

Elementary students assist with Las Vegas Wash restoration efforts

Dozens of Mabel Hoggard Elementary School students recently sacrificed a day of their summer vacation to help plant more than 60 trees and shrubs at the Las Vegas Wash. The student volunteers planted the trees as part of a plan designed to stabilize the banks of the wash.

The pilot project was made possible by a grant from the Nevada Legislature's Committee on Public Lands.

"Our hope is that these deep rooting trees will serve as a 'bio-armor' to reinforce the bank around the adjacent erosion control structure," said Las Vegas Wash Coordination Committee (LVWCC) Project Manager Kim Zikmund. "This project was intended not only to help stabilize the wash, but also to provide important information about vegetation techniques that will help us implement the Las Vegas Wash Comprehensive Adaptive Management Plan."

The management plan, which was created by the LVWCC and approved by the Southern Nevada Water Authority Board of Directors, recommends construction of erosion-control structures to slow flows in the Las Vegas Wash.

Clark County Commissioner Bruce Woodbury joined the students to help plant the first

cottonwood trees along the banks of the environmentally sensitive area.

"Over time, these trees should help to anchor the erosion control structures and create more water-polishing wetlands and wildlife habitat in the process," said Woodbury.

In recent years, increased flows in the wash and storm events have caused extensive erosion resulting in loss of wetlands and wildlife habitat. Today, only about 200 to 300 acres of wetlands vegetation remain of about 2,000 acres that existed in the 1970s.

The students, along with LVWCC members, planted the trees near an erosion-control structure that was completed last October using approximately 7,000 tons of rock rip-rap and recycled concrete construction debris donated by Lake Las Vegas Resort. Directly upstream from the structure lies a 4.5-acre wetland pond and

riparian area—physical evidence of successful planning.

Each of the hundreds of cattails that sprout from the slow-moving water in the thriving wetlands area validates the months of planning by the coordination committee that created the wetlands restoration strategy.

"This wetlands area serves as evidence that designed erosion-control structures work to slow down the flow, remove sediment and allow vegetation to develop," said Zikmund.

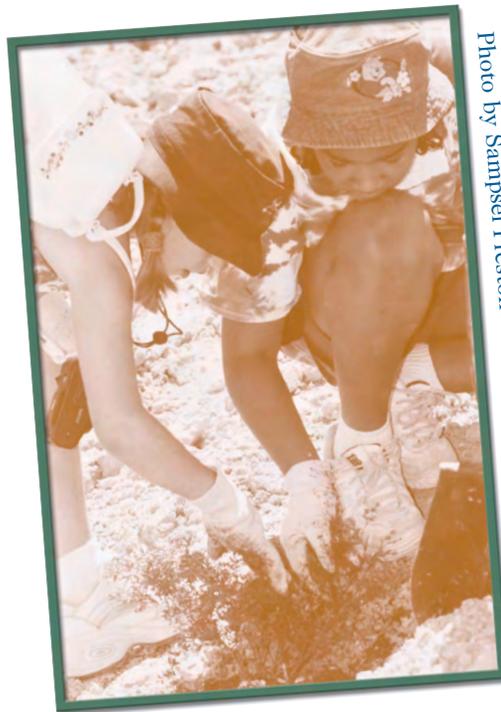


Photo by Sampsel Preston



Federal funding in the works for Las Vegas Wash



The Las Vegas Wash may grow in size thanks to a federal

program that, in part, provides funding to buy environmentally sensitive land.

Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt recently joined Senators Harry Reid and Richard Bryan to announce the first land acquisitions from the Southern Nevada Public Management Act of 1998.

“I’m glad to be a part of an act that will assist the Interior Department to protect and conserve environmentally sensitive lands,” said Babbitt.

Also participating were Bruce Woodbury, chair of the Clark County Commission; Tom Fry, director of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM); and Clark County Commissioners Mary Kincaid and Dario Herrera.

Nevada will purchase environmentally sensitive lands from willing sellers using proceeds from the auction or exchange of BLM lands within the Las Vegas Valley. The acquisition of wetlands and other environmentally significant lands in Clark County are also a priority under the act.

The legislation will fund the purchase of about 7,800 acres of ecologically valuable land statewide, including about 200 acres near the Las Vegas Wash in the Clark County Wetlands Park area.

“This much-needed federal funding should help all agencies involved to accomplish our common goal of effectively managing the wash,” said Clark County Parks and Recreation Planning Manager Jeff Harris.

The 1998 legislation uses revenues from auctions of federal land around Las Vegas to improve infrastructure on public lands and buy environmentally sensitive holdings statewide.

A separate bill was introduced in June by Sen. Harry Reid, D-Nev., and Rep. Shelley Berkley, D-Nev., to restore the wash. The bill,



Photo by Andy Cartoir

the Las Vegas Wash Wetland Restoration and Lake Mead Water Quality Improvement Act of 2000, would allocate federal funds to wash reparation.

If passed in Congress, the bill would facilitate recommendations made by the Las Vegas Wash Coordination

Committee in its Comprehensive

Adaptive Management Plan. It still is unclear whether or not Congress will vote on the bill this year.



WASH FACTS



There are **23** erosion-control structures planned for construction in the wash that will help stabilize the channel.



Water-quality standards have been developed for the Las Vegas Wash according to the Federal Clean Water Act and are regulated through the state by the Nevada Division of Environmental Protection.



Flows in the Las Vegas Wash are expected to increase **60** percent by the year **2027**.

PROJECT UPDATES

Consultants present potential alternate-discharge solutions



Consultants from Black & Veatch recently presented potential alternate-discharge options for returning highly treated wastewater to Lake Mead.

Options presented to the alternate-discharge study team by Black & Veatch representatives included the use of floating wetlands in Las Vegas Bay, off-channel wetlands and pipeline discharges. These options continued and expanded upon the findings of the Wastewater Needs Assessment Study (NAS) with the addition of engineering, scientific and environmental solutions for effluent discharge.

The NAS was commissioned in 1997 by the Las Vegas Valley's three wastewater treatment facilities (the City of Las Vegas, the Clark County Sanitation District and the City of Henderson) to review possible alternate-discharge options.

One of the challenges facing efforts to restore the Las Vegas Wash is the steady growth of Las Vegas, which has resulted in a steady increase in the quantity of effluent and urban runoff entering Las Vegas Bay via the wash.

The Las Vegas Wash Coordination Committee's Comprehensive Adaptive Management Plan recommends designing methods of alternate discharge for wash flows to reduce erosion and increase natural wetlands polishing of water traveling into Lake Mead.



Clark County breaks ground on Nature Center



Construction has begun on the Clark County Wetlands Park Nature Center. The center will be one component of a 100-acre interpretive park that will help visitors explore the many facets of the dynamic Las Vegas Wash environment.

Until the Nature Center is complete, the temporary visitor's center is located at 6800 E. Russell Rd. Construction already has commenced on a trail for the area, and the Nature Center is scheduled for completion in October. Last March, Clark County Parks & Recreation constructed the first trailhead for the park.

Eventually, a variety of planned recreational trails surrounded by wetlands will wind through the park.



Photo by Andy Cartwright

View wetlands restoration progress online



The “Watch Our Wetlands Grow” program provides those with Internet access the opportunity to monitor the progress of wetlands restoration efforts in the Las Vegas Wash.

Video and photos shot from the same vantage point over several months are online to show a time-lapse view of wetlands restoration efforts.

“This provides a wonderful opportunity for people to witness the progress taking place in the wash as it unfolds,” said Las Vegas Wash Coordination Committee Project Manager Kim Zikmund.

Link to the “Watch Our Wetlands Grow” program at www.lvwash.org.



Watch Our Wetlands Grow



Las Vegas Wash

Coordination
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**For more information, visit our
Web site at www.lvwash.org or
call the project office at
892-3800.**