



Celebrating 10 Years of the Las Vegas Wash Coordination Committee

Ten years ago, a group of concerned citizens gathered to discuss the issues of the Las Vegas Wash. This October will mark the 10th anniversary of the Las Vegas Wash Coordination Committee (LVWCC), the 30-member organization representing private and public agencies, businesses and concerned citizens. These representatives donated their time and expertise to collaborate and develop the long-term Las Vegas Wash Comprehensive Adaptive Management Plan and meet quarterly to oversee its implementation. This 10-year milestone provides the opportunity to reflect on the many successes of the program and highlight some of the major accomplishments.



Aerial view of two weirs and associated revegetation

Stabilization

The initial driving force of the LVWCC was the growing concern over water quality due to erosion of the Las Vegas Wash into Lake Mead. Stabilization efforts have included two key engineering components: channel bed stabilization and bank protection. Channel bed stabilization was addressed by the proposal of 22 grade control structures called weirs, which slow the flow of the water and reduce erosion. With the completion of the Upper Diversion Weir this summer, 11 of 22 weirs have been completed. These weirs have substantially strengthened the system's ability to resist erosion, and water quality data has shown more than a 50 percent reduction in the total amount of sediment being transported to Lake Mead. Nearly six miles of the Las Vegas Wash have been lined with rock rubble to protect the banks between weirs. When possible, the LVWCC utilizes recycled concrete salvaged from demolished casinos such as the Stardust, El Rancho and Castaways to line the banks.

Revegetation

Revegetation has played an important role in stabilization efforts; however, it is also critical in restoring and enhancing the Las Vegas Wash to its historic function. After 30 years of erosion, wetland areas, which help filter potentially harmful contaminants, had decreased by 90 percent. To date, more than 180 acres have been revegetated, which not only helps stabilize the soil but also enhances habitat for fish and wildlife. Much of the revegetation effort has been made possible by local volunteers attending LVWCC-sponsored Las Vegas Wash Green-Up events held every spring and fall. Since kicking off in 2001, the Green-Up events have attracted more than 3,000 volunteers and revegetated approximately 47 acres with more than 25,000 trees and shrubs! As this vegetation continues to mature, the Las Vegas Wash has resurged into a virtual oasis in the desert.

Water Quality and Biology

With so much effort being invested into stabilization and revegetation, it has been important to study the effects that these efforts have on water quality and wildlife populations. In just 10 years, the LVWCC has initiated more than 10 general biological surveys. The crowning achievement of these surveys is the recent completion of the Las Vegas Wash Wildlife Management Plan. Water quality surveys have been ongoing with several monitoring stations along the Las Vegas Wash and its tributaries. Results from the water quality surveys are available in a large online database, which is accessible to all LVWCC members. All of these reports can be accessed through lvwash.org.

Riding on so much success, the LVWCC looks forward to even higher achievements over the next 10 years.



The Las Vegas Wash is the home to an abundance of wildlife.

Upcoming Meetings

Research and Environmental Monitoring Study Team

Oct. 1, 2008 • 10:30 a.m.

Las Vegas Valley Watershed Advisory Committee

Oct. 14, 2008 • 3 p.m.

Administrative Study Team

Oct. 16, 2008 • 1 p.m.

Las Vegas Wash Coordination Committee 10 Year Anniversary Special Event

Oct. 30, 2008 • 9 a.m.