



Bicameral Las Vegas Wash Program Extension Act

Led by Rep. Susie Lee (D-NV) and Sen. Catherine Cortez Masto (D-NV)

Why do we need the Las Vegas Wash Program Extension Act?

The Las Vegas Wash is the primary drainage channel for the Las Vegas Valley watershed, carrying around 200 million gallons of highly treated effluent, urban runoff, stormwater, and shallow groundwater to Lake Mead daily. Southern Nevada has been one of the fastest growing areas in the United States — and increases in stormwater flows and wastewater discharges into the Wash have accelerated erosion, destabilized the stream channel, significantly degraded wetland areas, and contributed excessive sediment to Lake Mead, on which more than 25 million people in the West depend for drinking water.

In the late 1990s, a coordination committee inclusive of citizens and 30 local, state, and federal agencies prepared the Las Vegas Wash Comprehensive Adaptive Management Plan (CAMP). The CAMP includes 44 specific action items related to water quality, habitat management, erosion control, and other issues. In 2000, Congress enacted legislation supporting the CAMP by directing the Bureau of Reclamation, through the Department of the Interior, to participate in implementing the Las Vegas Wash Restoration and Lake Mead Water Quality Improvement Project.

More specifically, funding for this purpose was originally authorized by the Water Resources Development Act of 2000 at \$10 million. The original authorization has since been adjusted via subsequent appropriations bills — most recently in 2012, when the cap was moved to \$30 million. To date, nearly all of that \$30 million has been expended. As Nevada and the West face the worst drought in 12 centuries, the Las Vegas Wash Program Extension Act would raise the authorization cap to \$55 million, allowing federal funding to continue supporting rehabilitation, maintenance, and other critical infrastructure projects at the Wash.

The federal government continues to have a vested interest in protecting the water entering Lake Mead as it regulates and safeguards the delivery of water to Nevada, Arizona, California, and several Tribes.

What would the Las Vegas Wash Program Extension Act do?

Water quality in the Las Vegas Wash has improved through revegetation as well as the installation of erosion control structures, or “weirs”. Federal funds have helped plant more than 150,000 trees and revegetate more than 515 acres in the Wash, reducing erosion while restoring key wildlife habitat.

To date, 21 weirs have also been installed along the Wash — but six additional weirs within the boundaries of the federal Lake Mead National Recreation Area remain to be completed. Construction of these additional weirs is necessary to address the current rate of erosion. If left unaddressed, the Wash will experience degradation to the Wash channel, impacts to water quality from increased sediments and phosphates, and threats to Wash infrastructure as well as to the safety of people and property alike.

This bill would raise the authorization cap of the Las Vegas Wash program from \$30 million to \$55 million to ensure critical federal support for the Wash can continue, safeguarding the West’s water supply for years to come.

For more information or to cosponsor or endorse this bill, please contact Mark Coombs in Congresswoman Susie Lee’s office at mark.coombs@mail.house.gov.