

CHAPTER 5

COMMITTEE DEVELOPMENT & ACCOMPLISHMENTS

As discussed in Sections I and II, many complex issues converge in the place called the Las Vegas Wash (Wash). But the Wash also provides an opportunity for a common solution. The Water Quality Citizens Advisory Committee (WQCAC) recognized this in many of their nine recommendations summarized in Table 5.1 (and in more detail in Appendix 5.1). Their recommendations were presented to the Southern Nevada Water Authority (SNWA) Board of Directors and the Lake Mead Water Quality Forum in June and July 1998. The inception of the Las Vegas Wash Coordination Committee took shape from those recommendations, which focus on the Wash as a common solution.

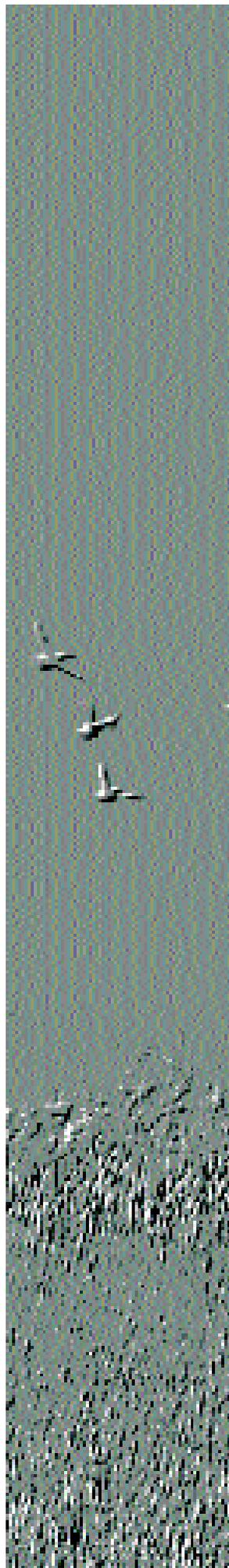
Because of the complex issues and the fact that the Wash is not the responsibility of any one public entity, the WQCAC concluded that an interagency and community-wide effort was needed to address the situation. The WQCAC's ninth and final recommendation was the development of a Comprehensive Adaptive Management Plan for the Wash to be coordinated by the SNWA, an existing entity comprised of seven water and wastewater entities with responsibility for water resource issues in southern Nevada. The Lake Mead Water Quality Forum agreed with this recommendation, and the Las Vegas Wash Coordination Committee was formed.

Las Vegas Wash Coordination Committee

In September of 1998, the SNWA developed and implemented an action plan outlining the membership of the Las Vegas Wash Coordination Committee. The action plan provided a framework for the LVWCC process and established a timeline for specific goals (Appendix 5.2). In October 1998, the LVWCC convened for the first time. The LVWCC combines local, state, and federal agencies with members of the public, business persons, and representatives of environmental groups (Table 5.2).

WATER QUALITY CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE	
June 1998 Recommendations	
The Foundation for the Las Vegas Wash Coordination Committee	
1.	Reduce wastewater flows in the Las Vegas Wash through reuse. The citizens advisory committee recommended an increase in ongoing reuse efforts and suggested the possibility of reuse mandates to encourage reuse.
2.	Reduce wastewater flows in the Las Vegas Wash through conservation. The citizens advisory committee emphasized several options focusing on reducing indoor water use.
3.	Reduce wastewater flows in the Las Vegas Wash through alternate discharge. The citizens advisory committee recommended pursuing feasibility studies of an alternate discharge. The committee also called for an analysis of the minimum amount of treated wastewater flows needed to sustain wetlands development in the Las Vegas Wash.
4.	Stormwater runoff and nonpoint sources. The citizens advisory committee recommended that an effort is made to reduce peak runoff flows to the Las Vegas Wash and Las Vegas Bay from stormwater and nonpoint sources. Where possible, runoff should be retained and its use maximized. The committee supported the concept of constructed wetlands, increased efforts to identify contaminants, and expanded public education on the issue.
5.	Ground water seepage. The citizens advisory committee recommended that contaminated groundwater be isolated, intercepted, and treated. Treatments to be considered include wetlands, evaporation ponds, and treatment plants.
6.	Spills. The citizens advisory committee recommended that local wastewater agencies, the Clark County Health District, and other public and private organizations reexamine their notification procedures to ensure public awareness of any spills was expedited.
7.	Water quality monitoring. The citizens advisory committee recommended that steps be taken to coordinate or consolidate sampling, monitoring, and reporting of water quality data in the Las Vegas Wash, Las Vegas Bay, and Lake Mead. The committee suggested taking a comprehensive look at the issue of water quality contamination to determine what additional monitoring might be desirable. They also said that sampling data should be maintained in a central database and made available to all parties, including the public.
8.	Public confidence and perception of water quality. The citizens advisory committee recommended the development of new methods to provide water quality data to the public in a timely manner. The methods chosen should educate the public on the meaning and significance of any sampling data collected, as well as provide regular status updates on water quality conditions in the Las Vegas Wash, Las Vegas Bay, and Lake Mead.
9.	Comprehensive management of the Las Vegas Wash. <i>The citizens advisory committee recommended the development of a comprehensive plan for managing the Las Vegas Wash. The committee said the plan should be a consensus-based document prepared jointly with stakeholder groups and agencies, with opportunities for substantial public involvement as well as input from the citizens advisory committee. The plan should address such issues as implementation, existing institutional mechanisms to perform work, funding, and the need for additional authorities, if necessary.</i>

Table 5.1 – Recommendations of the Water Quality Citizens Advisory Committee.



The Process

To provide administrative and technical support to the LVWCC, the Las Vegas Wash Project Coordination Team was established by the SNWA in September 1998. To support the committee, the Project Coordination Team office was established with seven permanent employees who are experts in the fields of water resources, biology, public relations, geographic information systems, and information systems. Participating entities have also committed considerable staff and resources to support the effort.

To facilitate the vast amount of work needed to develop a comprehensive management plan and in order to address the issues in depth, study teams were implemented as part of the LVWCC process. While the committee focused on conceptual and strategic direction for restoration of the Wash, the study teams focused on issues or concerns in specific areas. Over 140 individuals participated in the study team activities. The study teams function as sub-committees or work teams to the Coordination Committee. With a few exceptions, the nine study teams parallel the issues identified by the Water Quality Citizens Advisory Committee and the Lake Mead Water Quality Forum. Each study team represents an integral part of the overall management plan. Table 5.3 lists each study team, as well as their objectives.

Study Team Activities

To do their work, the teams drew upon technical staff from existing agencies, outside experts, and other sources. Coordination Committee members and their respective staff who have expertise in particular areas participated on a study team and examined the specific issues. Beginning in December 1998, each study team met monthly over a nine-

Las Vegas Wash Coordination Committee Members

- City of Henderson
- City of Las Vegas
- City of North Las Vegas
- Clark County Sanitation District
- Clark County Departments of Comprehensive Planning and Parks and Recreation
- Clark County Health District
- Clark County Regional Flood Control District
- Southern Nevada Water Authority
- Basic Management, Inc.
- Lake Las Vegas Resort
- Las Vegas Bay Marina Owner
- Water Quality Citizens Advisory Committee (2 members)
- Friends of the Desert Wetlands
- University of Nevada, Las Vegas
- Nevada Division of Wildlife
- Nevada Division of Environmental Protection
- Nevada State Health Division
- Conservation District of Southern Nevada
- Colorado River Commission
- National Park Service
- U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
- U.S. Corps of Engineers
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
- U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
- U.S. Geological Survey
- U.S. Natural Resources Conservation Service

Table 5.2 – Las Vegas Wash Coordination Committee members.



Las Vegas Wash Coordination Committee meeting, 1999.

STUDY TEAM	OBJECTIVE
Shallow Ground Water	"What are the shallow ground water issues of concern, and what needs to be done?"
Erosion & Stormwater	"How do we stabilize the Las Vegas Wash environment to most effectively reduce erosion and enhance wetlands?"
Wetlands Park	"How can we help Clark County facilitate implementation of the Clark County Wetlands Park Master Plan, and provide for the management of various ecosystems within the Wetlands Park boundary?"
Alternate Discharge	"How do we implement a practical, comprehensive approach for the discharge of current and future treated wastewater?"
Environmental Resources	"How do we protect and enhance environmental resources within the Wash?"
Land Use	"What effect do current land use practices have on the environmental integrity of the Wash, and what land use practices can be developed on a Valley-wide basis to improve Wash conditions?"
Jurisdictional & Regulatory	"What jurisdictional or regulatory framework is needed to implement the comprehensive adaptive management plan?"
Public Outreach	"How do we get the public involved in understanding and participating in enhancement and protection of the Las Vegas Wash?"
Funding	"How do we identify sources and means to obtain funding, in order to implement a practical and comprehensive approach for managing the Wash?"

Table 5.3 - Study team objectives.

month period. Project Coordination Staff supported the teams to help facilitate coordination and reduce the overlap of issues. Each team was responsible for researching its issues and developing recommendations for consideration by the LVWCC. The committee's Web site helped promote communication between and among study team members and the Coordination Committee through the sharing of documents and open dialogue. On a monthly basis, each study team gave a report to the full LVWCC, allowing for immediate feedback and direction as necessary.

Early in the process, the study teams developed goals and conducted an extensive evaluation process of issues. Teams tapped into local and regional experts, surveyed and collected data, and conducted site tours. After each team defined their problem, they developed an objective in questions format, and identified a list of recommended actions. These recommended actions include both short- and long-term activities and/or projects. For example, some recommended actions include construction of erosion control structures, implementation of public outreach programs, development of funding mechanisms, establishment of inter-local agreements, and conducting environmental site characterizations and biological studies.

Recent Accomplishments (1998-1999)

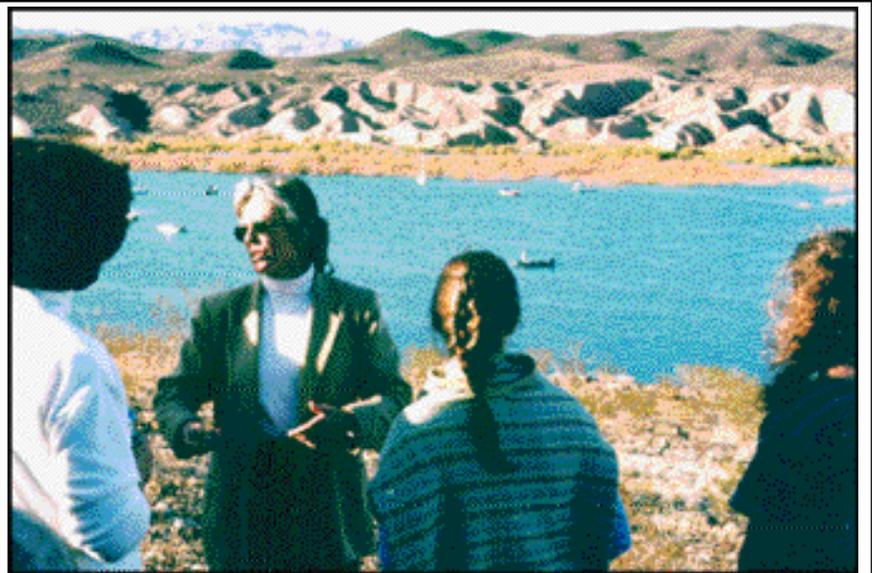
The following list represents some of the accomplishments achieved over the past year:



- **Interagency Water Quality Database** – developed to provide a central repository for multi-agency water quality data, allowing easy access to water quality data in southern Nevada.

- **Engineering Workshop** – conducted for technical experts from throughout the region to develop strategies to stabilize the Wash.

- **Developer Participation** – encouraged Developers with lands adjacent to the Wash to share plans with LVWCC for early input from agencies and concerned citizens.



Las Vegas Wash Coordination Committee members touring the Las Vegas Wash, 1998.

- **Grade Control Structure Repairs** – emergency repairs to the Grade Control Structure were made.
- **Installation of Prototype Stabilization Structures** – in conjunction with Lake Las Vegas, construction of structures at priority sites identified from the Engineering Workshop has begun. Additional structures may be permitted in the near future.
- **Wash Familiarization Tours** – conducted for more than 100 members of the public and agencies including members of the U.S. EPA Region IX Senior Management Team.
- **Presentations to Public Officials** – including U. S. Department Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt and U.S. Senators Harry Reid and Richard Bryan.
- **1999 Annual Las Vegas Wash and Wetlands Cleanup** – cosponsored with Friends of the Desert Wetland Park and Clark County, removed more than 100 tons of trash from the Wash.
- **Mabel Hoggard School Program** – developed to provide fifth grade students hands-on experience collecting water quality data and to teach them the significance of the Wash.



- **Facilitated Information Sharing with other Community-Based Wetlands Planning** – including efforts such as the Tres Rios project in Arizona.
- **Four Web Sites** were developed:
 - › **Las Vegas Water Quality Public Outreach Site** – informs the public about water quality and sets a new standard for the sharing and accessing of water quality data at www.lvwaterquality.org
 - › **Las Vegas Wash Coordination Committee Public Outreach Site** – informs the public of the Las Vegas Wash history, LVWCC plans and progress including sections for children, scientists, educators, and other interested parties at www.lvwash.org
 - › **Interagency Water Quality Database** – intended as a research tool for water professionals accessing this repository of water quality data collected by other agencies. Currently contains information on over 68,000 water samples, which can be accessed and sorted using powerful database search utilities. This is an unprecedented method of interagency data sharing in Southern Nevada at www.lvwaterquality.org/agency
 - › **Las Vegas Wash Coordination Committee Study Team Work Site** – used as a tool available to the Coordination Committee and Study Teams for information, updates, and communication at www.lvwash.org/members
- **Awards Received**
 - › **American Planning Association DeBoer Award** for Environmental Planning for the development and coordination for the Las Vegas Wash Coordination Committee.
 - › **Electronic Media Award presented by the Women in Communications Association** in recognition for the development of the Las Vegas Wash Coordination Committee Web site.
 - › **Pinnacle Awards** for the Las Vegas Wash Coordination Committee process, for the Web site, and for the Las Vegas Wash Clean-up Event.

Conclusion

The recommendations from study team activities form the basis for a long-term effort to stabilize and restore the Las Vegas Wash. Each study team's



efforts and recommendations are described in detail in Chapters 6 through 14 of this Comprehensive Adaptive Management Plan. The study team chapters discuss issues that were identified, and the means for addressing those issues through the recommend actions.

Appendices

- 5.1 Water Quality Citizens Advisory Committee Recommendations Report, June 1998
- 5.2 Framework for comprehensive management of the Las Vegas Wash.

