

WNC News & Notes

Tour of Waterfall Fire Trail set for Monday

A guided narrative tour of the Waterfall Fire Interpretive Trail located along the Western Nevada College planetary walkway and 395 Bike Trail will start at 8:30 a.m. Monday.

Leaders will be WNC Chemistry Professor Mike Sady and Carson City Open Space naturalist Ann Bollinger. Those interested should meet at the Reynolds Center for Technology, Room 103, at the WNC Carson City campus.

Five years ago, the massive Waterfall Fire ravaged homes and land in western Carson City, climbing the hills and marching toward the Tahoe Basin. While images of the fire and billowing smoke are still vivid in the minds of many residents, Sady and others have spent this summer exploring the effects of the fire on vegetation.

Sponsored by the Nevada System of Higher Education and the National Science Foundation-EPSCoR, Sady and Dr. Jay Arnone of the Desert Research Institute studied burned and unburned areas in the Waterfall area. Other researchers on the project were Alice Sady and Ann Bollinger, in addition to volunteers.

Study objectives were to compare shrub and forest plant communities in burned and unburned areas, and then to evaluate the success of post-fire seeding. Their analysis also was intended to determine if climate change was a factor in the type of re-vegetation that occurred.

The study group also considered the effects of sheep grazing on burned and unburned areas. To improve fire safety, the college has sheep graze seasonally near campus buildings to reduce fuels.

Sady said one of his goals was to determine the effectiveness of drill seeding, helicopter seeding and reforestation.

One surprise, he said, was that the reseeding mixture mainly contained Siberian wheatgrass, but only desert wheatgrass was found in the areas studied.

"This could suggest a climate change factor favoring grass species better adapted to a warming trend. In some respects this is precisely what we did not expect to find, but provides yet another example of climate change and its effects on fire landscapes."

One key feature of Sady's study has been the development of The Waterfall Fire Interpretive Trail — www.wnc.edu/~mbsady/TrailMap.htm — northwest of the college. It contains eight study sites, with three plots that compare and contrast the Waterfall Fire, rehabilitation treatments, and subsequent effect on the landscape, including long-term data of the local watersheds. Its purpose is to provide an outdoor science classroom experience for students at WNC, local schools, and community groups.

WNC Foundation Golf Classic is Sept. 21

It's time to head for the putting green and then hit a few range balls to get ready for the Western Nevada College Foundation's 12th annual Golf Classic on Monday, Sept. 21, at Thunder Canyon Golf & Country Club.

The popular fund-raiser will tee off in a shotgun scramble at 9 a.m. The \$150 entry fee will include a continental breakfast, on-course refreshments, tee prizes, contests and a barbecue following the tournament. All proceeds will benefit WNC Foundation special projects. Information and registration: 445-3240.

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