

# WRID uses NFWF grant funding to remove sediment at weir

Mason Valley News  
April 29, 2015  
Submitted Story

The main stem of the Walker River recently received some much needed sediment removal to aid instream flows and help address future flood issues.

The Yerington weir is a main water diversion structure on the Walker River about three miles north of Yerington. It diverts river water into three main ditch systems that supply irrigation water to the north end of Mason Valley. The Walker River flows through the weir structure downstream to Walker Lake.

Over time, up to 8 feet of sediment has built up behind the weir. This build-up has reduced the efficiency of water flows to agricultural users and hindered the natural instream flows.

A large flood in January 1997 was a significant contributor to the sedimentation build-up. The sediment causes the river bottom to rise, which then reduces the ability of the river to contain high-volume flows. This, in turn, increases the risk of flooding upstream toward Yerington.

To alleviate some of these problems, the Walker River Irrigation District and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation have teamed up to remove the sediment. During March, an excavator was used to remove the sediment from behind the weir, improving the ability for water to be diverted for irrigators while allowing for the remaining water to flow naturally.

WRID completed the work using internal staff and equipment with grant funding provided by NFWF to WRID for a demonstration leasing program and irrigation system improvements.

While the work is not expected to be a long-term fix for the sediment issue, it is expected to help the situation.

“It may seem odd to be concerned about flood issues during a drought, but when the flows are low, it’s the best time to work on it,” Bert Bryan, WRID general manager, said.

Although the flows in the river are low, history has shown they will increase again and the reduction of sediment will limit the chance of flooding when flows increase. In addition, this sediment had to be removed before any larger effort could be undertaken to permanently fix the sedimentation and flow issues associated with the weir.

“We are glad that we could help with this project and look forward to continued work with WRID on projects to improve the functionality of the river system for both WRID users and instream ecological flows,” said Joy Morris, NFWF program director.

