



NFWF



**Walker Basin  
Restoration Program**

PRESS RELEASE

## **Walker Basin Restoration Program Begins Demonstration Project on Economics of Farm Conversion with Peri & Sons Farms**

A demonstration pilot project (Project) to analyze the economics of vegetable production in Mason Valley has been developed over the last year between the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF), the Walker Basin Restoration Program (Program) and Peri & Sons Farms. The Project is the outcome of significant brainstorming and review of how to reduce water usage in the Walker Basin while continuing to support and promote agriculture in the region and to study the economic impacts associated with these efforts.

NFWF acquired approximately 2000 acres in two properties on the North end of Mason Valley in 2010 and 2011. The surface water rights historically associated with these properties will be protected for in stream benefit of the river and Walker Lake. NFWF donated a significant portion of the lands, over 1600 acres, to the State of Nevada for management as part of the Mason Valley Wildlife Management Area. The donation includes over three miles of river and riparian habitat, as well as upland habitat, all of which is open to the public. A collaborative effort between NFWF, the Mason Valley Conservation District and the Nevada Department of Wildlife is currently underway to monitor the condition of the lands donated to the State and to implement a program to gradually transition portions of those lands from actively farmed agricultural lands to more native habitat.

Peri and Sons purchased the remaining 360 acres of land as well as primary groundwater rights from NFWF at market value. The land acquired for the pilot project is comprised of portions of the old "Aiazzi" property and the former Sciarani Ranch. Prior to the sale, NFWF held a sealed bid auction to allow community members to salvage items of interest from the property. A restrictive covenant was recorded on the property limiting future use of the land to agricultural activities, open space, wildlife habitat and public recreational uses. Peri and Sons plans to convert the agriculture on the property completely to organic leafy greens and other vegetables. Interim water use on the property will include some surface water rights while additional groundwater is secured and transferred to the property.

David Peri explained his role in the project: "I have been a farmer my whole life and have been farming in the Walker Basin since 1979. I recognize that NFWF is here buying water for Walker Lake and as water sales from willing sellers occur, I want to do what I can to sustain agriculture in the Valley. The reality is that neither the farmers nor NFWF will be productive in our goals if we just engage in adversarial behavior. I believe there are ways to protect Walker Lake while sustaining agriculture, and I am excited to be pursuing a pilot project with NFWF to demonstrate these opportunities."



The purpose of the pilot farming project is to evaluate water conservation measures and the economic viability related to various crops. As Joy Giffin of NFWF explained, “We are trying to understand what happens if we buy farmland and transition a large portion of the land for public use while a fraction of the property stays in agriculture and possibly transitions to higher yielding economic crops. What does it mean for jobs, and the agricultural economics of the Valleys? And, is there a measurable increase in public use of the donated land for hunting, fishing, bird watching, etc.? These are all important questions and are key to successfully working through opportunities and challenges related to the water acquisition program.” The results of the Project will help put hard numbers to these questions and will be evaluated and incorporated into overall economic analysis to help inform the Program as it continues its water acquisition program and related land stewardship activities .