



Desert Wetlands *News & Views*

Wetlands Park Projects

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Information?

Call Wetlands Park
Information Center
455-7522



Desert Wetlands
Conservancy

The mission of the DWC is to influence policy, create partnerships, and initiate activities in advocacy or the Las Vegas Valley Watershed, including the Desert Wetlands Park.

If you have been wondering when the Duck Creek Trail will be re-opened, the schedule is for the end of January. The trails now have a hard surface and a great deal of tamarisk has been removed and replaced with new plantings of mesquite. There are three points where the trail system intersects with the Primary Corridor. The Primary Corridor is now named the Dragonfly Divide. The long range plans calls for this scenic drive to be paved, but funding for that must come from another source. Sections of the trails are bridged to prevent erosion damage that was experienced in the past.



A view of the new trail system showing one of the bridged sections.

Walking along the Dragonfly Divide, you can observe some of the work related to the Ducks Unlimited constructed pond system. The area has been completely cleared of vegetation and a large pond comes down to the road. This will be the lowest pond in the system of six cells working up to

the Nature Preserve. There will be a combination of permanent ponds and seasonal wetlands making up the project.



One of the DU ponds as observed from the Dragonfly Divide. The ducks are already enjoying the new open water.

Work on the Wetlands Neighborhood Park is also nearing completion. The trail system is a combination of hard surface and gravel trails. The stream beds and pond basins are in place and have been tested with water flow. Look for a dedication ceremony for these projects that should be scheduled soon.



A view of the stream beds in the neighborhood Park

Tamarisk Invasion

On first blush, the green groves of saltcedar or tamarisk in the Wetlands Park and along the wash can be viewed as attractive, adding color in contrast to the desert landscape. The truth is that this is an invasive and destructive weed that is extremely difficult to remove

One of the major maintenance activities along our watershed is the removal and controlling the spread of tamarisk (*Tamarix ramosissima*). There are four species of tamarisk found in Nevada, but *T. ramosissima* is the most prevalent. Tamarisk is a small deciduous exotic tree introduced to America during the nineteenth century from southern Eurasia as an ornamental and to prevent soil erosion along streams. A tamarisk dominated wetland functions poorly, changes native habitats, supports less wildlife, spoils recreational uses, and affects water quality. Studies in New Mexico and Utah show tamarisk uses four to thirteen acre-feet of water a year, much more than native trees and shrubs. It has an extensive, deep root system that absorbs water from the surrounding area, lowering the local water table and killing most adjacent native plants.

In the 1930's, when the Federal Government was experimenting with an array of projects to address bad times, tree-planting came into vogue. One of those projects, the Shelter Belt Program, took trees from many parts of the world and planted them by the millions to fight soil erosion in the West and the Great Plains. This is probably how tamarisk reached the Colorado River basin by 1938, and then rapidly spread along the pre-dam terraces and tributaries. It was the first non-native species to invade the newly stabilized post-dam riparian zone in the Grand Canyon.

A mature tamarisk is capable of producing millions of tiny, wind-dispersed seeds per year. Its seeds are short-lived (less than 2 months in summer), have no dormancy requirements, and germinate in less than 24 hr. Tamarisk also reproduces from its stems, crowns and roots. Tamarisk can use salty water, absorbing the salts through its cell membranes. It avoids the toxic effects by excreting the salt into its leaves. The salt-filled leaves are dropped and accumulate to a considerable depth under the canopy. Through this process, tamarisk acts like a salt pump concentrating salts in the mulch layer killing existing plants and preventing other desirable species from becoming established.

Tamarisk's success in riparian environments in the Southwest appears to be a function of its phenomenal reproductive output and its greater drought and flood tolerance, as compared to native species. In an effort to understand the ecological success of tamarisk, experiments on its competitive ability, germination and nutritional requirements, and other aspects of its life history were conducted. Competition experiments with Sandbar Willow (*Salix exigua*) a common neighbor throughout the Colorado River system, failed to demonstrate competitive superiority of tamarisk over willow. In fact, at the seedling stage, willow was competitively dominant. But tamarisk is more drought tolerant and inundation tolerant than any native species. Some tamarisk survived more than two years of root-crown inundation in the Grand Canyon during high water events from 1983-85. (continued on page 3)

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Tamarisk Invasion

(continued from page 2)

From a wildlife point of view, tamarisk has little value and is usually considered detrimental to native animals. The leaves, twigs and seeds are extremely low in nutrients, and, as a result, very few insects or wildlife will use them. In one study along the lower Colorado River, tamarisk stands supported less than 1% of the winter bird life that would be found in a native plant stand. Because of the tamarisk's ability to eliminate competition and form single-species thickets, wildlife populations have dropped dramatically.

Tamarisk has invaded almost all watercourses and other wetland habitats throughout the Southwest, taking over more than one million acres of wetland. Control and management of tamarisk infested areas is widespread through the Southwest, but it is a difficult and costly activity. In 2003, approximately 1,500 acres of tamarisk were reported within the lower Las Vegas Wash. To date, approximately 205 acres have been removed by the Las Vegas Wash Coordination Committee for erosion control, restoration, etc. Much of it related to the Green-Up activities. In addition, approximately 770 acres have been removed for adjacent housing developments, etc. Tamarisk is fire adapted and readily re-sprout after fire. Bulldozing of mature trees and hand-pulling of new shoots seems to work best and are the primary methods applied in the Wash. Cut down trees must be chemically treated which adds a hazard in a wetland. Biological control agents for tamarisk include fifteen insects. Two of these, a mealybug (*Trabutina mannipara*) and a leaf beetle (*Diorhabda elongate*), have preliminary approval for release and five more are being tested in the U.S., but none have been introduced here in Southern Nevada.



Tamarisk grove bordering the Wash below the Pabsco weir (LVWCC archive photo)

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May we show your name on our membership list?

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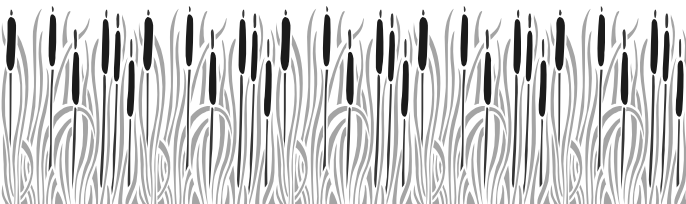
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Corporate Sustaining Member

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| Osprey: | \$500 |
| Great Egret: | \$5000 |
| Great Blue Heron: | \$10,000+ |

**Please mail to DWC,
PO Box 28017, Las Vegas, NV 89126
For Membership information, call:
457-8867**



Our Thanks To...

New and Renewing Members: Toby Sulenski, Pamela Radke, Margaret Mark, Gene Segerblom, Nadine Baker, William Brandt, Linda Wiltberger, Jim & Mary Dale Deacon, Lee-Anne Milburn, Ester Doherty, Carolyn Titus, Patricia Kepner, Joan Lolmaugh, Norma Cox

WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT

PLEASE CHECK THE EXPIRATION DATE ON YOUR MAILING LABEL TO SEE IF IT IS TIME TO RENEW! If you have not yet taken the plunge to join, please do so now. You will demonstrate that you want to help in the development of new features in the Park for our community!

The Park is a place to enjoy! Have you visited the Park recently? The temporary Visitor Center is at the very end of Wetlands Park Lane. Cross Boulder Highway and travel 1 mile east, then look for the Wetlands Park sign, just where Tropicana turns into Broadbent Ave. If it has been a while since you've visited the Park, you will be amazed at the changes and improvements that have taken place. The Park is for your benefit, come and enjoy it!

There are many opportunities to get involved and to show your support-not only through membership in the Friends, but by contributing funds or labor for needed physical improvements, and educational materials. If you have put off renewing, remember your membership ends one year from the date you paid your dues.

Spring Green-Up



The Las Vegas Wash Coordination Committee (LVWCC) is gearing up for its 14th Wash Green-Up! The LVWCC is hosting the Spring Green-Up on Saturday, March 21.

We are hoping to attract 350 volunteers to plant 2800 trees and shrubs on 8 acres. In case of weather, the back up date will be Saturday, March 28.

This popular and fun event always turns out a big crowd. If you are interested, click on the following website. http://www.lvwash.org/cfml/volunteer/volunteer_signup.cfm. The planting holes are pre-dug and lunch is provided. But you will want to hurry because the volunteer quota can fill up quickly.

A young volunteer handling a Mesquite tree, one of the larger plants used for the planting. (photo, courtesy of Nice Price)



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