

LAS VEGAS WASH COORDINATION COMMITTEE

Virtual Meeting Conducted via Microsoft Teams

April 27, 2021

8:30 a.m.

Members Present:

Elizabeth Bickmore, *Clark County Wetlands Park (Wetlands Park)*

Dan Fischer, *Clark County Water Reclamation District (CCWRD)*

Dana La Rance, *City of Henderson (COH, alt.)*

Zane Marshall, *Southern Nevada Water Authority (SNWA)*

Angela Slaughter, *Colorado River Commission (CRC, alt.)*

John Solvie, *Clark County Water Quality (CCWQ)*

John Tennert, *Clark County Regional Flood Control District (CCRFCD)*

Andrew Trouette, *Bureau of Reclamation (BOR)*

Also Present:

Brandon Albrecht

Scott Hebner

David Stoft

Jason Bailey

Joe Leedy

Todd Tietjen

Michael Boyles

Ryan Pearson

Matthew Wilkinson

Keiba Crear

Colby Pellegrino

Xiaoping Zhou

Jason Eckberg

Nick Rice

Deena Hannoun

Tim Ricks

Comments by the General Public

No one wished to speak.

1. Welcome/Call to Order

Keiba Crear called the meeting to order at 8:32 a.m.

2. Introductions

Keiba conducted a roll call of attendees.

3. Approve January 26, 2021 Meeting Summary

Keiba asked if anyone had comments on the meeting summary. There were no comments, and the summary was posted to the website following the meeting.

4. Receive Presentation on Water Levels in Lake Mead and What to Expect in the Future

Colby Pellegrino, SNWA, gave the presentation and reported that the Colorado River continues to experience hot and dry conditions, further exacerbating ongoing drought. She reported that the seven basin states' drought monitor shows that most of the basin is in extreme or exceptional drought and will persist throughout the summer, stating that precipitation to-date in the upper Colorado River basin is 74 percent of average, but the forecasted inflow to Lake Powell is only 41 percent of average, due to the dry winter and evaporation. Historically, since 1964, water year 2021 is shaping up to be the third driest on record. She stated that Nevada's reductions in Colorado River supply are based on Lake

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Mead's levels, and that if Lake Mead drops below 1,025 feet, Nevada will have to reduce its allocation a total of 30,000 acre-feet. Colby stated that consumptive use is up significantly for 2020, that the current trajectory is not sustainable, and while there is headroom today, even with a declared shortage, the community cannot survive with continued increases in water use. She stated that SNWA is getting aggressive with conservation and that its recent Integrated Resource Planning Advisory Committee recognized that the community needs to work harder to reach conservation goals with upward pressure from climate change and system age. She stated that last year most of the conservation programs underperformed, largely due to reduced demands associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. Colby discussed the Conservation Strategic Plan, its water efficiency goals, and how to support those goals, which include engaging the public in water conservation efforts, improving water efficiency in new development, improving internal communication and collaboration, and using research to inform program and policy development.

Following the presentation, John Tennert asked if the proposed legislative bill requires the removal of existing non-functional turf or prohibits the installation of future non-functional turf in southern Nevada. Colby stated that non-functional turf moving forward is consistently prohibited in all the purveyor member development codes. The proposed legislation states that Colorado River water cannot be used to irrigate non-functional turf after 2026. She added that one of the components of the legislation is a citizens advisory committee to provide input on how SNWA could support the legislation. Joe Leedy asked about the potential declared shortage on the Colorado River and what happens if there is a declaration. Colby stated that the current policy monitors the August 24-month study conducted by BOR which looks at the January 1 elevation of Lake Mead, and if lake levels are below 1,075 feet, a shortage is declared. Last year's water use was 255,000 acre-feet and a shortage would reduce Nevada's 300,000 acre-feet to 280,000 acre-feet. John Solvie asked about growth in the valley and what the water consumption will be with the current growth. Colby stated that SNWA uses the Center for Business and Economic Research's study, which is a jobs-based study, on population growth to model its projections. SNWA looks at how the land is being developed and monitors large consumptive users and takes those into account in its water use projections.

5. Receive Presentation on Razorback Suckers in Las Vegas Bay

Brandon Albrecht, BioWest, gave the presentation and provided an overview on the species' status under the Endangered Species Act and the 2002 recovery goals, which require two populations in the upper basin and two populations in the lower basin. Razorback sucker populations suffered due to dam installation and predatory game fish having an impact on vulnerable larvae. Razorback populations that were estimated in the 100,000s in the 1950s were believed to be extirpated from Lake Mead by the mid-80s until multiple encounters by fisherman in the early 90s. As a result of these encounters, BioWest's Lake Mead research and monitoring of the endangered razorback sucker began in 1995.

What makes Lake Mead unique is both its geographic location between the upper and lower basins, as well as its ability to produce wild fish without captive rearing. Brandon displayed

the five known areas of successful spawning on the lake and described monitoring methods, which include active and passive sonic telemetry, trammel netting and larval sampling. He also stated that the modeling includes population and survival estimates, giving a results summary. Lake Mead, and Las Vegas Bay in particular, are special locations where researchers have been able to find juvenile razorbacks. Important components contributing to Lake Mead's recruiting success for razorback sucker are vegetated cover and turbidity levels. It is believed that these inflow and large wash areas are contemporary versions of historic spawning and nursery habitats. He also stated that from 2009 onward, biologists have suspected that adult and juvenile razorback suckers use the Las Vegas Wash (Wash) for spawning or nursery habitats and larvae are frequently captured in or adjacent to the Wash.

While no specific study of razorback sucker in the Wash has been conducted to date, there have been small ancillary projects that have provided important data. Active telemetry efforts have shown razorbacks retreating from the Las Vegas Bay up towards the Wash inflow during the winter months, before disappearing for a time in the spring. It was assumed that these fish were travelling up into the Wash. Passive telemetry efforts were conducted by BOR in 2019 using submerged stationary telemetry units. One of these units, located downstream of the old boat ramp, contacted a sonic-tagged fish 124 times between February and March.

In 2017, 168 juvenile razorbacks were being moved out of the fish hatchery and needed a home. The Lake Mead Razorback Sucker Workgroup decided that these fish would be pit tagged, and 82 were stocked in Las Vegas Bay near the Wash and 86 were stocked in the Wash near the boat ramp. To track the fish, stationary pit tag readers were put along the Wash that were able to read and record an individual's tag number each time it passed. The year 2019 produced 30 individual hits at a narrow spot between the bay and the boat ramp, and a few were recorded as far upstream as the boat ramp, the most upstream known location of razorbacks in the Wash, although no efforts have been made above that point. The year 2020 produced four individual hits, all at the lower mid-point pit scanner location. All of this data points towards the Wash being an important component of razorback sucker success in Lake Mead. As a side note, a bonytail chub, another endangered Colorado River fish, was captured near the Wash in 2020 in a trammel net. It is hypothesized that it escaped from the Lake Mead fish hatchery as a larva and found the Wash inflow area to be suitable for its needs. Brandon said that he was unaware of another larval bonytail surviving to adulthood without human intervention in the modern Colorado River system.

6. Receive Update on Recent Activities

a. Las Vegas Wash Project Coordination Team (Wash Team)

The Wash Team showed a video displaying aerial footage of the Wash with narration from team members and content from the Las Vegas Wash Coordination Committee 2020 Year-End Report.

b. Clark County Wetlands Park (Wetlands Park)

Elizabeth Bickmore had a conflict and was unable to present on Wetlands Park activities.

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c. Las Vegas Valley Watershed Advisory Committee (LVVWAC)

Keiba provided an update on LVVWAC and reported on the committee's meetings from February 9 and April 13. At the February 9 meeting, the LVVWAC received an update on the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's recommendations regarding the selenium standard development study and approved the 2021/2022 Wash budget of \$1,204,631. At the April 13 meeting, the LVVWAC approved the 2021 Las Vegas Wash Capital Improvements Plan, the wastewater dischargers provided their annual updates, and Dan Fischer with CCWRD provided an update on the ongoing legislative session and assembly bills 97 and 146. Ryan Pearson also provided an update on the Lower Las Vegas Wash stabilization program and the plan to construct six new weirs and to rehabilitate two. SNWA will lead the design and construction, with Atkins as the design consultant. SNWA is negotiating with Las Vegas Paving on the Construction Manager at Risk (CMAR) contract. The next LVVWAC meeting is tentatively scheduled for July 13.

d. Emerging Issues

John Tennert stated that CCRFCD recently received a draft of the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit from the state for the Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) program and has begun to review it. He also mentioned that the selenium project consultants will conduct surveys on the tributaries at the end of May.

Todd Tietjen stated that staff is modeling several low lake level scenarios for water quality in Lake Mead, with warm inflows from Lake Powell as the most immediate concern.

John Solvie stated that CCWQ is pursuing a project to remove trash and debris from low flow bypasses and detention basins, in cooperation with Clark County Public Works and CCRFCD.

7. Set Next Meeting Date/Time and Propose Items for the Next Meeting's Agenda

The next meeting is scheduled for October 26, 2021.

Comments by the General Public

Seeing no request from the public to comment, the meeting was adjourned.