

## **Virgin River and Tributaries Watershed Analysis**

Utah, Arizona and Nevada

August 2007 Update

**Project Description:** The Virgin River's headwaters are in Washington, Kane and Iron Counties of Utah. The lower watershed includes portions of Mohave County, Arizona and Clark and Lincoln Counties, Nevada. The river eventually empties into the Colorado River at Lake Mead in southeastern Nevada. In carrying out this watershed analysis the Corps is working in partnership with stakeholders from throughout the five counties making up the Virgin River watershed. This effort will produce three major products including a Needs Analysis, Floodplain Strategy, and Watershed Strategy.

### **Recent Accomplishments/Activities (March-July 2007)**

**Stakeholder Meeting, May 24:** Approximately 50 people participated in a watershed stakeholder meeting in Mesquite, NV. Mr. Waters gave opening remarks at that meeting and stressed the significance of conducting watershed analysis and the systems approach to planning. The meeting included both study updates as well as presentations from various stakeholders pertaining to ongoing work. A set of objectives to be addressed in the watershed strategy were developed in a brainstorming session.

**Upper Watershed Outreach, July 10:** In order to reach out to individuals in the upper watershed that haven't been able to participate in previous meetings the NRCS, Five County Association of Government and Corps held a meeting near the Virgin River headwaters in Kane County, UT, approximately 20 people attended. During the May 24 brainstorming session planning tools, data and sample ordinances were described as items needed in the rural communities. Since NRCS Rapid Watershed Assessments may contribute to this Mr. Lee Woolsey, Resource Conservationist gave a presentation on what they have available. This presentation was well received as the local governments, farmers/ranchers, and water districts should be able to utilize some of this in local land use planning. Need for additional planning assistance is being addressed in the watershed strategy.

**Technical Committee, July 12:** Members of the technical committee met in St. George, Utah to review and refine and expand the objectives and work on the outline for the watershed strategy.

**Floodplain Strategy:** The floodplain management strategy is well underway with data collection and discussion of issues and concerns with floodplain managers from throughout the watershed. Identification of flood risk and hazards in addition to summary of lessons learned from flooding in 2005 are being compiled. Goals and objectives for floodplain management and potential mitigation measures will be developed in an upcoming floodplain managers meeting.

**Website:** Study information is on the SPL website at <http://www.spl.usace.army.mil/virginriver.htm>

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### **Percent Complete**

Expenditures are at approximately 50%. Substantial progress is being made in the study but the original schedule was overly optimistic. Completion will not be in January as previously expected. That date will be changed to May 2008.

### **Challenges/Opportunities**

Political boundaries and Institutional barriers continue to be challenges. Crossing political boundaries and going beyond agency/institutional area of jurisdiction continue to be challenges, although progress is being made in increasing collaboration in many areas.

Stakeholders have expressed satisfaction that the study is helping to increase collaboration and watershed thinking. Since the first study meeting in August 2006 collaboration among groups in the watershed has increased. Desire to continue beyond this study was expressed at the May 24 meeting. Brainstorming objectives included statements such as: improve communication, improve coordination, coordination groups become implementation groups.

A portion of the watershed strategy will focus on collaboration and watershed management. Activities are being identified to meet the objective of establishing ongoing collaboration throughout the watershed. The existing upper (Utah) and lower (Nevada) watershed groups have discussed co-hosting annual meetings to facilitate continued collaboration.

### **Work Plan (Final Quarter FY 07)**

Interim report will be completed by mid September.

Draft Watershed Strategy with objectives, prioritization and implementation plan will be completed with the technical committee.

Tamarisk toolbox draft will be completed, attempting to establish an interagency invasive species work group from within the watershed.

Floodplain managers meeting scheduled for August 14. Draft strategy with management goals and mitigation measures identified by the end of the FY.

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