Obstacles and Opportunities in State Water Right Change Process: Nevada

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Photo cred: Mark Gamba
Walker River Basin - California and Nevada

Source: NFWF
Walker Lake Elevation

1882: 4080 ft

Current: 3925 ft

Photo cred: Mark Gamba
Walker Basin Restoration Program

Reverse Walker Lake’s decline by finding balance between the interests of landowners, water-user organizations, Indian Tribes, local, state & Federal Governments & agencies & non-profits.

- Water Acquisitions to increase freshwater inflows to the Lake.
- Three-year water leasing demonstration program developed and administered by the Walker River Irrigation District (WRID).
- Research, evaluation, modeling and decision support activities
- A conservation and stewardship program focused on land stewardship, water conservation, alternative agriculture, watershed improvement and establishment of a local non-profit.
- Funding from Bureau of Reclamation under Desert Terminal Lakes

Source: NFWF
Water Rights in Walker

- Natural flow, Storage (Supplemental & New Land), Ground Water
- Natural flow adjudicated in Federal Court, subject to jurisdiction of both Nevada State Engineer & Federal District Court.
- All rights under Decree are for irrigation.

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Change Process in Nevada

• General change criteria
  – Water is available;
  – No conflict with exiting rights;
  – Does not threaten public interest
Applicability to Environmental Water

- No instream specific provisions
- No Diversion Requirement
- Beneficial use: wildlife & recreation by statute; instream by rule
- Injury: assuming CU
- Enforcement: ??

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