



# Las Vegas Wash Coordination Committee

## E-mail update

September 2007

### Upcoming Meetings

Special MAC Meeting  
T.B.A.



Southwestern Willow Flycatcher  
Photo by Suzanne Langridge, USGS

### Surveys for the Endangered Southwestern Willow Flycatcher

Since 1998, annual field surveys have been conducted to determine the breeding occurrence of the federally endangered southwestern willow flycatcher (*Empidonax traillii extimus*), a bird species for which the Las Vegas Wash might offer potentially suitable nesting habitat. These surveys are performed by permitted wildlife biologists on behalf of the Southern Nevada Water Authority. Moreover, a standard protocol which focuses on listening for the birds is used. The southwestern willow flycatcher is a federally endangered subspecies of the willow flycatcher, and breeds in relatively dense native and non-native riparian vegetation at a limited number of sites throughout the southwest.

Since annual breeding season surveys began in 1998, migrant willow flycatchers have been detected during most years. Generally only one or two detections are made each year; however, larger numbers of detections—seven in 2000 and 18 in 2004—have occurred. These birds were presumed to be migrants and could not be confirmed as the endangered subspecies because they were only detected early on in the breeding season. This year, however, a willow flycatcher was detected in late June, past the time when migrants would still be moving through the area. Although much effort was put forth in searching for the individual in subsequent surveys, it was not detected again. Nonetheless, given the late timing of the detection, it is highly likely the individual was the endangered southwestern subspecies. Nesting by this species, however, has still not been confirmed. This is an exciting development for the Las Vegas Wash, and we will continue our surveys for this endangered species in the summer of 2008!

### Vegetation Monitoring Underway

Revegetation is one of the many important requirements for the construction projects that take place at the Las Vegas Wash. Annual monitoring efforts take place every summer to measure and document the growth and success of each planting site. Due to the impressive efforts by both the Las Vegas Wash Coordination Committee and Wash Green-Up volunteers, the monitoring area has blossomed from 80 acres to more than 165 acres in just one year.

Each monitoring effort looks at a variety of different element which, measured over time, help to determine various rates of success. Biologists document plant survival, species richness (i.e., the number of different plant species present within each site), and percentage of total vegetative cover and cover by species, as well as noting general site conditions. Not only do these monitoring efforts help meet permit and grant requirements, they also provide valuable information on how future planting and revegetation activities can be even more successful.

Overall, the revegetation efforts at the Las Vegas Wash have taken root. Thousands of non-native plants have been removed from the Las Vegas Wash and replaced with native trees and shrubs that are not only beautiful, but are also beneficial to improving water quality and providing habitat for wildlife.



Upstream of Rainbow Gardens Weir in May of 2006



Upstream of Rainbow Gardens Weir in April 2007

### Did You Know?

The Clean Water Coalition recently announced that it received the Records of Decision from both the National Park Service and the Bureau of Reclamation for the Systems Conveyance and Operations Program (SCOP). These Records of Decision are the final step that completes the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the SCOP project. Now that the EIS is complete, the project can now focus on the design process. Construction of the project is scheduled to begin in 2008.

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