



THE CURRENT

Las Vegas Wash News

Spring 2000

Southern Nevada Water Authority approves management plan to restore Las Vegas Wash

The Southern Nevada Water Authority (SNWA) Board of Directors accepted the Las Vegas Wash Coordination Committee's (LVWCC) Comprehensive Adaptive Management Plan for the Las Vegas Wash at its Jan. 20 meeting. Upon accepting the plan, the SNWA board instructed staff to develop an implementation plan that would provide an action mechanism for the key recommendations identified.

The Las Vegas Wash carries urban runoff, shallow groundwater, treated wastewater and stormwater back to Lake Mead from the Las Vegas Valley. Due mainly to increasing erosion, only about 200-to-300 acres of wetlands vegetation remain of the approximately 2,000 acres that existed in the 1970s.

The process of developing a plan to provide for the long-term management of the Las Vegas Wash began with a recommendation from the SNWA Water Quality Citizens Advisory Committee (WQCAC). Established in 1997, the WQCAC provided citizen input and made recom-

mendations on water quality issues. Among its recommendations was the formation of a project team to facilitate the development of a wash management plan.

Comprised of various study teams, the LVWCC worked the past 18 months to develop a plan that provides specific actions necessary to stabilize, enhance and create wildlife habitat in the wash. The panel includes local, state and federal officials, environmentalists and private citizens who have succeeded in identifying key issues and developing potential solutions.



"The fact that the coordination committee succeeded in maintaining such a high level of participation among twenty-eight separate organizations in a concerted effort to protect this resource is

unprecedented," said SNWA Board Chair Mary Kincaid.

According to LVWCC Project Manager Kim Zikmund, implementing a management plan will ensure the long-term stability of the Las Vegas Wash.

"This collaborative effort among the twenty-eight entities with an interest in the Las Vegas Wash was necessitated by the complex and dynamic nature of the area," said Zikmund.

For a closer look at the Las Vegas Wash Comprehensive Adaptive Management Plan, visit the Web site at www.lvwash.org.

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Clark County breaks ground on erosion control structures in the Las Vegas Wash

Dozens of political and community leaders recently joined to celebrate the groundbreaking of Clark County’s first permanent erosion control structure in the Las Vegas Wash. Located off Pabco Trail within the Clark County Wetlands Park area, the structure is part of an overall plan to slow water flows and decrease the amount of erosion occurring in the environmentally fragile area.

“This is a significant first step in saving an area that is of vital importance to all southern Nevada residents,” said Park Planner Bruce Sillitoe of Clark County Parks and Recreation.

The Las Vegas Wash Comprehensive Adaptive Management Plan, created by the Las Vegas Wash Coordination Committee (LVWCC) and recently approved by the Southern Nevada Water Authority (SNWA) Board of Directors, recommends construction of several such structures.

“Erosion is really the most significant challenge we are faced with in managing the wash,” said Sillitoe. “Our ability to effectively manage all other issues involving the wash, including the creation of a wetlands park, hinges on our success in decreasing the amount of erosion in the area.”

Since erosion poses the greatest threat to the stability of the Las Vegas Wash, the LVWCC devoted considerable attention to the issue when drafting its management plan. In recent years, increased flows in the wash and storm events have caused extensive erosion resulting in loss of wetlands and wildlife habitat, lost property, infrastructure damage and excessive sediment transport to Lake Mead.



“Following months of study and discussion, the coordination committee determined that the only way to develop a wetlands park and protect the wash is to decrease erosion by slowing down the water moving through the channel,” said Sillitoe.

Erosion control structures should serve as the most effective method in stabilizing the channel and reducing the potential for catastrophic erosion during storm events. Five locations have been identified for installation of the structures with eight additional sites under consideration. Three of the five sites are currently in various stages of production ranging from planning to construction.

Other significant projects include the SNWA temporary grade control structure. An onslaught of storm events in recent years eventually led to the demise of the structure, which collapsed completely during the July 1999 flooding. The SNWA is currently managing the re-design and construction of this structure to accommodate the wash’s widened banks, which have been gouged away by stormwater flows. Construction is expected to begin this spring.

If left unchecked, future erosion of the channel and destruction of habitat will continue to occur, according to Sillitoe.

“The erosion control structures will not only slow erosion in the wash, but they will also create more water-polishing wetlands and wildlife habitat in the process,” said Sillitoe.

For more information regarding erosion control structures in the Las Vegas Wash, please visit our Web site at www.lvwash.org.

Third Annual Las Vegas Wash Cleanup project seeks volunteers

Joint sponsors Clark County Parks & Recreation, Friends of the Desert Wetlands Park and the Las Vegas Wash Coordination Committee (LVWCC) are seeking volunteers to participate in one of the most important environmental projects in southern Nevada.

The third annual Las Vegas Wash and Wetlands Cleanup is slated for April 8. Because of its remote location, the Las Vegas Wash becomes victim to illegal garbage dumping. In an effort to decrease the amount of litter in the environmentally sensitive area, residents are asked to join in cleanup efforts.

Approximately 1,400 residents from throughout the valley participated last April in the second annual Las Vegas Wash & Wetlands Cleanup, removing more than 200,000 pounds of garbage from the area.

“We are overwhelmed at the growing level of community



support for this event each year,” said Friends of the Desert Wetlands Park Chairman Jack Harvey. “This event has succeeded in removing a phenomenal amount of trash, indicating just how much residents of our city care about their environment.”

The day’s activities will include a free barbecue lunch for participants and the Wash Information Fair featuring various exhibits from organizations with interests in the Las Vegas Wash. The exhibitors demonstrate how protecting the wash and wetlands helps protect Lake Mead and how the wetlands serve as a habitat for many plants and animals not found elsewhere in the valley.

“The information fair is good for people who participate because, while they know the cleanup is good for the environment, they aren’t really sure why the wash is important,” said LVWCC Project Manager Kim Zikmund.

Residents interested in obtaining more information about the 2000 Las Vegas Wash and Wetlands Cleanup may call 368-0065, ext. 800, or visit the Web site at www.lvwash.org.



Help clean up the Las Vegas Wash April 8!



For more information, call 368-0065, ext. 800 or visit www.lvwash.org

WASH FACTS

The normal flow for the wash is 153 million gallons per day. During the July 1999 storm, approximately 4.5 billion gallons of water passed through the wash.

In the early part of this century, the area known as the Las Vegas Wash was nothing more than a slow trickle of water leaving the valley to join the Colorado River. Occasionally it would run high with stormwater flows and runoff.

The environment in the area known as the Las Vegas Wash is one of the most unique ecosystems in southern Nevada. Rarely would you expect to find an oasis of water, wildlife and vegetation on the floor of a desert valley, but that is precisely what exists at the wash.

Las Vegas Wash

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For more information, visit our website at www.lvwash.org or call the project office at 892-3800.

LVWCC meetings are held the fourth Tuesday of each month beginning at 9:00 a.m.