



Devastation to Sustainability

Full Mitigation Best Practice Story

Multiple Counties, Nevada

Lockwood, NV – Life on the Truckee River can be dangerous during winter rainstorms. Warm currents from the South Pacific Ocean bring rain on top of the winter snow, which can cause severe flooding. This weather pattern is known as the “Pineapple Express.” It caused the river to overflow its banks into the Truckee River Mobile Home Park in Lockwood, Nevada, on December 31, 1996. The President subsequently declared a Federal disaster on January 3, 1997.



The same weather pattern occurred December 31, 2005. However, this time the Washoe County government, residents of the mobile home park, and several neighboring properties were prepared. The community had participated in a \$3.6 million project that successfully mitigated the repetitive damage caused by the river’s flooding.

Lockwood is a small community east of Reno/Sparks along the Truckee River. For most of the year, life near the river is pleasurable. Trout fishing and outdoor recreation create a lifestyle that many Nevadans enjoy.

The Washoe County Public Works Department was aware of the flooding problems in Lockwood. The area had flooded five times in 15 years. The mobile homes in the park and 12 nearby single family homes were substantially damaged.

Washoe County applied to the State of Nevada Department of Emergency Management for funding under the Federal Emergency Management Agency’s (FEMA) Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) and Pre-Disaster Mitigation (PDM) program to buy out the properties located in the floodway.

David T. Price of the Washoe County Department of Public Works was the engineer in charge of the project. He recalled how devastated the area was. “We worked very hard on that project - it was a mess,” he said. Mr. Price was proud of the cooperative effort between the Washoe County Department of Public Works and the Nevada Department of Transportation (NDOT). NDOT contributed 44 mobile homes to the project. The homes had been part of a purchase of land in Carson City for a new freeway. “I enjoyed working with [FEMA] and it was a pleasure to see the joy of the people we helped relocate,” Mr. Price reminisced. There was initially concern that one of the home owners did not want to participate in the acquisition project. He stated, “It couldn’t have turned out better.” The homeowner eventually decided to sell their property to the State of Nevada Wild Life Conservancy, which will help protect wildlife in Lockwood.

In 1996, a “Pineapple Express” weather pattern increased the river flow to just over 18,000 cubic feet per second in downtown Reno, and there was nothing anyone could do but wait helplessly as properties were damaged. When the sanitation system at the mobile home park failed, the park’s operation permit was placed under suspension by the Washoe County District Health Department. The residents of the mobile home park and the 12 neighboring houses were homeless and had lost all their possessions.

By the end of the acquisition project, all of the families devastated by the Truckee River’s floodwaters were living in new locations. Families in the mobile home park received relocation cost assistance, which enabled them to move to another park of their choice. Some residents purchased mobile homes from NDOT. On New Year’s Eve 2005, the homeowners in Lockwood were safe in their new homes.

There is an ongoing effort to mitigate flood losses in the area. The Washoe County Parks Department is working with the multi-jurisdictional Truckee River Flood Project to create a multi-purpose flood control project and public use areas that can also provide habitat for wildlife. Additionally, the project will preserve the lifestyle of a small working-class community.

The land is now open space and wetlands that drain water during high water events, and is deed-restricted to that use in perpetuity under the federal grants. The Washoe County Parks Department and the State of Nevada Wildlife Conservancy are working on an open space project addressing flood control, wildlife, and community use.

The cooperative efforts of the federal, state and local government to mitigate flood losses have created a safer and better quality of life for residents of Lockwood.

Activity/Project Location

Geographical Area: **Multiple Counties in a State**

FEMA Region: **Region IX**

State: **Nevada**

County: **Storey County; Washoe County**

Key Activity/Project Information

Sector: **Public**

Hazard Type: **Flooding**

Activity/Project Type: **Acquisition/Buyouts**

Structure Type: **Mobile Home**

Activity/Project Start Date: **04/1997**

Activity/Project End Date: **05/1998**

Funding Source: **Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP); Other Federal Agencies (OFA)**

Funding Recipient: **Local Government**

Funding Recipient Name: **Washoe County Public Works Department**

Application/Project Number: **9999**

Activity/Project Economic Analysis

Cost: **\$3,600,000.00 (Actual)**

Activity/Project Disaster Information

Mitigation Resulted From Federal
Disaster? **Yes**

Federal Disaster #: **1153 , 01/03/1997**

Federal Disaster Year: **1997**

Value Tested By Disaster? **Yes**

Tested By Federal Disaster #: **No Federal Disaster specified**

Year First Tested: **2005**

Repetitive Loss Property? **Yes**

Reference URLs

Reference URL 1: <http://www.fema.gov/government/grant/hmgrp/index.shtm>

Reference URL 2: <http://www.fema.gov/government/grant/pdm/index.shtm>

Main Points

No Main Points were entered.



Flood-damaged mobile homes in 1997.



The buy out area is the former location of a mobile home park.