



# FEMA

## Devastation to Sustainability: Flooded Property Returned to Open Space

**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 on December 31, 1996. The same weather pattern occurred on December 31, 2005, but 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.

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 FEMA’s 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.

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.

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 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.



Multiple Counties,  
Nevada



### Quick Facts

- Year: **1997**
- Sector: **Public**
- Cost: **\$3,600,000.00 (Actual)**
- Primary Activity/Project: **Acquisition/Buyouts**
- Primary Funding: **Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP)**