

LAS VEGAS WASH COORDINATION COMMITTEE

Southern Nevada Water Authority

100 N City Parkway

Las Vegas, NV 89106

October 24, 2023

8:30 a.m.

Members Present:

Sajjad Ahmad, *University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV)*

Tom Ashley, *Bureau of Reclamation (BOR, alt.)*

Elizabeth Bickmore, *Clark County Parks & Recreation (CCPR)*

JD Dotchin, *Nevada Division of Environmental Protection (NDEP, alt.)*

Matt Flores, *Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW)*

John Hiatt, *Desert Wetlands Conservancy (DWC)*

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

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

David Stoft, *Clark County Water Reclamation District (CCWRD, alt.)*

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

Also Present:

Erik Anderson

Alisa Blaylock

Keiba Crear

Gilbert Cruz

Spring Dineen

Christine Dudas

Syndi Dudley

Jason Eckberg

Dan Gerrity

Ben Jurand

Julia Lantow

Joe Leedy

Ryan Pearson

Alan Pineda

Paulina Pinto

Nick Rice

Tim Ricks

AJ Rodrigues

Daylin Sigler

Amanda Tanaka

Debbie Van Dooremolen

Xiaoping Zhou

Comments by the General Public

There were no comments by the public.

1. **Welcome/Call to Order:**

Jason Eckberg, SNWA, called the meeting to order at 8:37 a.m.

2. **Introductions**

Everyone introduced themselves.

3. **Approve April 25, 2023 Meeting Summary**

Jason made a motion to approve the meeting summary of April 25, 2023. The motion was approved.

4. **Receive Presentation on Hollywood Boulevard Extension**

Syndi Dudley, WSP, provided the update. As the engineering consultant, WSP is working with Clark County Public Works (CCPW) on the Hollywood Boulevard extension project. Based on suggestions from the Las Vegas Valley Watershed Advisory Committee (LVVWAC) and SNWA, CCPW selected a new alignment to connect Vegas Valley to Galleria Drive through Wetlands Park. Phase 2 of the project extends from Silver Bowl

Park up to Vegas Valley Drive. This project will connect the Sunrise Manor neighborhood to the commercial areas of the City of Henderson. The project will improve access to Wetlands Park and ease traffic on the I-515 and Boulder Highway. The project is 5.8 miles long, provides two lanes in each direction, the posted speed will be 45 miles per hour, and the right-of-way through Wetlands Park ranges from 100 to 450 feet. Two bridges totaling nearly 900-foot long will be constructed over the Las Vegas Wash (Wash) and Duck Creek, and the project will improve 60 acres of the Duck Creek floodplain. Total cost for the project is about \$72.5 million. The Sunrise Trailhead will be shifted to accommodate the new roadway. The Hollywood Extension Trail will cross Hollywood Boulevard with a bridge from the west side of the road to the east side of the road and will include guardrails and tortoise fencing around the perimeter of the road. A driveway will be constructed for access to SNWA facilities at Wetlands Park. They will replace pavement around the Silver Bowl baseball fields and add new guardrails; these improvements will be completed within the next 12–18 months. Two roller compacted concrete structures will be constructed under the bridges at Duck Creek to manage flows. The lighting on the bridges will be sensitive to the birds and wildlife in the area. Between the two bridges will be a dirt switchback down to the Pelican Point Trail. Lastly, a parking area will be constructed for one of the featured trailheads at Wetlands Park. NV Energy is providing stubs in the parking lot in case Wetlands Park wants to include lighting for the trailhead. Phase 2 of the environmental assessment for this project is nearing completion. Phase 2 final design will begin January 2024 and will last about a year, and construction will last about 18 months.

Joe Leedy, CCWQ, asked if any portion of the road will fall below grade and asked if there will be drainage for this section. Syndi confirmed drainage will be designed into the below-grade portions of the project. John Hiatt, DWC, asked where wildlife under-crossings or over-crossings will be along the new road. Syndi shared that there are several culvert concrete boxes for wildlife under-crossings along areas of natural waterflow. Zane Marshall, SNWA, asked if the extension is compatible with walkers, runners, and cyclists. Syndi shared that there will be a 10-foot-wide trail about 16 feet from the motorway. Zane also asked if there are still plans to build a sports complex near the Silver Bowl. Elizabeth Bickmore, CCPR, confirmed that there are still plans for the complex, but it is not within Wetlands Park boundaries. John Hiatt raised concerns about the proposed posted speed and asked what kind of speed-reducing features will be in place on this roadway. Syndi shared that there are no speed-reducing features being integrated into the project at this time. John Solvie, CCWQ, asked what the drainage channels on the side of the roadway will be made of. Syndi shared that this detail has not been determined. Zane asked if this project is a solution to some of the flooding that happens in the Duck Creek area at Wetlands Park. Syndi shared that this project does address some of the Duck Creek head cut that is occurring. The CCWRD is starting a new project that will channel some water running down from the north and cross this alignment. Syndi shared that there has not been any coordination with CCWRD regarding water channelization, but they plan to meet as it would be a useful consideration for the project.

5. Receive Updates on Recent Activities

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

Environmental Resources, Funding and Public Outreach

Julia Lantow, SNWA, provided the update. Avian point counts by the Great Basin Bird Observatory (GBBO) were conducted biweekly at more than 30 points year-round until the study paused in August. In the 2021–2022 study year (September to August), 146 species were detected. Since 2005, approximately 250 species have been detected. The 2005–2021 and 2005–2022 reports are back with GBBO for edits. The reports document significant increases in species richness and abundance. The study will alternate yearly moving forward and is currently off for the 2023–2024 study year.

Julia detailed results from the threatened and endangered (T&E) bird surveys. Marsh bird surveys covering the endangered Yuma Ridgway's rail (YRRA) were conducted in April and May. Six individuals were counted in 2023 compared to the seven identified in 2022 and five in 2021. Southwestern willow flycatcher (SWFL) surveys were conducted May through June and territory monitoring continued into August. A record of three territories, with three pairs, were identified. There were six nest attempts and only one was successful. Three nestlings were banded at 7–9-days old. The youngest nestling was confirmed as fledging and is the first successful SWFL fledgling in the Wash project area. Yellow-billed cuckoo surveys were conducted June through August and 11 detections of a record five individuals were reported. Of these, two were probable breeding territories. A probable breeding territory is defined as three or more detections in roughly the same area, each separated by at least 10 days. The increase in detections and breeding records required re-initiation of section 7 consultation under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) for compliance coverage for Las Vegas Wash Long-Term Operating Plan (LTOP) activities. The Wash Team worked with BOR to submit a biological assessment for LTOP activities funded by BOR and/or occurring on BOR lands given the recent changes in T&E bird status at the Wash. They are also working with Clark County to address ESA coverage for YRRA for LTOP activities on county lands.

Rodent and shrew surveys are conducted at six mesquite woodland and riparian sites using Sherman live traps for rodents and drift fencing and pitfall traps for shrews. Acoustic monitoring of bats began in January and will run through December 2024. Three Anabat Swift Detectors were deployed at different sites. The detector at Pabco Weir was attached to a tree uprooted during the September flood events and was retrieved by the Wash Team to restore and eventually re-deploy. Limited mist-netting of bats was conducted in the spring: 23 individuals were captured and swabbed for the fungus that causes white-nose syndrome, a deadly bat disease. All samples at the Wash and in Nevada came back negative. Mist-netting surveys were put on pause to avoid potential incidental take of T&E birds. Bat surveys including acoustic monitoring, white-nose syndrome sampling, and mist-netting surveys will be conducted in 2024. Benthic macroinvertebrates will also be studied in 2024.

More than 615 acres along the Wash have been revegetated. The 2022 vegetation monitoring report is under internal review. The 2021 report is complete and highlights the 78 sites monitored in the field. Of those, 49 had no change in cover, 12 increased in cover, and 12 decreased in cover; the other five were new. The report includes implementation of the long-term revegetation management plan and efforts for additional plantings and enhancements for wildlife.

BOR has awarded a \$900,500 grant for the Wash for riparian restoration at Pabco Weir and an additional \$255,000 for Wash activities. NDEP awarded \$55,000 to cover fiscal year (FY) 2022/23 Mabel Hoggard field trips, Wash Green-Ups, and Springs Preserve teacher trainings. They have awarded more than \$56,000 for the same programs for FY 2023/24. The Nevada Division of Forestry awarded a \$10,000 matching grant for riparian area cleanup in the Cottonwood Cells.

Julia shared updates on the LTOP budget. There is about \$3.4 million in the budget for FY 2023/24 and of that, \$735,000 has been carried over from the previous year for stabilization maintenance. The budget is funded by the LVVWAC and various grants.

Julia updated the group on outreach activities. At the spring Wash Green-Up, 155 volunteers planted over 3,000 plants on 4.5 acres at Powerline Crossing South. The next Wash Green-Up is scheduled for April 6, 2024, where volunteers will plant about 3,500 plants on four acres at Lower Narrows. This event will mark the 40th Green-Up at the Wash. The Wash Team participated in the Las Vegas Science and Technology Festival, Discovery Day at Wetlands Park, and a private planting event with the Howard Hughes Corporation. Upcoming events include Mabel Hoggard field trips, World Wetlands Day, and a Youth Conservation Council field trip.

Lastly, Julia shared photos of the damage caused by the fall flooding events. The flooding caused erosion, significant sediment transfer, and vegetation removal. Engineering is creating a maintenance plan where they will prioritize areas that have seen significant damage.

John Solvie asked what they attribute the dramatic increase in T&E birds at the Wash to. Debbie Van Dooremolen, SNWA, shared that it is likely due to habitat restoration efforts. Jason added that the increase may be attributed to the maturation of plant species, increased habitat connectivity, and the development of enhanced habitat. Zane added that the restoration work that has been done makes this area ideal for migratory birds to stop and breed. John Hiatt asked how the Wash Team knew that they detected seven different YRRA rather than multiple sightings of the same bird. Debbie shared that they have established methods for estimating abundance and avoiding double-counting individuals; e.g., if one individual is detected at the same point on three separate surveys, it is counted as one YRRA. John Hiatt then asked about the plan for managing invasive species. Julia shared that the annual vegetation monitoring focuses on managing noxious weeds and invasive species. Jason added that of the 78 sites surveyed in the field in 2021, there were only 2–3 sites that had more than 10 percent noxious weed cover. Prior to management of the Wash, there were nearly 1,500 acres of tamarisk, and now there are only about 15 acres. The Wash Team not only removes the invasive species but replaces them with native species. John Hiatt asked about invasive animal species such as feral cats and non-native rat species. Jason shared that feral cats are not an issue at the Wash due to the large coyote population. There also seem to be fewer black rats at the Wash than in recent years; the rodent survey has not captured many. John Hiatt expressed his concerns about a potential increase in feral cat population at the Wash because of the increase in birds and housing development. Elizabeth added that cat colonies are restricted at Wetlands Park. David Stoft, CCWRD, asked if the beaver that lived in the Wash was still there and if beavers are native to the area. Jason shared that there are many beavers along the Wash, and they are considered a

native species, but can also be destructive to the revegetated areas. David asked where bats roost at the Wash. Julia shared that it depends on the species, some do not stay at the Wash, some live beneath bridges, in palm trees, and other crevices. Joe asked if it is common to lose vegetation during flood events. Julia shared that the September flood events were significant in terms of damage compared to the last five years. Zane added that the Wash Team was unable to perform regular maintenance due to compliance issues last year, which could have worsened the damage caused by flooding. Jason added that there is always some vegetation moved or removed during flood events, but the erosion control structures help significantly lessen the damage. Syndi Dudley, WSP, asked what solutions could be used to prevent white-nose syndrome in bats. Julia shared that the only measure to prevent white-nose syndrome from spreading is to educate people on its existence. White-nose syndrome came to the United States in 2007 from climbers who went through caves and brought the fungus that causes the disease back on their climbing gear. If white-nose syndrome spreads to Nevada, there is no antidote. Extremely cold areas where bats hibernate appear to suffer the hardest from white-nose syndrome. John Tennert, CCRFCD, asked what the recurrence interval was of the flood event. Jason shared that it was a five-year flood event.

Water Quality

Xiaoping Zhou, SNWA, shared water quality data using the Power BI application. He shared the functions of the application and how they can organize the data by parameter, field measurement, location, and year. Mainstream Wash average conductivity in the last two years has remained steady. Total suspended solids (TSS) concentrations increased at some sites in 2023 in comparison to 2022. Xiaoping mentioned that erosion control structures were effective in managing TSS during the flood events. Xiaoping shared that whenever there are increases of TSS, there are often increases in total organic carbons. Dissolved selenium concentrations are higher at the two upstream sites due to urban runoff flows and the lack of dilution by treated wastewater at those locations. Arsenic concentration increased at the site downstream of the Duck Creek inflow; increases can be attributed to groundwater and urban runoff. Orthophosphate concentrations decreased at most sample sites in the last five years, but there was a slight increase in 2023. Xiaoping shared that if there were a dramatic increase in orthophosphate, it could cause algal blooms in Lake Mead.

Xiaoping provided water quality data from the shallow groundwater monitoring wells along the Wash. The purpose of the study is to understand the surface water and groundwater interaction especially as it relates to perchlorate levels. Average conductivity remained stable at most monitoring wells, with a slight increase at some sites. Total dissolved solids follow a similar pattern to conductivity data but have increased in the last five years. Arsenic concentrations remain stable. Orthophosphate concentrations remain relatively low apart from a few sites. Monitoring wells on the south side of the Wash have relatively higher concentrations of perchlorate.

There are three real-time water quality monitoring stations along the Wash. Two are in tributaries and one is in the mainstream Wash below Lake Las Vegas. Four parameters are monitored: (1) temperature, (2) conductance, (3) pH, and (4) dissolved oxygen. The data quality is fairly high, and data is collected every 15 minutes. Xiaoping shared a flow chart provided by U.S. Geological Survey displaying the increase in discharge to the Wash from

the flood events. Xiaoping reported that the storm events and higher flow caused a decrease in conductance.

John Solvie asked if groundwater sampling is taken at the same depth each time, or if it is measured in correlation to the change in groundwater levels. Xiaoping shared that because they are only testing shallow groundwater, they sample from the same depth each time and groundwater levels are typically stable. Elizabeth referenced the development of the Cadence community in Henderson bordering Wetlands Park. She asked if the flows coming from that area interact with other surface flows and if they affect groundwater quality. Xiaoping clarified that she was referencing the Burns Street channel and shared that water quality in that stream is stable, but the flows have been diverted from the Wash to the Duck Creek channel. He shared that the Burns Street channel accounts for 20 percent of the perchlorate loading to the Wash. JD Dotchin, NDEP, shared that they are working with a contractor to install a subsystem to attempt to remove roughly 15 to 20 pounds of perchlorate per day from this site. Construction is set to begin in March 2024. Elizabeth asked where the new subsystem would be located and if the subsystem would cause a reduction in flow volume. JD shared that the subsystem will be on Sunset Road, will pump water to the AMPAC treatment plant, and then the flows will be returned to the Wash. It could reduce flows. John Hiatt asked if anyone had done a vertical profile of the distribution and concentration of perchlorate in the soils along the Wash. Xiaoping shared that no soil studies have been done for perchlorate along the Wash, but it will be considered. Joe asked if perchlorate levels are a concern or if it is trending downward. Xiaoping confirmed that while there has been a slight increase recently, perchlorate levels have overall decreased. Joe then asked how long they have been doing real-time water quality monitoring and how long they expect to continue the program. Xiaoping reported that they have been doing real-time water quality monitoring since 1998 and plan to keep the program as long as funding is available. Joe asked what the data is being used for. Xiaoping shared that it is used to monitor major events like flooding and its effects on the Wash.

Stabilization

Ryan Pearson, SNWA, provided the update and shared that upcoming efforts will focus on stormwater pollution prevention best management practices at the stockpile sites. He is also preparing a contract for long-term maintenance and site-specific work. Work on the Historic Lateral Weir is needed to ensure a uniform flow path while being cautious with the nearby habitat and wildlife. The DU Wetlands No. 1 Weir needs maintenance and repair. The Upper Narrows Weir will need vegetation clearing on the weir structure, and Upper Diversion Weir needs routine maintenance for trash build-up. SNWA will coordinate with Wetlands Park to conduct bank line work between the Visitor Center and Monson weirs to rebuild the drop structure.

John Hiatt asked if they had seen any long-term changes in building or cutting of the Wash bed. Ryan shared that there has not been an official survey of the Wash bed, but it is relatively stable. He added that storm events can often cause higher velocity of water flow over the weirs; however, there has not been much change in the Wash bed itself. John asked if there is a noticeable decrease in sediment load during storm events with the erosion control structures in place. Ryan shared that his team has not actively measured that data.

b. Clark County Wetlands Park

Elizabeth provided the update and shared the effects of the recent flood event at Wetlands Park. She shared video footage of the flooding at Upper Diversion Weir where water had covered the weir and flattened the vegetation near the area. The flood event also damaged areas near Wetlands Park Lane, Tropicana Wash, the cottonwood grove, and the Nature Preserve. There was a lot of trash build-up due to the flood, and the team will focus on cleaning the area.

Elizabeth shared that the park police joined administrative services to form the Office of Public Safety and augmented their staff, increasing the police presence at Wetlands Park. There are plans to increase regulation of e-bikes at Wetlands Park to better align with BOR rules. Wetlands Park is looking to create posted speed limits and rules for e-bikes. They are also considering installing fences to restrict ATVs, four-wheelers, and trucks from driving on park trails. Wetlands Park maintains their contract with the National Park Service Exotic Plant Management Team to address invasive species at the park. One hundred-fifty domestic rabbits were released in the park and animal control provided cages to capture some of them. With the newly installed security system, the suspects have been identified and reported. Australian redclaw crayfish have also been an issue at Wetlands Park, and a joint effort with other agencies helped mitigate the risk that this noxious species could have on the Wash and Lake Mead.

Elizabeth shared plans for development at Wetlands Park including an event space near Duck Creek Trailhead funded by a Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act grant. This space could be used for running or biking events. They are looking to increase parking to accommodate the new event space. Wetlands Park plans to develop a Dragonfly Interpretive Area which will include a walkway from the Nature Center to Wetlands Loop Trailhead, a bridge over a pond, and a bird viewing area. Wetlands Park has \$10 million allocated from the state through Conserve Nevada to fund several trails including one that connects Pabco Trailhead through the Hollywood extension up to the Nature Center. Project plans are estimated to be complete in December 2024.

Wetlands Park is engaging in studies on screwbean mesquite die-off in the valley, some of which are in Wetlands Park. Several theories point to fungal pathogens and climate change, but there is no current explanation for this phenomenon. They are planning a screwbean mesquite common garden where they will monitor the locations of the trees in relation to their health.

Elizabeth summarized their stewardship programs: they had 715 volunteers contribute over 1,500 volunteer hours. The Wetlands Watch program continues, and volunteers collect trash and educate visitors. NFL Green is partnering with the Super Bowl host committee for a community planting event at the Wash on December 7. Elizabeth highlighted the grand opening of the Nature Gallery on July 22 that features different art installations. Since 2001, Wetlands Park has had 57,800 Clark County School District (CCSD) students attend field trips. This year, free bussing will be offered to CCSD students, made possible by grants from Wetlands Park Friends and REI.

Elizabeth highlighted upcoming signature events. Haunt the Wetlands is scheduled for October 27, Wetlands Art Day is scheduled for March 23, BioBlast is scheduled for April

27, Discovery Day is scheduled for June 8, Pollinator Party is scheduled for June, Stalking Twilight is scheduled for August 15, and Astronomy in the Park is scheduled for September.

c. Las Vegas Valley Watershed Advisory Committee (LVVWAC)

Keiba Crear, SNWA, reported on the recent LVVWAC meeting where they approved the FY 2024/25 budget for LTOP activities. Nearly \$300,000 of this budget is grant funded. The next LVVWAC meeting is scheduled for April 9 at 2 p.m. on Microsoft Teams.

d. Emerging Issues

There were no emerging issues.

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

The next meeting will be the annual Wash tour and is scheduled for April 23, 2024.

7. Recognize 25th Anniversary of the Las Vegas Wash Coordination Committee (LVWCC)

Zane highlighted the accomplishments of the LVWCC over the past 25 years including water quality improvement, infrastructure development, and biodiversity improvement. He recognized the collaborative efforts of members and partners, and stated that continued cooperation is necessary to ensure success of the Wash project into the future.

Jason shared that a bench with a special plaque will be installed by Powerline Crossing Weir to commemorate 25 successful years of the LVWCC.

Comments by the General Public

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