him, seems like forever. Take Buff for instance. She's a young American Pika who is raising her tiny rock rabbit family on an 11,000 ft. limestone cliff ledge on the wildest alpine tundra in the Lower 48. Or, perhaps Sheila. She's a glorious middle-aged Ferruginous Hawk teaching her recently-fledged brood of three to hunt the wildest Sagebrush Steppe and Piñon-Juniper Woodland of America's Cold Desert. What three things these wild individuals share in common is, 1) they desperately require leagues of open wild landscape to carry on, 2) they rarely, if ever, see a human, and 3) they all are wild native Nevadans. In late 63' early 64', while a few wild places have been afforded protections of various kinds, think Yellowstone/Yosemite/Okefenokee/Sheldon, there is not a single, solitary acre on Earth, where wilderness has been protected for all time.



Photo by Tyler Roemer



So, when, on 3 September 1964, the Wilderness Preservation Act was signed into law by the 88th Congress of the United States, it was a brave and uniquely American innovation for its time. On that very same day, and as part of the 1964 Act, the 64,667 acre Jarbidge was the first wild place in Nevada to be protected for all time in Wilderness. This was a game changer.



Not that Ernie, Buff, Sheila or their kin, or the thousands of other wild Nevada species (Black-Rosy Finch, Alpine Penstemon, Chuckwalla, Paintbrush, Greater Sage-Grouse, Globemallow, Gila Monster, Silver-haired Bat, Quaking Aspen, Tortoiseshell Butterfly, Bighorn, Buckwheat, Bristlecone Pine, Orohelix Snail, etc etc etc) cared a whit about our human constructs. Just like you, all the while, they were and are just trying to make a living, raise a family and stay safe.

*Photos by Friends of Nevada Wilderness*

Immediately, the monumental challenge became the designation and stewardship of our wild Nevada landscapes beyond the fraction of 1964. That's where you all came in. Seven names. Although we know many thousands more, we will mention seven here. They will serve as surrogates for you all. Without these seven, a cohesive Nevada Wilderness Legacy may never have come to the fore. You all could be a Marge, a Roger, a Karen, a John, a Shaaron, a Hermi or a Harry. We love all of you who have made it their life's work or who have helped in any way to preserve our Nevada Wilderness Legacy and thereby given voice to the voiceless.

*\*Some proper nouns have been fabricated to protect individual privacy.*

*Pete Bradley is a wildlife ecologist, former board member, writer and teacher. He once patrolled the Ruby Mountain Wilderness for USFS, was a wildlife biologist for NDOW and, as he has since 1963, continues to spend as much time as he can out in the place he loves... wild Nevada.*

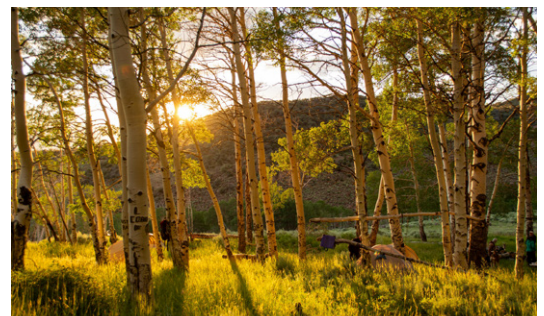


Photo by Olivia Wolff



# WE REACH OUT

## STORIES FROM THE ROAD BY JIM STANGER

*Community & Development Manager*

One of my roles is to meet and get to know our organization's supporters, keep them up-to-date on our accomplishments, and motivate them to support the wild spaces they know and love... as well as those still unexplored.

Having lived in the Las Vegas area for the past 20 years, I stay connected to old friends and meet many new ones. Now a Northerner, I'm getting to know the awesome Truckee Meadows community... not just recreationists, but small business owners, folks in surrounding communities, and more.

The best part of my job is listening to people's stories - their path to connecting to Nevada's public lands and wild places. A Las Vegas couple moved to town convinced their new home was surrounded by a wasteland. After visiting some surrounding recreation spots they ventured out further. Then, amazed and relieved their assumptions had been proven false, they volunteered for trail projects knowing they could have fun while helping to keep these

fantastic wild places wild. I spoke with a gentleman who grew up in Reno hunting and exploring public lands such as Sheldon Wildlife Refuge and Black Rock/High Rock. He wants his kids and grandkids to be able to have these same experiences and appreciates the work groups like ours do to care for areas impacted by heavy visitation. We can all trace our love of the outdoors to amazing first experiences.

I fell in love with the Mojave Desert while hunting for dark skies to view meteor showers and subsequently spent years hiking and exploring places such as Joshua Tree National Park and Mojave National Preserve, eventually moving to Nevada.

### WHAT'S YOUR STORY?

Email me at [jim@nevadawilderness.org](mailto:jim@nevadawilderness.org)  
I'd love to read what experiences connect you to Wild Nevada.

## CELEBRATING LATINO CONSERVATION WEEK

Friends invited Reno/Sparks area Latino families to hike the beautiful Jones-White's Creek Trail on July 22 in observation of Latino Conservation Week.

The hike was led by Meg Tait, Friends' Bi-lingual Stewardship Coordinator, and included discussions of wilderness, conservation and the basics of Leave No Trace.

We're lucky to have such beautiful natural areas close to where we live and Meg reported the hike was an inspiring and educational experience for the families who participated.

Latino Conservation Week is observed nation-wide with hikes, camping trips, and stewardship projects.

*More about the event and pictures on Page 10!*

## CELEBRATING DARK SKIES IN CEDARVILLE



*Creativity inspired by the night skies!*

The painting class was just one of many fun and informative events at the 2023 Dark Sky Festival in Cedarville, CA, the gateway community to the Massacre Rim WSA International Dark Sky Sanctuary in far northwest Nevada.

Preserving our uniquely dark skies helps connect us to our public lands in a very profound way. The festival celebrates this distinction

and educates attendees about the cultural, scientific and environmental values of unspoiled night skies.

If you missed this year, we hope to see you next. But in the meantime, we encourage you to get away from the city lights whenever you can and look up. Remember that wonder still exists over our heads each night, if we take the time to gaze into the darkness.

Continued from Page 3...



Desert National Wildlife Refuge  
By Kirk Peterson

After all, most of the refuge was recommended for wilderness by the US Fish and Wildlife Service in the 1970's and we've been awaiting Congressional action since. *Well, that time is NOW!*

The Air Force is now asking to install more infrastructure (threat emitters) on the western side of the Refuge. However, their request does not include proposals to mitigate the additional impacts of increased military activity. We are working hard to get Wilderness designation in this year's National Defense Authorization Act to mitigate the increased military use of the refuge. It will be a hard fight but we will not give up on protecting this amazing Refuge.

We will keep you updated in our e-news and website as this campaign moves forward.

Sign up for updates at [nevadawilderness.org](http://nevadawilderness.org)

Continued from Page 5...

Brian comes from a specialized background of natural resource management collecting soil and groundwater data, and is currently working on his Master of Natural Resources. He is excited to apply his knowledge to the springs program and protect our state's waters.

We met Rachael a few years ago when she volunteered on a crew bucking trees on Griffith Peak Trail. She has worked as a river guide on the Colorado River teaching people how to kayak and weaving the natural history of the desert southwest into interpretive programs. She is an attendee of Alternative Spring Break 2023 and just finished her summer AmeriCorps term in the Mount Charleston Wilderness. She is excited to make the transition into her new role as our Southern Nevada Programs Technician.



# THANK YOU!

Continued from Page 9...

Latino Conservation Week was created as an initiative of the Hispanic Access Foundation to support the Latino community getting into the outdoors and participating in activities to protect our natural resources.



Hiking the Jones-White's Creek Trail

## OUR 2024 WILD NEVADA CALENDAR IS NOW AVAILABLE!

**2024** is both the 60th anniversary of the Wilderness Act and our own 40th anniversary! What better way to commemorate them both by purchasing one of our new Wild Nevada calendars. Besides monthly views of amazing Nevada landscapes we'll have information about some of the people responsible for spearheading wilderness protection through the decades and more.

Purchase your Wild Nevada Calendar at [nevadawilderness.org/shop](http://nevadawilderness.org/shop)



Your monthly support powers the protection and conservation of Nevada's wild places. Over 80% of donations we receive go directly to advocating for wilderness protection, restoring habitat for wildlife and maintaining hiking trails, and more. Together, we can protect the wild places that make Nevada so special!

Gold Transparency 2022

Candid.

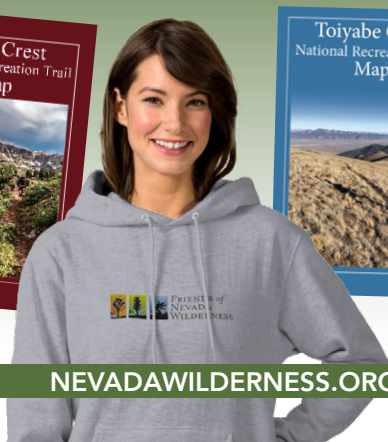
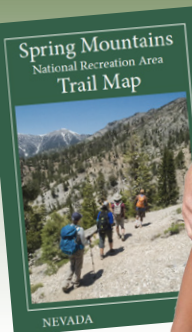
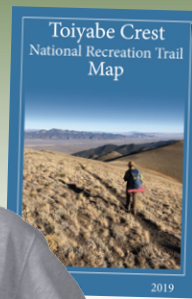
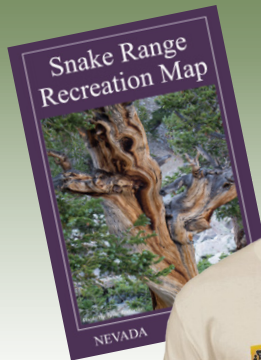
## Become a **Steward of the Wild!** [nevadawilderness.org/donate](http://nevadawilderness.org/donate)

If you have any questions about giving to Friends of Nevada Wilderness or purchasing merchandise contact Jim Stanger, Community & Development Manager at [jim@nevadawilderness.org](mailto:jim@nevadawilderness.org) or 775-324-7667 x202.

## Check Out Our New Zazzle Store Proceeds benefit wild places across Nevada!

For clothing and other outdoor gear purchases, we're expanding to Zazzle, an easy and convenient print-on-demand service. This means we'll soon have **MANY MORE** varieties of gear available and more design options. We'll continue selling specialty items such as maps, posters, and calendars directly from our in-house inventory.

Explore now! [nevadawilderness.org/shop](http://nevadawilderness.org/shop)



[NEVADAWILDERNESS.ORG/SHOP](http://NEVADAWILDERNESS.ORG/SHOP)



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.

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## Northern Nevada

**October 20th — 22nd: Join us out in Mining Claim Marker Knock Down** - There are currently no open volunteer slots available.

Email [megan@nevadawilderness.org](mailto:megan@nevadawilderness.org) to join the waitlist.

**December 15th: Wilderness Wingding!**

Watch for details...

## Southern Nevada

**The following Saturdays — October 21st, October 28th, November 4th: Native Plants with Nevada Division of Wildlife** - Join Friends of Nevada Wilderness and NDOW for a lovely fall day, or 2 or 3 days, of planting native plants in the beautiful Mormon Mountains.

*Visit [nevadawilderness.org/calendar\\_of\\_events](http://nevadawilderness.org/calendar_of_events)  
to sign up for these important projects!*

Follow Us!

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## CONTACT OUR OFFICES

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LAS VEGAS: (702) 515-5417

NEVADAWILDERNESS.ORG

Pahute Peak Wilderness

Photo by Meg Tait