

# CHAPTER 11

## LAND USE STUDY TEAM

### Objective

*“What effect do current land use practices have on the environmental integrity of Las Vegas Wash, and what land use practices can be developed and implemented to improve Wash conditions?”*

### Introduction

The Land Use Study Team (Team) was formed to investigate any concerns stemming from land use practices that may exist relative to the Las Vegas Wash (Wash) and to develop recommendations that could be incorporated into the planning process currently employed by Las Vegas Valley (Valley) agencies. Taking a comprehensive look at the land use process used by Valley planning agencies is essential considering that the Wash transects different planning authorities.

Developing methods to mitigate the influence of land use practices on the Wash will help reduce the impact of the Valley’s growing population. The issues surrounding land use, and the subsequent impact on the Wash, will continue to be a concern considering that the current projections estimate Valley population growth to average roughly 3 percent from the year 2000 to 2010, assuming that the Valley’s population grows in tandem with the forecast of Clark County’s population.

When making its water demand forecasts for the region, the SNWA uses the Clark County population forecasts made each year by the Center for Business and Economic Research at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (CBER). CBER’s 1996 population forecast, shown below, corresponds with the SNWA’s 1997 Water Resource Plan. This forecast shows an average annual growth rate of approximately 3 percent from 2000 to 2010, and a slower rate of less than 1.5 percent from 2010 to 2030.

#### Clark County Population Projections

Year	Estimated Population
1998	1,254,233
1999	1,328,404
2000	1,399,206
2005	1,685,399
2010	1,885,717
2015	2,037,784
2020	2,165,949
2025	2,286,478
2030	2,410,858
2035	2,538,325

Source: Clark County  
Population Forecasts,  
August 1996, CBER.

### The Process

The Team is comprised of agency land use planning professionals. Each of the land use planning entities in the Valley was represented on the study



team. The Team worked throughout the process to understand current land use plans and reports relating to the Wash (Appendix 11.1), to identify any land use practices that may have an effect on environmental integrity of the Wash, and to determine what type of land use practices can be developed to improve Wash conditions.

Discussions of the Team focused on determining zones of influence to the Wash, the possibilities of establishing a common environmental review process among all planning entities and the benefits of developing and implementing best management practices.

To reach their objective, the Team established three goals to accomplish throughout the process:

- Goal One -** Identify land use practices that impact water quality in the Las Vegas Wash and tributaries within the Valley.
- Goal Two -** Identify successful watershed management methods in place throughout the southwest that may be adaptable for use in the Las Vegas Valley.
- Goal Three -** Support the development of land use/environmental review process for implementation by land use planning authorities.

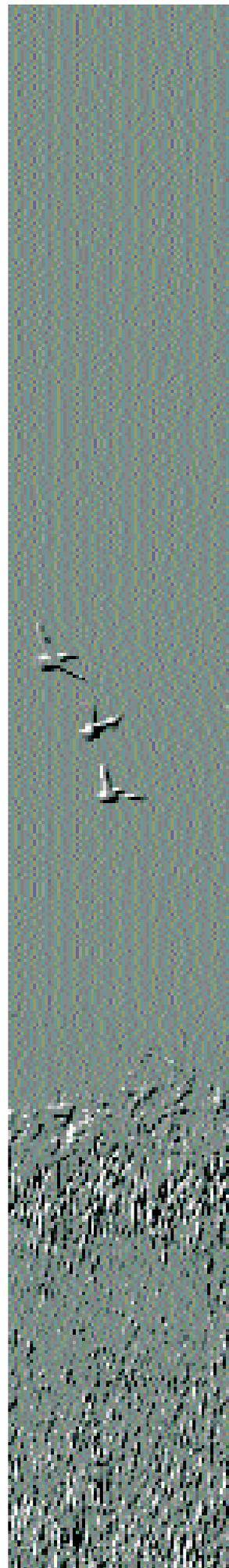
## Background

### Current Land Use Planning and Zoning Approval Processes

Throughout the Valley, the process by which land use and zoning decisions are made is determined by each of the three city councils and by the Board of County Commissioners (BCC). The jurisdictional boundary for each planning authority is shown in Figure 11.1, and the specifics of the land use and zoning process for each entity are described in more detail below.

### Clark County Land Use Planning Process

Clark County is comprised of 11 unincorporated towns and areas. Each of these towns and areas have undergone the land use planning process and have distinct plans in place to guide zoning application decisions that fit the character of the community. Per Nevada Revised Statute (NRS), land use plans are updated every five years by each planning agency and are public processes.



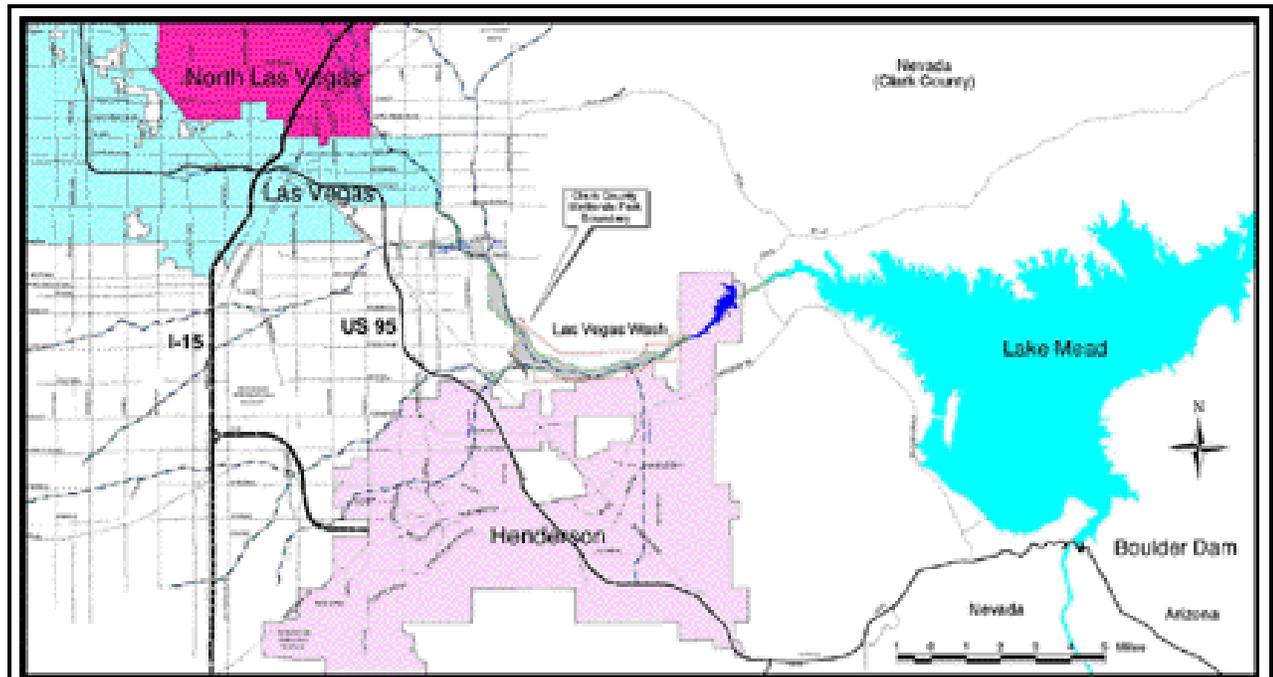


Figure 11.1 – Jurisdictional boundaries for each planning entity.

### Clark County Zoning Approval Process

Zoning requests to Clark County begin with the applicant submitting an application along with the required supporting materials (deeds, site plans, etc.) to staff. The request is then routed to the appropriate Town Boards, departments and other agencies. Staff researches the item for conformance to the Land Use Plan for the area, zoning designation, and comments from other departments and agencies, and then forwards the staff recommendation to the Planning Commission and the Board of County Commissioners. Per NRS, public hearing notices are sent to property owners within 300 feet of the exterior boundary of the subject property and a sign with pertinent information is posted on the property. Notices are also sent to the newspaper to be published.

The applicant meets with the appropriate town advisory board or citizens area committee, who then forwards a recommendation to the Planning Commission. If the application is a conforming request, it is scheduled for the Board of County Commissioners agenda for a public hearing. If not conforming to the land use plan, it is reviewed by the Planning Commission as a non-conforming zone change, a recommendation is developed and is forwarded to the Board of County Commissioners for final action. If the request conforms to the land use plan it may be approved with no time limit for review. If non-conforming, a Resolution of Intent is prepared and recorded. This means that the development is constructed as approved, the zoning is put in place, and if not, it can expire and the applicant must go through the process again. Most other land use applications are processed in a similar manner.

#### Land Use & Zoning Entities

- ▶ City of Henderson
- ▶ City of Las Vegas City Council
- ▶ City of North Las Vegas City Council
- ▶ Clark County Board of County Commissioners



### City of Henderson Land Use Planning Process

The City of Henderson has a Comprehensive Plan in place to address land use planning which guides zoning application decisions. Per NRS, the land use plan is updated every five years and undergoes a public process.

### City of Henderson Zoning Approval Process (Land Development Review Process)

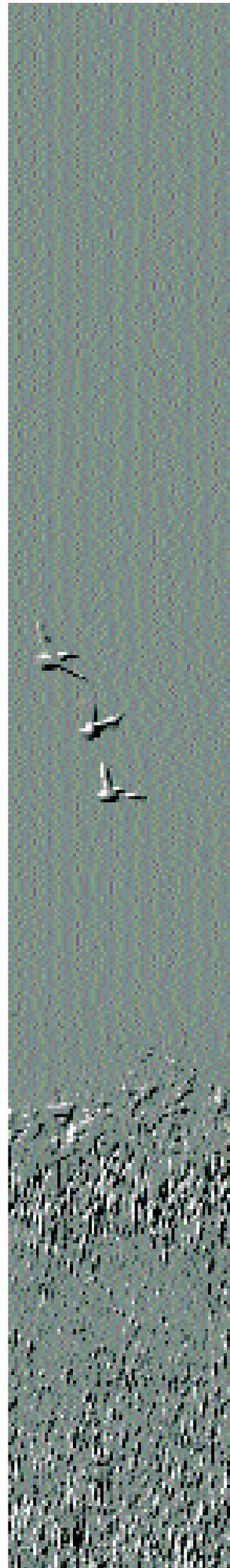
Zoning requests to the City of Henderson begin with the applicant submitting an application along with the required supporting materials (deeds, site plans, etc.) to staff at the Henderson Development Center. If conforming to the Comprehensive Plan, the application is forwarded to the Building Department for required permits. If the request is not conforming to the Comprehensive Plan it is then routed to the Community Planning Department and the Public Works Department and other agencies for comment. Staff compiles the comments and data from other departments and agencies to establish a staff recommendation to be forwarded to the Planning Commission. Per NRS, public hearing notices are sent to property owners within 300 feet of the exterior boundary of the subject property and a sign with pertinent information is posted on the property. Notices are also sent to the newspaper to be published. If the Planning Commission approves the application, it is forwarded to the City Council for approval. If the Planning Commission denies the request, the applicant may appeal to the City Council. The applicant may make appropriate changes or reapply in one year.

### City of Las Vegas Land Use Planning Process

The City of Las Vegas has a General Plan in place to guide zoning application decisions; however, this General Plan is dynamic, changing with each General Plan Amendment (GPA) approved by the Planning Commission and the City Council. Generally, each GPA occurs when an application for a non-conforming land use application is received and each GPA will be heard simultaneously with the Zone Change (ZC) application, thus allowing for a conforming land use category for the ZC application.

### City of Las Vegas Zoning Approval Process

Zoning requests to the City of Las Vegas begin with the applicant submitting an application along with the required supporting materials (deeds, site plans, etc.) to staff. The request is then routed to the appropriate departments and other agencies for comment. Staff researches the item for conformance to the General Plan, zoning designation, and reviews comments from other departments and agencies to establish a staff recommendation. If not conforming to the General Plan, a GPA may be requested. The



application is then forwarded with the staff recommendation to the appropriate neighborhood association, Board of Zoning Adjustment, Planning Commission and the City Council. Per NRS, public hearing notices are sent to property owners within 300 feet of the exterior boundary of the subject property and a sign with pertinent information is posted on the property. Notices are also sent to the newspaper to be published.

### City of North Las Vegas Land Use Planning Process

The City of North Las Vegas has a Comprehensive Plan in place which addresses land use planning to guide zoning application decisions. Per NRS, the comprehensive land use plan is updated every five years and undergoes a public process.

### City of North Las Vegas Zoning Approval Process

Zoning requests to the City of North Las Vegas begin with the applicant submitting an application along with the required supporting materials (deeds, site plans, etc.) to staff. The request is then routed to the Community Planning Department and the Public Works Department and other agencies for comment. Staff researches the item for conformance to the Land Use Plan, zoning designation, and reviews comments from other departments and agencies to establish a staff recommendation. Per NRS, public hearing notices are sent to property owners within 300 feet of the exterior boundary of the subject property and a sign with pertinent information is posted on the property. Notices are also sent to the newspaper to be published. The application is then forwarded with the staff recommendation to the Planning Commission. If the Planning Commission approves the application, it is forwarded to the City Council for approval. If the Planning Commission denies the request, the application is not forwarded to the City Council. The applicant may make appropriate changes or reapply in one year.

## **Recommended Actions**

In order to identify land use practices that have an effect on the Wash and to provide methods of promoting informed planning decisions resulting in reducing the impact of land use on the Wash, the Team developed the following five action items.

### **Action 1: Focus Land Use Recommendations on the Priority Zone of Influence (1/2 mile radius of Las Vegas Wash)**

*Entities: City of Henderson, City of Las Vegas, City of North Las Vegas, Clark County Department of Comprehensive Planning*

The Team developed three tiers, or zones of influence to the Las Vegas Wash. Tier 1 is the area of land adjacent to the Las Vegas Wash running the length of the Wash from the headwaters to the Las Vegas Bay, extend-



ing from the center line of the water course one half (1/2) mile in each direction. This zone should be distinguished as the priority zone because of the obvious effect land use activities could have on the Wash.

Tier 2 is the land surface area directly above the shallow aquifer. The Team determined that understanding the land use practices that are allowing constituents to reach the shallow aquifer, and potentially reach the Wash as intercepted shallow ground water, and developing methods that could reduce the occurrence of certain pollutants are worthy of consideration.

The Bureau of Land Management’s Land Disposal Boundary for the Las Vegas Valley was used to delineate the Tier 3 zone of influence. This boundary area was used because it encompasses all area that is currently developed and all area that is expected to be developed in the future. The

Team realized that this area encompasses the entire urban area of the Valley, and recommends that this zone of influence is considered by entities from a watershed management approach whenever possible.

Figure 11.2 shows a map of the three identified zones of influence. While the Team originally identified three zones of influence, the priority zone (1/2 mile radius of the Wash) should be focused on with the implementation of the recommended action items.

This recommendation includes recognizing that an interagency effort is necessary for this effort to be effective.

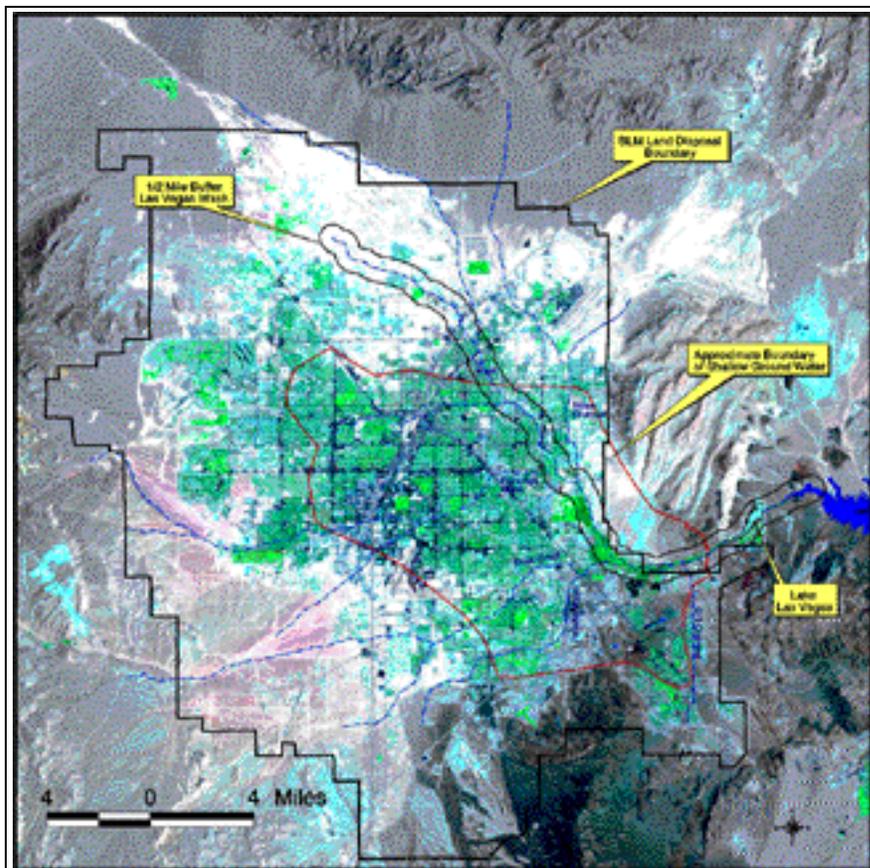


Figure 11.2 – Map indicating the three zones of influence as identified by the Land Use Study Team.

**Action 2: Support the Development and Implementation of a Standardized Environmental Review Process among Planning Entities**

*Entities: City of Henderson, City of Las Vegas, City of North Las Vegas, Clark County Department of Comprehensive Planning, Las Vegas Wash Management Entity*



The Team realized that often developers, or other parties seeking zoning changes on properties within different jurisdictions, would need to interact with more than one planning authority. The Team suggested that a common review process would not only speed up the process for internal and external customers, but would also make clear to the party requesting the zoning change exactly what is required. Items that should be included in the environmental review include:

- Water Level Data
- Water Quality Data
- Notice to Entities that may have an Interest in the Plan
- Hydrogeologic Concerns
- Surface and Subsurface Drainage

**Action 3: Develop Best Management Practices**

*Entities: City of Henderson, City of Las Vegas, City of North Las Vegas, Clark County Department of Comprehensive Planning, Conservation District of Southern Nevada, Las Vegas Wash Management Entity*

The Team recommended the development of structural and non-structural Best Management Practices (BMPs) to be adopted by the land use planning authorities. One method of identifying BMPs for the Valley is by conducting a search of other communities in the southwest and determine what works best for them.

The study team realizes that many entities already provide BMPs to interested parties, but believe additional BMPs could be identified and developed and that consistency from one entity to another would be beneficial.

**Action 4: Develop Educational Material for Developers**

*Entities: City of Henderson, City of Las Vegas, City of North Las Vegas, Clark County Department of Comprehensive Planning*

Making expectations clear to the developer was the impetus behind this action item. This would also help to educate the developer as to any environmental concerns in the priority zone of influence. The educational material should include:

- Description of Planning Process
- Checklist of Permits / Paperwork
- Discussion and Recommendation of Required Best Management Practices
- Encouragement of Optional Best Management Practices



**Action 5: Identify Opportunities for Interagency Coordination Efforts**

*Entities: City of Henderson, City of Las Vegas, City of North Las Vegas, Clark County Department of Comprehensive Planning, Las Vegas Wash Management Entity, Nevada Division of Environmental Planning, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers*

The Team recommended that interagency coordination was the key to effectively develop and implement many of their ideas. This could be accomplished by making presentations to the planning authorities and to use the Coordination Committee as a forum to present opportunities for coordination.

**Appendix**

11.1 Current Land Use Plans and Reports Relating to the Las Vegas Wash

