

NFWF files more transfer applications for Walker Lake

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The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation has filed additional change applications within weeks of a favorable ruling by the Nevada State Engineer to change the manner and place of use for the first 7-plus cubic feet per second of natural flow decree water rights acquired by the Walker Basin Restoration Program.

On April 23, NFWF filed four permanent change of use applications with the state engineer for an additional 21-plus CFS of decree water rights that were acquired from willing sellers off ditches served by the Yerington Weir.

The Weir is the same point of diversion as the state engineer's first water change approval dated March 21.

These new applications mirror the stipulated terms and agreements that successfully resolved most of the initial protests to the program's first change application.

As part of the Walker Basin Restoration Program, NFWF is buying Walker River water rights from willing agricultural sellers with the intention to deliver the water to Walker Lake.

The change applications are to change the manner of use from agricultural to wildlife.

"The new applications propose that the consumptive use portion of the changed water rights be protected instream from the Yerington Weir to Walker Lake, with hydrologic losses through the Walker River Paiute Reservation to be shared in accordance with negotiated accounting protocols," said Joy Morris, NFWF's Walker Basin Restoration Program Manager.

The nonconsumptive portion of the changed water rights then would be available to the Federal Water Master, at his discretion, to avoid conflict with other existing water rights and to mitigate hydrologic losses from the Yerington Weir to the Wabuska Gage, Morris said.

"We sincerely hope that timely approvals will follow from using this same approach for all Weir water rights," Morris said.

Morris said additional change applications for water rights acquired from agricultural sellers upstream of the Yerington Weir will be filed with the state engineer after further consultations with appropriate parties.

In the meantime, she said, there is significant ongoing interest from prospective sellers in the program's water acquisition activities.

Morris also said NFWF continues to support a variety of conservation and stewardship projects in the Walker River Basin to protect agricultural and watershed interests consistent with restoring and maintaining Walker Lake.