Las Vegas Wash Coordination Committee

E-mail update

July 2007

Archaeological Research Continues to Shed Light on Past

Archaeologists have recently made another exciting discovery regarding the Las Vegas Wash. Radiocarbon dates obtained by HRA Inc. on prehistoric corn cobs found near the Clark County Wetlands Park suggest that prehistoric people may have farmed within the Las Vegas Wash and stored their corn harvest in specially made pits as long ago as 300 B.C. This date is possibly the oldest evidence of maize in southern Nevada! Until now, the earliest dated maize sample had indicated an age of A.D. 200. This strong indication of local agricultural practices once again shows that the Las Vegas Wash has long been an important asset to area residents. The corn cob sample was collected from a pit structure found at the Larder Site that was excavated in 2005. To verify this early date, additional radiocarbon samples will be analyzed and compared to dates from similar archaeological sites in southern Nevada.

Prehistoric pot shard discovered inside the Clark County Wetlands Park earlier this year.

This research is part of a grant from the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation to fulfill mitigation requirements for Las Vegas Wash projects. More than 50 culturally significant sites have been identified within the Clark County Wetlands Park, which was designated as an Archaeological District in 1977. The Las Vegas Wash Coordination Committee (LVWCC) is committed to the further research and conservation of these important pieces of history.

Upcoming Meetings

Operations Study Team
July 11, 2007
8:30 a.m.

Research and Environmental Monitoring Study Team
July 11, 2007
10:30 a.m.

Management Advisory Committee
July 16, 2007
1:30 p.m.

Administrative Study Team
July 19, 2007
1:00 p.m.

Las Vegas Wash Coordination Committee
July 24, 2007
9:00 a.m.

Bioassessment Egg Collection Underway

Biologists have been walking the Las Vegas Wash and its tributaries over the last several weeks in search of eggs, but this is no Easter Sunday egg hunt. These collections form the third round of a bioassessment study that includes analyzing bird eggs for several contaminants of concern. Bird eggs are sampled because they are sensitive indicators of contaminants in the surrounding environment and can highlight potential areas for concern. Seven sites form the focus of these egg collections: Las Vegas Wash, Las Vegas Bay, Clark County Nature Preserve, the City of Henderson Bird Viewing Preserve, Duck Creek, Burns Road (near the Pittman Wash), and Pahranagat National Wildlife Refuge, which serves as a regional reference. Collection efforts are targeting two bird species, killdeer and American coot. These species were targeted because they tend to be year-round residents; therefore, any concentrations of contaminants in their eggs should be reflective of the site at which they were found. A total of six eggs may be collected by permitted biologists from each site, one egg per nest found. Once an egg is collected, it is taken to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) laboratory here in Las Vegas where it is further quantified for weight, size, volume, and eggshell thickness and its contents are examined for abnormalities. The eggs are then frozen and sent to the USFWS Analytical Control Facility in West Virginia where they are analyzed for contaminants.

A killdeer sits on her nest at the Bird Viewing Preserve in Henderson.

Fish tissue samples will be collected in the fall for similar analysis. This study is being funded by the Management Advisory Committee of the LVWCC, and cooperatively implemented by USFWS and Las Vegas Wash Project Coordination Team biologists.

Did You Know?

Construction has recently begun on the next erosion control structure in the Las Vegas Wash. The Upper Diversion Weir along with an associated outfall channel will be the newest addition to the Las Vegas Wash and is part of the LVWCC's efforts to reduce erosion and stabilize the banks of the Las Vegas Wash. The new structure will be located in the northwest corner of the Clark County Wetlands Park and will serve as the most upstream structure. Once completed, the weir will be 450 feet long, 40 feet wide and 10 feet high and will include a pedestrian bridge similar to the one at the Powerline Crossing Weir. Construction is expected to be completed by August 2008.

Construction equipment removes soil near the future Upper Diversion Weir site.

For comments or to contact Las Vegas Wash Project Coordination Team staff, call **702-822-3385**.