

Wash project team weeds out invasive plants

It didn't take long for the Las Vegas Wash Weed Partnership to begin battling the invasive plants threatening the wash and Lake Mead.

Within a few months of receiving a grant from the National Fish & Wildlife Foundation's Pulling Together Initiative, the partnership has drawn battle lines and targeted the enemy—in this case, tall whitetop, giant reed and tamarisk.

With additional financial support from the Bureau of Reclamation and the Clark County Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan, National Park Service crews already have begun controlling the invasive plants from the lower section of the Las Vegas Wash, upstream of where the waterway enters Lake Mead.

"I'm happy we've been able to get started so quickly, because this is a problem that can get away from you in a hurry," said Las Vegas Wash Project Team Biologist **Elizabeth Bickmore**. "All of these invasive species spread quickly, so you really have to catch them before they take over."

While the casual observer may see the plants as a lush addition to the landscape, biologists worry about the plants' tendency to spread and choke out native plants, which diminishes habitat for birds and other wildlife by reducing plant diversity. Additionally, regional environmentalists are concerned about the wash serving as a source for weeds downstream along the Colorado River. Bickmore said the partnership is committed to heading off such a problem.



Tamarisk is one target of a weed-removal effort at the Las Vegas Wash.

"We have the advantage so far in the Las Vegas Wash," she said, "and we plan to press that advantage and keep the weeds in check so they don't spread to areas that are more difficult to mitigate."

Weed control activities are expected to be ongoing throughout the wash restoration process.

For more information about the partnership, visit www.lvwash.org.



Volunteers sought for Wash Green-Up

Willing to get your hands dirty for a good cause? The Las Vegas Wash Project Team needs approximately 200 volunteers to plant trees and shrubs along the Las Vegas Wash on Saturday, March 1.

During last fall's Wash Green-Up, approximately 150 residents turned out to plant mesquite, quailbush, sandbar willow and other species near the Clark County Wetlands Park Nature Preserve. In addition to providing wildlife habitat, the plants help prevent erosion and enhance the wash's natural beauty.

To volunteer for the Wash Green-Up, call 258-7117.



LVWCC garners state environmental award

The Las Vegas Wash Coordination Committee (LVWCC) recently received high accolades from the Nevada




Water sampling helps wash team members gauge the health of the wash.

Division of Environmental Protection (NDEP), earning the state agency's 2002 Wendell McCurry Excellence in Water Quality Award.

The presentation, made at the LVWCC's October meeting, marks the first time a Southern Nevada organization has won the award. It represents only the fourth award bestowed in the name of McCurry, the late environmentalist considered by NDEP officials to be "the father of Nevada's clean water efforts."

"During the past three years, we've made a lot of progress stabilizing the Las Vegas Wash and trying to enhance its ability to polish urban flows," said **Keiba Crear**, Las Vegas Wash Project Team senior

biologist. "We're honored to receive this kind of recognition."

The LVWCC's efforts include building dam-like erosion control structures and reinforcing the wash's banks to stabilize the channel, removing invasive weeds and planting more than 12,000 trees and shrubs along the banks of the 12-mile channel. The committee was formed in 1998 in partnership with the Southern Nevada Water Authority after a citizens' advisory committee recommended that efforts be made to protect and enhance the Las Vegas Wash. The tributary carries urban runoff, shallow groundwater, stormwater and reclaimed water from the valley to Lake Mead. 

Designer unveils plans for Clark County Wetlands Park trails

Visitors to the Clark County Wetlands Park will one day enjoy a network of trails designed to accommodate hikers, bicyclists and even equestrians, according to a comprehensive trails plan that will be set in motion within the next few years.

Developed for Clark County Parks & Community Services with input from citizens and more than a dozen environmental and recreation-oriented organizations, the plan even includes a scenic drive that skirts the wetlands.

Trails called for in the plan will vary in length, width and level of difficulty. Where possible, planners tried to incorporate natural materials

into the design to complement the surrounding landscape. The trails are designed to cross over the Las Vegas Wash in several areas and will include proposed amenities such as trailheads and interpretative stations.

Park planners hope residents' appreciation for the area's environmental importance will increase with its popularity as a recreational area. Although relatively few people visit the Las Vegas Wash at this point, residents' actions directly impact its health. For instance, over-watering, overfertilizing and excessive use of herbicides and pesticides send pollutants directly to the wash, threatening wildlife populations.

For more information about the Clark County Wetlands Park, visit www.wetlandspark.org. For more information about the Las Vegas Wash, visit www.lvwash.org. 



Las Vegas Wash

Coordination
Committee



Did You Know?

The Las Vegas Wash is home to one of Southern Nevada's most diverse wildlife habitats. Biologists have observed more than 125 species of birds that have taken up residence at the wash during the past three years.