

# Cross-Boundary Collaboration: Developing a Watershed Group and Restoration Plan for the Walker River Basin



Photo: Walker Lake, the terminus of the Walker River Basin watershed (HUC 160503).

WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program Phase I Grant 2023  
Notice of Funding Opportunity No. R23AS00362

Submitted by:  
Walker Basin Conservancy  
615 Riverside Dr., STE C, Reno, NV 89503  
Jessica Abbott  
[Jessica.abbott@walkerbasin.org](mailto:Jessica.abbott@walkerbasin.org)  
775-463-9887 ext. 103



## Table of Contents

Abbreviations .....	3
Technical proposal .....	4
Executive Summary.....	4
Project Location .....	5
Applicant Category.....	6
Eligibility of Applicant .....	8
Project Description.....	8
Evaluation Criteria.....	13
E.1.1. Evaluation Criterion A—Watershed Group Diversity and Geographic Scope.....	13
E.1.2. Evaluation Criterion B— Developing Strategies to Address Critical Watershed Needs .....	17
E.1.3. Evaluation Criterion C—Readiness to Proceed .....	21
E.1.4. Evaluation Criterion D—Presidential and Department of the Interior Priorities.....	22
References .....	25
Project Budget .....	27
Budget Narrative.....	28
Environmental and Cultural Resources Compliance.....	29
Required Permits or Approvals .....	31
Overlap or Duplication of Effort Statement.....	31
Conflict of Interest Disclosure Statement.....	31
Uniform Audit Reporting Statement.....	31
Disclosure of Lobbying Activities .....	31
Appendix A: Letters of Support.....	31
Appendix B: Official Resolution.....	32

## Abbreviations

BSAP	Bi-State Sage-grouse Action Plan
CEPA	California Environmental Protection Agency
DCNR	Department of Conservation and Natural Resources
EOC	Executive Oversight Committee
LCT	Lahontan cutthroat trout
NDEP	Nevada Division of Environmental Protection
RAD	Resist, Accept, Direct
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats
TAC	Technical Advisory Committee
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
USGS	United States Geological Survey
WBC	Walker Basin Conservancy
WBRP	Walker Basin Restoration Program
WRID	Walker River Irrigation District

# Technical proposal

## Executive Summary

Date: December 5<sup>th</sup>, 2023

Applicant name: Walker Basin Conservancy

Location: Yerington, NV in Lyon County

Project Duration: Jan 2025 – Dec 2027

The Walker Basin Conservancy (WBC), in partnership with federal, state, local, non-profit, tribal, business, and other stakeholders, will build on existing relationships to formally establish a Walker River Basin watershed group. The goals of the group are to identify landscape-scale watershed priorities and plan actions to address them using a comprehensive approach that focuses on stakeholder engagement and finding multi-benefit solutions that balance ecological and community needs. The group will meet these goals by:

1. Conducting a situation assessment including stakeholder engagement, assessment of socio-economic and environmental conditions, and a synthesis of existing watershed science and data.
2. Developing the group's mission, bylaws, structure, and longevity plan.
3. Producing a first iteration of an integrated watershed restoration plan that identifies critical watershed needs and clear actions for addressing them.

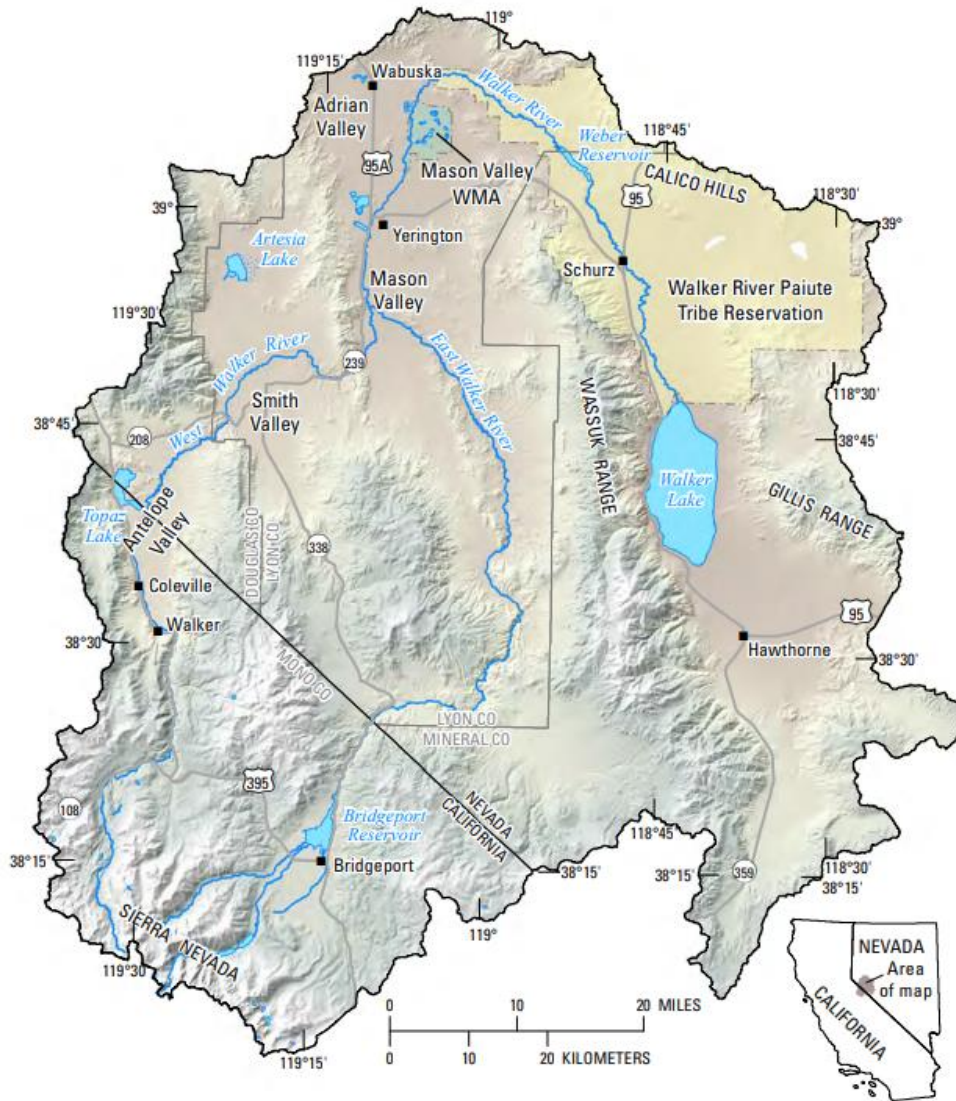
The Walker River Basin covers nearly 4,000 square miles from the headwaters in the Sierra Nevada in California to Walker Lake in Nevada and supports important ecosystems, agricultural and tribal communities, and recreational opportunities. The area also provides critical habitat for a variety of special status fish and wildlife. However, the Walker Basin faces significant challenges, including over-appropriation of water resources, the ecological collapse of Walker Lake due to water diversions, unsustainable groundwater withdrawal, impaired water quality, and the associated strain on ecosystems and wildlife which is exacerbated by climate change and wildfires.

Many critical issues in the Walker River Basin operate at the landscape scale, are complex, have no easy solution, and require investment and coordination among a diverse group of stakeholders that have different and sometimes conflicting priorities. A central goal of forming the Walker River Basin watershed group is to bring together these diverse stakeholders to share information about priority issues in the watershed and work towards solutions that balance multiple needs and objectives.

## Project Location

The Walker River watershed includes areas in Mono County, California and Douglas, Lyon, and Mineral Counties, in Nevada. The watershed covers 4,050 square miles and is located roughly 20 miles southeast of Carson City, NV. It contains multiple small towns, with Yerington, NV being the largest at roughly 3,100 residents. There are roughly 18,000 residents in the entire Basin (Census Bureau Data). About 25% of the watershed is in California and 75% in Nevada. Walker River Basin is a 6-digit USGS HUC: 160503.

The upper watershed in California extends to the Sierra crest which reaches elevations of 10,000 to 11,000 ft and receives significantly more precipitation (over 40 inches on average) than lower parts of the watershed (less than 6 inches on average). The lower watershed, primarily in Nevada, is characterized by basin and range topography with valley bottoms at 4,000-5,000 ft elevation and is in the rain shadow of the Sierra. Surface water flows throughout the watershed are primarily driven by Sierra snow melt (Wheeler 1992). There are two forks of the Walker River (East and West Walker River) that start in the headwaters and converge in Mason Valley, NV to form the mainstem Walker River, which flows through the Walker River Paiute Tribe Reservation to Walker Lake, the terminus of the Watershed (Figure 1.) There are three reservoirs in the system, the largest is Topaz Reservoir (stores up to 60,200 acre-feet) on the West Walker River, followed by Bridgeport Reservoir (stores up to 42,460 acre-feet) on the East Walker River, and Weber Reservoir (stores up to 10,700 acre-feet) on the mainstem Walker River within the Walker River Paiute Tribe Reservation.



Base from U.S. Geological Survey digital data, 2015.  
 Roads from U.S. Census Bureau TIGER/Line digital data, 2015.  
 Shaded-relief base from 10-meter National Elevation Data, 2015;  
 sun-illumination from northwest at 45 degrees above horizon.  
 Walker Lake average lake altitude of 3937.5 ft for November 2006.  
 Universal Transverse Mercator projection, Zone 11  
 North American Datum of 1983

**Figure 1.** Map of the Walker River Basin showing the West and East forks and mainstem of the Walker River and Walker Lake.

### Applicant Category

WBC is seeking funding for the formation of a new watershed group. A central goal of this proposal is to build on the existing informal Walker Workgroup to form a watershed group with a broader geographic focus, that includes more diverse stakeholders, and addresses a wider

range of priorities in the watershed. The Walker Workgroup was formed in 2014 and until recently has focused primarily on the headwaters of the watershed in California. The workgroup has been primarily composed of Federal and State agencies and non-profit organizations working on meadow restoration and fish habitat improvement.

The group took a hiatus starting in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic and began reconvening in April 2023. At that time, some new organizations were invited to the group, and the group has been discussing expanding the scope to include the entire Walker River Basin and focus on a broader suite of restoration needs. American Rivers, a non-profit organization, had previously been convening the group and WBC took over leadership in September 2023.

There have been four Walker Workgroup meetings since April 2023, including an one day in-person meeting in November attended by roughly 30 stakeholders representing 15 organizations. The November meeting focused on development of this proposal. Over the course of these four meetings several themes have emerged, including a desire to:

- Expand participation in the group to be more inclusive and representative of all interests and stakeholders in the Basin, including tribes.
- Expand the group's scope in terms of its geographic focus, the range of issues and needs addressed.
- Focus on landscape-scale issues and projects that benefit multiple objectives.
- Develop a more formal and sustainable structure with clear goals and objectives.

We are leveraging relationships previously developed through the Walker Workgroup to form a new collaborative Walker River Basin watershed group that will bring in additional key stakeholders, such as ranchers, farmers, and tribes, to help shape the group's future. With support from the Walker Workgroup stakeholders, WBC is applying for funding to support this effort and lay the groundwork for a well-organized, inclusive group, that makes meaningful impacts in the watershed and has longevity.

As we move toward this goal, the workgroup plans to continue meeting quarterly and continue to work on an ongoing project to gather and integrate spatial data from organizations in the group. The purpose of the spatial data project is to organize and share information about 1) where organizations work in the Basin and what they are working on, 2) special status species habitat, 3) other priority areas for conservation/restoration, and 4) publicly available layers, such as, land status, species distributions, current and historical fire perimeters, waterbodies and aquifers, cropland, and road density. The goal is to compile information that can be useful for land management decisions and restoration planning, catalyzing partnerships, and identifying priority areas where work is needed but not yet underway or planned. We will update these products with additional information from new stakeholders as the new watershed group is developed.

## Eligibility of Applicant

WBC is eligible as a non-profit organization sponsoring the development of a new watershed group. The core of WBC's mission revolves around restoring and maintaining Walker Lake, which is directly linked to the quantity and quality of water reaching the lake. To achieve this mission, WBC has worked with 156 ranchers and farmers to reduce agricultural diversions and increase the instream flows of the Walker River. These connections have resulted in 22 permanent water rights transactions, securing over 26,000 acre-feet annually. WBC was recently awarded \$4 million through the Nevada Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) to purchase groundwater rights, marking a milestone as the State's first-ever support for groundwater retirement in the Walker River Basin. WBC also focuses on restoring riparian habitat and promoting community connection to the landscape. We have improved habitat on thousands of acres throughout the Basin and created public access to 29 miles of the Walker River. WBC's mission is rooted in the comprehensive management of water resources within the Basin. Our track record demonstrates an ability to collaborate with the local communities to find effective solutions to the complex challenges surrounding the sustainable use of water resources.

## Project Description

The goal of developing the Walker River Basin watershed group and watershed restoration plan is to address landscape-scale watershed priorities using a comprehensive approach that focuses on stakeholder engagement and finding multi-benefit solutions that balance ecological and community needs. The approach we will take to accomplish this goal has three main components:

1. Conducting a situation assessment including stakeholder engagement, assessment of socio-economic and environmental conditions, and a synthesis of existing watershed science and data.
2. Developing the group's mission, bylaws, structure, and longevity plan.
3. Producing a first iteration of an integrated watershed restoration plan that identifies critical watershed needs and clear actions for addressing them.

The first two components fall under Task A - Watershed Group Development, and the third component falls under Task B – Watershed Restoration Planning.

### **Task A – Watershed Group Development**

#### *1. Situation Assessment*



The first step we will take to develop an effective and inclusive watershed group is conducting a situation assessment with the help of trained social scientists and other technical specialists as necessary. We will take a systematic approach to gathering, analyzing, and presenting information on the current state of resource conditions, as well as challenges and issues faced by stakeholders the Walker River Basin, in both California and Nevada. We will evaluate the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) that are driving both the socioeconomic and biophysical conditions of the Walker River Basin. It will form a foundation and will help inform the other two components – the group’s mission and structure, and the first iteration of watershed plan.

The objectives of the situation assessment are to:

- Identify and engage diverse stakeholders.
- Characterize current conditions in the watershed.
- Describe the major issues, problems, needs, and risks facing stakeholders.
- Uncover data gaps or misunderstandings so that they can be addressed.
- Identify challenges and opportunities for addressing priority issues.
- Determine the structure and level of involvement desired by stakeholders moving forward.

We plan on using a combination of in-house staff and hired contractors for project management, facilitation, and technical analyses. The specific approach used for the situation assessment will be determined based on input from the subject matter experts. At the beginning of the project, we will determine clear outcomes for the assessment and define the methods and work schedule. We will also begin by developing an initial list of stakeholders to include in outreach efforts and will expand the list as the process moves forward. The Project Manager will work with the social scientist and other team members to develop a stakeholder engagement plan, including developing outreach materials (informational handouts, talking points, etc.) that present the scope and objectives of the project to stakeholders. A condensed list of anticipated stakeholders is presented in section E.1.1.1. We expect to use a combination of in-person and virtual stakeholder meetings as well as interviews and/or surveys led by the social scientist to get feedback on major issues, needs, and risks related to water resources in the Basin, as well as potential mitigative actions. We will hold in-person meetings in different areas of the Basin to ensure engagement with the full geographic scope of the watershed.

In tandem with the initial outreach and stakeholder engagement, the Project Manager will work with consultants and project team members to compile and summarize data characterizing the condition of the watershed’s biophysical resources (e.g., water quantity and quality, vegetation, flora and fauna, climate, etc.) as well as socioeconomic resources (population demographics, economy, income, cultural characteristics, occupations, etc.). We will also summarize significant natural resources management and restoration efforts in the Basin. Several partners have already synthesized data relevant to these analyses, which will accelerate the process.

The project team will use the data synthesis and feedback from stakeholders to generate a picture of the status of the watershed and identify critical needs and opportunities. These materials will be distributed to the stakeholders and form the basis of a SWOT analysis, identification of socioeconomic and biophysical data gaps, and development of a list of future actions. During this time, we also plan to generate alternatives for the future group's structure and for ongoing stakeholder involvement. Stakeholder engagement will continue throughout the process through workshops as well as written feedback.

## *2. Watershed Group Development*

A key goal of this proposal is establishing a formal Walker River Basin watershed group. There are currently no watershed groups focused on the Walker River Basin or any of its sub-basins and the only portion of the Basin with any type of watershed plan is the California portion of the East Walker River Watershed (Kettleman 2012). To increase the effectiveness and longevity of the watershed group we want to include diverse stakeholders that represent the full geographic scope and interests of the Basin in the process of determining the group vision. The situation assessment process is designed to engage this group of stakeholders and to establish a shared knowledge base for conditions and needs in the Basin. Thus, we will begin the group development process towards the end of the situation assessment. The crucial elements we plan to establish are mission, organizational structure and by laws, and longevity plan. The Program Manager will lead the process of developing these elements with the group. We plan to use brainstorming sessions, surveys, and/or workshops with stakeholders to facilitate the process of developing these elements.

**Mission:** Establishing a group mission will serve as a foundational and guiding element that will provide clarity and guide decision-making processes, motivate and inspire, foster cohesion and collaboration, and promote strategic focus. The general approach we will use starts with defining the core values of the group; what are fundamental principles and values that guide the group's actions and decision-making? Next, we will clearly articulate the group's overarching purpose and the scope of its activities. From there, we will work on crafting a clear and concise mission statement capturing the group's purpose and core values. It is important that the mission statement resonates with stakeholders, so we will solicit feedback from all group members as the statement is refined.

**Structure and by laws:** Establishing group structure and by laws will be important for creating organization and accountability, increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of the group's activities, establishing consistency and clarity, protecting member interests, and aiding in succession planning and group longevity. Using stakeholder input and research into what has been effective in similar groups we will establish:

- Leadership and organizational structure: Structures we have seen to be effective in other groups include having 1) an executive oversight committee (EOC) responsible for strategic planning, risk management, and decision authority, 2) a technical advisory

committee (TAC) to provide technical expertise to guide decisions and actions, and 3) a working group focused on stakeholder and community engagement that would include members of the EOC and TAC. The working group could be subdivided to focus on sub-basins while still meeting as a whole less frequently. Another component that we have planned in this proposal and anticipate continuing in the long term is having a group project manager or coordinator to facilitate group activities.

- **Membership process:** The group will decide if a formal membership process is needed and if so, what it would entail. This is important for determining who is listed as a member on group materials (e.g., webpage, proposals, outreach materials) as well as who should be included in decision making and communications.
- **Decision making process:** The group will determine who will be involved in group decisions and how they will be made. Will it require consensus, or will one person or group (like the EOC) have the ultimate authority?
- **Communication structure:** How will information get communicated with the group? Currently, the workgroup has a mailing list and most group communication goes to everyone, but as we develop the new watershed group and define our organizational structure the communication process will likely need to change. Will everything going out to the whole group need to go through the project manager/coordinator? How would communication within committees work? How frequently do group members want to receive communication about group activities? How will the group communicate with stakeholders that are not members?
- **Data storage:** The group will determine where group data be stored and who is responsible for maintaining it.

**Longevity Plan:** The goal is to develop a strategy for sustaining the group and its impacts on the watershed after the conclusion on this project. The plan will focus on fundraising, succession planning, and strategies for maintaining stakeholder engagement in the long term. The Program Manager will take the lead on developing the longevity plan with assistance from group members/committees. The plan will outline potential funding sources to sustain the project manager/coordinator position, stakeholder engagement activities, and other long-term needs we identify. Funds could come from a variety of sources including grants, private donations, or contributions from member organizations or a combination of multiple sources. The group structure and by laws are a large component of succession planning and will need to be clearly and thoroughly documented. We also plan to outline processes for documenting and archiving group activities and discussions and clearly defining the roles and responsibilities of the project manager/coordinator and any committees or subgroups.

## **Task B – Watershed Restoration Planning**

### *3. Integrated Watershed Restoration Plan (Version 1)*

The Project Manager will lead the process of drafting version 1 of an integrated watershed restoration plan using the results of the situation assessment and further stakeholder input. We chose to call it version 1 to highlight that we want this to be a living document that is regularly reviewed and revised to ensure it incorporates additional stakeholder feedback, new data, and updates based on changing conditions and progress made. The goal is for the document to be a useful tool for prioritizing and catalyzing restoration actions for years to come, which will require regular revisions. We use the term “integrated” to highlight that the plan will focus on the intersection between environmental, economic, and societal needs.

Some plan components will be determined through stakeholder feedback, but we anticipate it will include:

1. Characterization of watershed and summary of issues of concern.
2. Summary of current management efforts.
3. Specific goals and objectives for the watershed (prioritized needs).
4. Prioritized restoration strategies and actions.
5. Implementation plan with funding and technical expertise needs identified.
6. Proposed long-term monitoring plan for tracking progress.

The first two components can be pulled directly from results of the situation assessment. We will rely heavily on stakeholder input for components three and four, prioritizing issues and actions. For this process we will take a tiered approach, defining goals for the Basin as a whole, objectives for each sub-basin, and site-specific actions that contribute to sub-basin objectives and basin goals (Ward et al. 2023). As the group develops restoration strategies and actions, we will consider using the Resist-Accept-Direct framework (RAD; Magness et al. 2022, Ward et al. 2023). The framework outlines approaches managers can take when facing social-ecological transformations due to directional forcing. The approaches include: 1) Resisting change by working to maintain the current or return to historical conditions, 2) Accepting change, allowing the system to continue on its trajectory, or 3) Directing change, actively shaping changes in the system towards a new preferred outcome (Magness et al. 2022). The framework may be useful for making decisions about how to approach and prioritize restoration actions in the Basin.

The plan will include an implementation strategy that establishes the timeframe and interim milestones for restoration actions, identifies realistic expectations for partner involvement, and outlines funding and technical expertise needs. We would also like to include a plan for monitoring progress toward established milestones, strategies for continued stakeholder involvement, and mechanisms for revisiting and revising the restoration plan. Some of the implementation and monitoring components may require more time and resources to fully develop and could be included in subsequent versions of the plan.

### **Stakeholder Engagement**

Stakeholder engagement is critical for conducting a situation assessment, group development, and creating a watershed restoration plan. Given the importance of stakeholders in all aspects

of this proposal, we are including funds for honoraria in the proposal budget to facilitate stakeholder participation. The honoraria will be offered to tribal members or other stakeholders from disadvantaged communities to offset the cost of travel to meetings or time spent on group activities.

## Evaluation Criteria

### E.1.1. Evaluation Criterion A—Watershed Group Diversity and Geographic Scope

#### *E.1.1.1. Sub-criterion No. A1. Watershed Group Diversity*

A central goal of this proposal is to build on existing partnerships to create a new group with much broader diversity. The current workgroup is primarily composed of state and federal government agencies and conservation focused non-profits (see letters of support). Most of the organizations that are currently part of the Walker Workgroup focus on land and resource management, conservation and restoration, and recreation. There are several key stakeholders that are not yet engaged, including ranchers and farmers, counties and cities, the Walker River Irrigation District (WRID), Conservation Districts, energy developers, mining companies, recreation focused organizations, tribes, and other community members living in the Basin. WBC already has established relationships with many of the stakeholder groups we would like to add to the group, which will help with initial outreach efforts in the first year of the project. WBC has worked with over 155 ranchers and farmers in Basin on water transactions. We also work closely with the Walker River Paiute Tribe (see letter of support), WRID, and US Water Board of Commissioners to administer our program water through the system to Walker Lake. We serve on the Board of Directors for the Yerington Chamber of Commerce, volunteer with Lyon County and the Smith Valley Advisory Board, and host environmental education programs with the Yerington Boys and Girls Club and Schurz Elementary. We also have partnerships with other target stakeholders not yet in the group including the Nevada State Parks, Nevada Department of Wildlife, and Mineral County. We will leverage these relationships and outreach materials developed at the start of the project to engage diverse stakeholders throughout the Basin.

Below is a table listing major stakeholders that affect or are affected by the quantity or quality of water within the watershed. The list is not exhaustive and will be expanded throughout the process of stakeholder engagement and outreach. The table highlights the role of the stakeholder in the watershed and if they are already engaged with or expressed support for forming the watershed group. We will specifically seek to engage groups that have not yet been involved with the group during the first year of the project.

**Table 1.** List of major stakeholders in the Walker River Basin, their role in the watershed, and if they are already engaged with the group or support group formation.

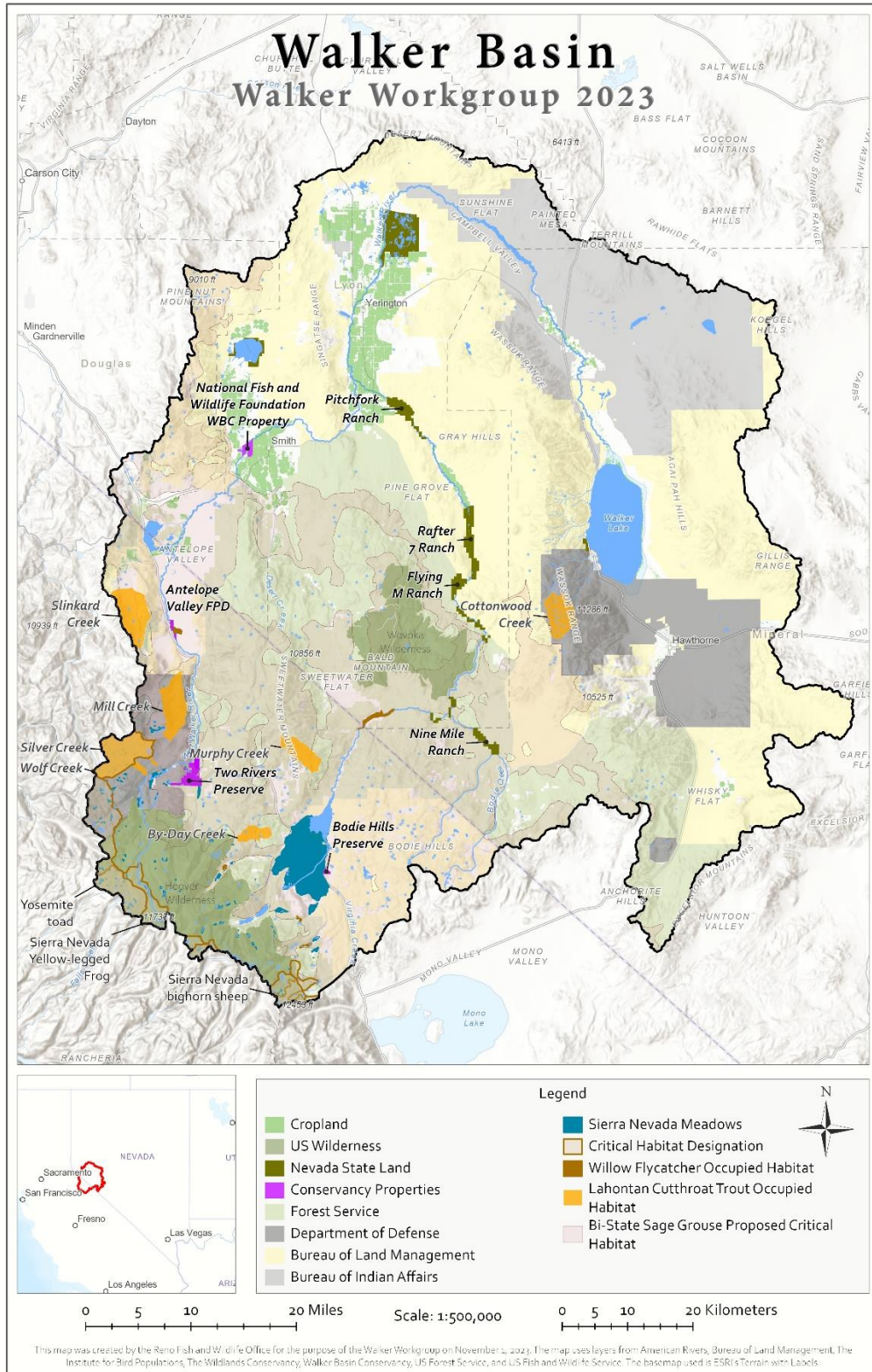
<b>Stakeholder</b>	<b>Role and interaction with water resources</b>	<b>Already engaged?</b>
<b><i>Federal</i></b>		
Bureau of Land Management	Multiple use land management	Yes
U.S. Forest Service	Multiple use land management	Yes
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	Fish and Wildlife	Yes
Department of Defense	Land/resource management	No
Natural Resources Conservation Service	Soil and water conservation	Yes
Bureau of Reclamation	Water use	No
U.S. Board of Water Commissioners	Water use/water rights	No
U.S. Geological Survey	Research and monitoring	Yes
<b><i>State</i></b>		
Nevada Department of Wildlife	Fish and wildlife/land management	No
California Department of Fish and Wildlife	Fish and wildlife/land management	Yes
NV Division of Natural Heritage	At-risk plants and animals	Yes
Nevada Division of Environmental Protection	Water quality	Yes
California Department of Water Resources	Water quality	No
Nevada State Parks	Land management/recreation	No
CA Department of Parks and Recreation	Land management/recreation	No
Mono County Resource Conservation District	Resource management	No
Smith Valley and Mason Valley Conservation Districts	Resource management	No
University of Nevada, Reno	Research	No
<b><i>Local</i></b>		
Lyon County	Resource management/recreation	No
Mineral County	Resource management/recreation	No
Mono County	Resource management/recreation	Yes
Walker Irrigation District	Irrigation	No
<b><i>Non-profit</i></b>		
Walker Basin Conservancy	Water acquisitions/restoration	Yes
American Rivers	Wetland/riparian Restoration	Yes
Trout Unlimited	Fish habitat	Yes
CalTrout	Fish habitat	Yes
Institute for Bird Populations	Avian monitoring and research	Yes
Wildlands Conservancy	Land management/recreation	Yes
Eastern Sierra Land Trust	Land management/conservation easements	Yes

Walker Lake Working Group	Advocacy	No
<b>Community/Industry</b>		
Agriculture	Irrigation/stock water/landowner	No
Mining	Water/land use	No
Energy development (geothermal, solar, etc.)	Water/land use	No
<b>Tribes</b>		
Walker River Paiute Tribe	Resource/land management	Yes
Yerington Paiute Tribe	Resource/land management	No
Bridgeport Indian Colony	Resource/land management	No

*E.1.1.2. Sub-criterion No. A2. Geographic Scope*

The geographic scope of the group will be the Walker River Basin (6-digit USGS HUC), which includes 4 sub-basins (8-digit USGS HUC): East Walker, West Walker, Walker, and Walker Lake. We chose to work at the Basin scale because many issues/needs operate across State lines and sub-basin boundaries. The amount of water reaching Walker Lake is impacted by activities throughout the watershed. Upstream activities can impact water quality in lower parts of the Basin and many special status species have ranges that span large parts of the Basin.

The planned membership of the group will represent the full geographic scope of the Walker River Basin. The current partners do span much of the Basin but are more weighted to the California portion and there are key landowners and organizations in both Nevada and California that we plan to engage in the group formation and plan development process (Table 1 and Figure 2).



**Figure 1.** Map of the Walker River Basin showing the location of different stakeholders in the Basin including state and federal land management areas, cropland, conservancy owned properties, water resources, and the location of special status species habitat.



## E.1.2. Evaluation Criterion B— Developing Strategies to Address Critical Watershed Needs

### *E.1.2.1. Sub-criterion No. B1. Critical Watershed Needs or Issues*

Below we highlight some of the most critical issues and needs of the watershed, however it is not a comprehensive accounting of all issues in the Basin. One of the main goals of the project is to receive input from stakeholders in the Walker River Basin identifying and ranking the priority issues and needs of the watershed, so we expect to expand on the list below during the situation assessment portion of the project.

#### *Water Quantity*

The Walker River Basin is over appropriated, with the total demand for water substantially exceeding available supplies in normal or dry years. There are roughly 110,000 surface water irrigated acres in the Basin and in a normal year (100% of average snowpack) only 84% of surface water rights can be satisfied (Yardas 2007, Sharpe 2008). That leaves very little water instream reaching Walker Lake and large stretches of the lower Walker River below the last dam (roughly 15 miles of river) dry in most years. For example, between 2020 and 2022 less than 200 acre-feet of water reached Walker Lake each year, a tiny fraction of the more 160,000 acre-feet needed on average to sustain lake levels (Lopes and Allander 2009). Furthermore, flows entering the lake in those years were almost entirely water acquired through the Walker Basin Restoration Program.

Water levels in Walker Lake, the terminus of the watershed, have been declining since the late 1800s. The lake elevation has declined more than 160 feet, and it has lost 90 percent of its volume since diversions began (Lopes and Smith 2007). This decline caused total dissolved solids (TDS or salinity) to increase more than 10-fold to the point that fish and many invertebrates can no longer survive in the lake, leading to a total ecological collapse of the ecosystem (Herbst 2013, USGS 2023).

Walker Lake historically supported four species of native fish including Lahontan cutthroat trout, a federally listed species, which was an important cultural resource for local tribes and prized sport fish. In their native language the Walker River Paiute Tribe is known as Agai Dicutta, or Trout Eaters, and losing trout from Walker Lake was a substantial cultural loss. Walker Lake was also important habitat for migratory and wintering waterbirds, attracting large populations of American white pelicans, common loons, cormorants, grebes, ducks, and a variety of shorebirds (Zimmerman 2013). However, loss of fish and many invertebrate species from the lake has resulted in major declines in the number and variety of waterbirds using Walker Lake (Colegrove et al. unpublished report). The annual Loon Festival that took place at Walker Lake stopped in 2009 due to the lack of loons visiting the lake. That same year, the stocked Lahontan cutthroat trout stopped surviving in Walker Lake. Recreation at Walker Lake for fishing, boating, bird watching, and other activities previously supported roughly 50% of Mineral County's economy, but much of the of that revenue has been lost with the ecological

collapse of the lake. The decline of Walker Lake has led to serious cultural and economic losses for local communities.

The Walker Basin Restoration Program (WBRP), led by WBC, was established in 2009 as part of the Desert Terminal Lakes Program created in the 2002 federal Farm Bill. The goal of the WBRP is to increase flows to Walker Lake by acquiring and leasing water rights and promoting other water conservation measures. Increasing flows on the Walker River will also benefit aquatic and riparian habitat in the watershed. To date, WBC has acquired roughly 53% of the water needed to sustain lake levels that could once again support native fish. However, acquiring the rights is only half the battle, there is a lengthy legal process to administer that water instream, and WBC has successfully completed that process for about 26% of the rights acquired. Continued success of the program relies on maintaining and fostering relationships with water management entities like the Walker River Irrigation District and the US Board of Water Commissioners, as well as the broader community.

Unsustainable groundwater pumping is also a concern in the Walker River Basin. In Smith and Mason valleys, two of the largest agricultural communities in the Basin, groundwater storage-volume has declined by 287,600 and 269,000 acre-feet respectively between 1970 and 2020 (Davies and Naranjo 2022). Even in wet years the Walker River is not able to adequately recharge the groundwater supply and groundwater depletion exacerbates losses of surface flows in the Walker River, putting additional strain on an already over appropriated system. Limited surface and groundwater supplies within the Basin have led to conflicts over water supply and restoration measures.

#### *Water Quality*

Water quality assessments have consistently found that large stretches of the West, East, and mainstem Walker River, many of its tributaries, as well as Walker Lake have impaired water quality. High levels of total phosphorous are the most common impairment. Other common impairments include temperature, pH, heavy metals, total dissolved solids, bacteria, mercury in fish tissue, turbidity, dissolved oxygen, and sedimentation (NDEP 2022; CEPA 2022). Many sections of the watershed are not supporting beneficial uses including aquatic life, fish consumption, irrigation, municipal or domestic supply, and recreation with contact because of water quality impairments (NDEP 2022). Water quality impairments in the Basin are likely driven by a number of factors including degraded wetland and riparian habitat, legacy and current mining activities, legacy and current agricultural activities, wildfires, and development (USGS 2004, Kettleman 2012).

#### *Wetland and Riparian Habitat*

Like much of the Western US, it's estimated that Western Nevada has lost over 80% of its historic wetlands and many remaining wetlands and riparian areas are in fair or poor condition (Thompson and Merrit 1988). Many rivers and streams in the Walker Basin have large sections

of channel incision that have disconnected the stream from the floodplain, causing a loss of wetlands, which is exacerbated by irrigation diversions and declining groundwater levels.

Between 2013 and 2015 American Rivers assessed the conditions of all wet meadows larger than 15 acres in the California portion of the Walker River Basin using a rapid assessment that scores channel and vegetation conditions. Of the 30 meadows evaluated, 14 had a score of two or lower (indicating substantial impact) for at least one of the six assessment categories and seven meadows scored two or below in three categories (Hunt et al 2015).

Point Blue and the Sierra Meadows Partnership developed a tool for prioritizing restoration in Sierra Nevada meadows based on their potential to provide benefits for 24 conservation targets (Vernon, 2019). The targets are related to ecosystem services (e.g., carbon, climate, and water benefits) and habitat value to target special status amphibian, bird, and fish species. Nearly all the meadows evaluated in the Sierra Nevada portion of the Walker River Basin rank in highest two (out of five) categories for conservation potential (Vernon, 2019). So, while many meadows in the Walker River Basin headwaters show degradation, they also have high conservation potential.

### *Special Status Wildlife*

Many listed species rely heavily on stream, riparian, and wetland habitat in the Walker River Basin including Lahontan cutthroat trout, Bi-State sage-grouse, Western yellow-billed cuckoo, willow flycatcher, Yosemite toad, and Sierra Nevada yellow-legged frog. Historically, Lahontan cutthroat trout (LCT), were found throughout the Walker River Basin, from the headwaters to Walker Lake (Coffin and Cowan 1995). Unfortunately, LCT has been extirpated from 89% of its historical range due to water diversions, diminished water quality, habitat fragmentation, and competition from non-native species. Today, there are only seven small, disconnected populations of LCT, primarily located in the headwaters of the Basin and no lacustrine (lake dwelling) populations. Improving water quality and flows throughout the Basin would provide more potential habitat for future reintroductions, however lack of community support for reintroduction efforts continues to be a challenge. Restoring Walker Lake to the point that it can support a LCT population once again is a crucial component for recovering this species in the Basin (Lahontan Cutthroat Trout Coordinating Committee 2019).

Bi-state sage-grouse rely on wet meadows for brooding habitat and loss and degradation of wetlands is identified as a moderate or high risk to all sage-grouse populations in the Walker River Basin (BSAP 2023). Climate change and drought are also major threats to sage-grouse in the Basin, highlighting the importance of water resources for this species (Coates et al. 2018, BSAP 2023). Similarly, wet meadows are essential breeding habitat for Yosemite toads and Western yellow-billed cuckoos and willow flycatchers require expansive high quality riparian habitat with complex riparian vegetation (Morton and Pereyra 2010, Johnson et al. 2010). A significant portion of wetland and riparian habitat in the Walker Basin has been lost or degraded (see section above), putting a strain on listed species that rely on those resources.

One of the goals of creating an integrated watershed restoration is to identify actions that can improve riparian and wetland habitation for the benefit of wildlife throughout the Basin.

### *Wildfire*

Over 75,000 acres have burned in wildfires in the Walker Basin since 2000, and the risk of wildfire is expected to increase with climate change (Williams et al. 2019). The western half of the Walker Basin was recently added as priority area for treatment under the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Forest Service Wildfire Crisis Strategy (USDA 2023). Wildfire has been identified as a high risk to all Bi-State sage-grouse populations in the Walker River Basin (BSAP 2023). The increased erosion and sedimentation associated with burned areas can negatively impact water quality. Conversely, restoring wetland and riparian habitat can help mitigate wildfire risk.

#### *E.1.2.2. Sub-criterion No. B2. Project Benefits*

Because there are currently no watershed groups focused on the Walker River Basin and no watershed restoration or management plans, the activities proposed here would fill a critical gap in a system where managing water resources plays such a pivotal role in the economy, cultural, and ecology of the region. The activities planned for this project lay the foundation for effective restoration efforts that provide lasting change. Addressing the issues identified in the watershed restoration plan will create a more resilient watershed with benefits to local communities and ecosystems, including more reliable water supplies for ecological and socioeconomic needs, improved water quality, expanded habitat for special status wildlife, greater fire resilience, improved flood mitigation, and enhanced recreational opportunities.

#### Task A – Watershed Group Development

A key outcome of forming a watershed group is connecting stakeholders working on natural resources management and restoration in the Walker River Basin. Facilitating the exchange of information among various groups engaged in the restoration and management efforts within the Basin holds the potential to unlock synergies and foster collaborations with far-reaching impacts. By breaking down silos and encouraging open communication, these groups can pool their collective expertise, resources, and strategies, increasing the pace and scale of restoration efforts. This collaborative approach is more likely to address challenges at a landscape scale and benefit multiple objectives. Whether it's addressing limited water supply, water quality issues, fuels management, or degraded wetland and riparian habitat, a shared pool of knowledge can lead to more comprehensive and effective solutions. Additionally, these collaborative synergies promote benefits that extend beyond the immediate restoration goals to encompass broader ecological, social, and economic advantages for the entire Basin.

The situation assessment conducted as part of this proposal, including collecting and disseminating information characterizing the watershed and stakeholder workshops, is essential to fostering a shared understanding among diverse stakeholders. By involving a wide array of perspectives, including environmental scientists, local communities, policymakers, and

industry representatives, a more comprehensive view of the watershed's dynamics and challenges will emerge. This shared understanding lays the groundwork for meaningful collaboration, as stakeholders gain insights into the nuances of the issues at hand. Moreover, this collective knowledge forms the basis for establishing common objectives that reflect the interests and concerns of all parties involved. In this way, the process of collecting and sharing information becomes not only a means of fostering collaboration but also a crucial step toward building a united force for the sustainable management and restoration of the Basin.

#### Task B – Watershed Restoration Planning

Developing version 1 of a watershed restoration plan for the Walker River Basin will serve as a comprehensive roadmap that provides direction for future endeavors in the region. By delineating shared priorities and strategies, the plan will provide guidance for informed decision-making, ensuring that efforts are strategically directed toward the most critical and collectively agreed-upon objectives. This not only enhances the efficiency of resource allocation but also helps mitigate conflicts that may arise among stakeholders with differing interests.

The plan will serve as a valuable tool for technical and financial planning, aiding in the identification of resources required to meet defined objectives. By clearly articulating the strategies and goals, the plan will be instrumental in securing the necessary funds and resources for successful implementation of watershed restoration initiatives. We expect the plan to be regularly revisited and revised, ensuring that it is a tool that remains useful in the long-term.

#### E.1.3. Evaluation Criterion C—Readiness to Proceed

This project builds on an already established workgroup that fully supports the proposed work (see letters of support). The Walker Workgroup plans to meet quarterly to continue to work on established goals of:

- Sharing information and finding synergies.
- Expanding the group's focus and adding more diverse stakeholders.
- Focusing on landscape-scale issues and projects that benefit multiple objectives.

The relationships and products (e.g., compiling spatial data, establishing goals and next steps) that have and will continue to be developed through the Walker Workgroup lay the foundation for successful implementation of the proposed project. We will be able to leverage our existing group structure to maximize project outcomes over the three-year period. A project timetable is presented below outlining the expected timing and duration of project tasks.

**Table 2.** Project schedule outlining the stages and duration of tasks associated with each component of the project. Each task shows who will have the primary responsibility for completion listed in parentheses.

	2025				2026				2027			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
<b>Situation Assessment</b>												
Outreach plan and materials (Project Manager and social scientist)	■											
Stakeholder assessment of major issues, needs, and risks (social scientist)	■	■	■									
Biophysical and socioeconomic data synthesis (Project Manager and contractor)	■	■	■									
Compile and summarize information from stakeholder feedback and data synthesis (Project Manager and social scientist)			■	■								
Stakeholder SWOT analysis and development of future actions (Project Manager and social scientist)					■	■						
<b>Group Development</b>												
Quarterly group meetings (Project Manager)	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Establish group mission, bylaws, and structure (Project Manager)						■	■					
Development longevity plan (Project Manager)							■	■	■			
<b>Watershed Restoration Plan</b>												
Plan development workshops (Project Manager)								■	■			
Prioritized goals and actions identified (Project Manager)									■	■		
Draft plan complete (Project Manager)											■	
Plan review workshop (Project Manager)											■	
V.1 Watershed Restoration Plan complete (Project Manager)												■

E.1.4. Evaluation Criterion D—Presidential and Department of the Interior Priorities

E.1.4.1. Climate Change

Warming temperatures place added stress on already limited water resources in the Walker River Basin. Future increased drought risks could have severe impacts on water levels in Water Lake as well as social and economic systems throughout the Basin (Cook et al. 2015, Diffenbaugh et al. 2015, Hachett et al. 2015). More severe droughts will also increase the risk of

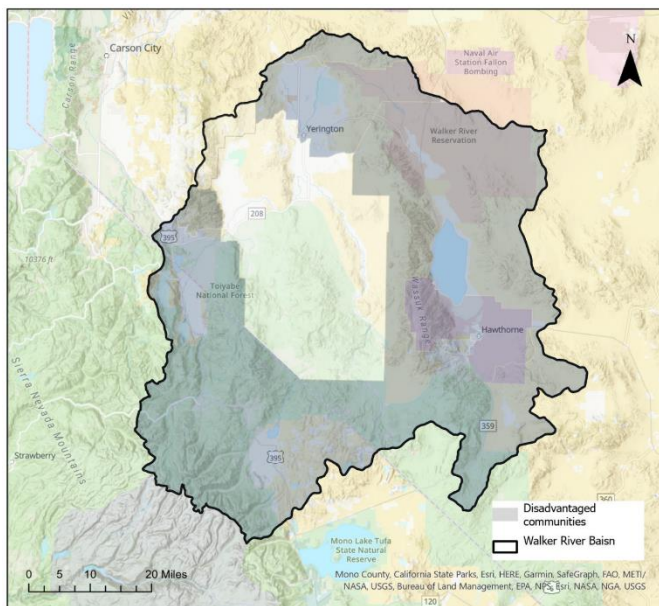
high intensity wildfires and create hardship for irrigators and ranchers in the Basin. White House Council on Environmental Quality’s interactive Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool identifies nearly all of the Walker River Basin as exceeding the burden threshold for climate change, primarily due to risk of agricultural loss from natural hazards, but also loss of buildings, risk of human fatalities and injuries, and wildfire risk. More extreme weather patterns will also increase flooding risk. The 2022-23 water year saw record high snowpack in the Walker River Basin and while a mild spring prevented the worst-case scenario for flooding, there was still significant flooding along both forks of the Walker River, causing damage to buildings in Smith Valley and Mason Valley, NV.

The partnerships developed through forming the watershed group and the strategies generated through creating a watershed restoration plan will directly contribute to climate resilience. Healthy watersheds with functioning riparian habitat and wetlands provide flood mitigation, increase water storage capacity, increase/prolong late-season base flows, and reduce erosion and sedimentation, all of which increase resiliency to climate change. Working on strategies for promoting sustainable groundwater and surface water supplies for multiple users will also help mitigate the negative socioeconomic and ecological impacts of droughts.

#### *E.1.4.2. Benefits to Disadvantaged, Underserved, and Tribal Communities*

##### *Disadvantaged and Underserved Community Benefits:*

There are five census tracts with significant area in the Walker River Basin that are identified as disadvantaged communities through the White House Council on Environmental Quality’s interactive Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool. They fall in Lyon, Mineral, and Douglas Counties in Nevada and in Mono County in California. Roughly 80% of the population in the Walker River Basin lives in areas identified as disadvantaged communities (Figure 3).



**Figure 3.** Map of areas within the Walker River Basin that are identified as disadvantaged communities by the White House Council on Environmental Quality’s interactive Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool.

Communities in the Walker River Basin surpass socioeconomic thresholds for low income and education level, and burden thresholds for climate change (agricultural loss, loss of buildings wildfire risk, and human fatalities and injuries), energy costs, rates of disease (asthma, diabetes, and heart disease), legacy pollution, transportation barriers, unemployment rates, and poverty rates. There are also several tribes in the Basin (see section on tribal benefits).

Significant industries in the Walker River Basin rely heavily on water resources, including agriculture, mining, energy develop, and recreation. Many of the critical issues and needs discussed above, such as over-appropriation, groundwater depletion, and sedimentation, directly impact community member's livelihood. The long-term outcomes of the proposed project will benefit disadvantaged communities in the Walker River Basin by increasing climate resilience (see section above), improving water quality, reducing wildfire risk and flood risk, providing enhanced recreational opportunities, and promoting more sustainable management of water resources in the Basin.

#### Tribal Benefits:

There are three Tribes in the Walker River Basin: Walker River Paiute Tribe, Yerington Paiute Tribe, and Bridgeport Indian Colony. The Walker River Paiute Tribe Reservation includes over 30 miles of the lower Walker River including Weber Reservoir, a major measuring and distribution point for WBC program water being sent to Walker Lake. Walker Lake was once within the boundary of the Reservation and the native Lahontan cutthroat trout that once inhabited the lake were a culturally important resource. In their native language the Walker River Paiute Tribe is known as Agai Dicutta, or Trout Eaters, and losing trout from Walker Lake was a loss of part of their cultural identity (see letter of support). Additionally, the stretch of the Walker River that runs through the Reservation, particularly below Weber Reservoir is the section of river most impacted by water diversions. Many sections of the lower Walker River dry out completely most years. Working to ensure reliable flows through the lower Walker River to Walker Lake would directly benefit the Walker River Paiute Tribe.

There are many natural resources in the Walker River Basin that are culturally significant to local tribes that are affected by water resources. For example, pine nuts from pinyon pine forests throughout the Basin are a traditional food source for local tribes. The Walker River Paiute Tribe hosts an annual pine nut festival and blessing to celebrate the harvest. However, drought and wildfires threaten this culturally important resource.

Meaningful engagement with the Tribes will be a key component of our stakeholder outreach. We have included funds for honoraria to help facilitate involvement with the group. Outcomes for the group that directly benefit Tribes will be informed through input from the tribes, however some expected benefits include, developing relationships and a plan to facilitate improved water quality, improved water management, reduced sedimentation (particularly on lower Walker and at Weber Reservoir), improved wildfire resilience and management of pinyon forests, and flood mitigation.



## References

- Bi-State Action Plan (BSAP) For Conservation of Greater Sage-Grouse Bi-State Distinct Population Segment. December 2023 Draft.
- California Environmental Protection Agency (CEPA), State Water Resources Control Board. 2022. 2022 Integrated Report for Clean Water Act Sections 305(b) AND 303(d)
- Coates, P.S., Prochazka, B.G., Ricca, M.A., Halstead, B.J., Casazza, M.L., Blomberg, E.J., Brussee, B.E., Wiechman, L., Tebbenkamp, J., Gardner, S.C. and Reese, K.P., 2018. The relative importance of intrinsic and extrinsic drivers to population growth vary among local populations of Greater Sage-Grouse: An integrated population modeling approach. *The Auk: Ornithological Advances*, 135(2), pp.240-261.
- Colegrove, K., Boone, J.D., and Ammon, E.M. Waterbird Community Changes During Salinization of a Terminal Lake in Western Nevada. Unpublished report. Great Basin Bird Observatory, Reno Nevada
- Coffin, P.D, and Cowan, W.F. 1995. "Lahontan Cutthroat Trout Recovery Plan" US Fish and Wildlife Service, Region 1.  
[http://www.fws.gov/ecos/ajax/docs/recovery\\_plan/950130.pdf](http://www.fws.gov/ecos/ajax/docs/recovery_plan/950130.pdf)
- Cook, B. I., T. R. Ault, and J. E. Smerdon. 2015. Unprecedented 21st-century drought risk in the American Southwest and Central Plains, *Sci. Adv.*, 1, e1400082, doi:10.1126/sciadv.1400082
- Davies, G.E., and Naranjo, R.C., 2022, Estimated effects of pumping on groundwater storage and Walker River stream efficiencies in Smith and Mason Valleys, west-central Nevada: U.S. Geological Survey Scientific Investigations Report 2022–5123, 49 p.,  
<https://doi.org/10.3133/sir20225123>.
- Diffenbaugh, N. S., D. L. Swain, and D. Touma. 2015. Anthropogenic warming has increased drought risk in California, *Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. U.S.A.*, 112(13), 3931–3936
- Hatchett, B.J., Boyle, D.P., Putnam, A.E., and Bassett, S. D. 2015. Placing the 2012–2015 California-Nevada drought into a paleoclimatic context: Insights from Walker Lake, California-Nevada, USA, *Geophys. Res. Lett.*, 42, 8632–8640, doi:[10.1002/2015GL065841](https://doi.org/10.1002/2015GL065841).
- Herbst, D.B., Medhurst, R.B., and Bell, I.D. 2013. Walker Lake Ecological Monitoring of the Status and Trends of the Benthic Ecosystem: Invertebrate Populations, Algae, Lake Level, Salinity and Waterbird Surveys. Report to Lahontan National Fish Hatchery Complex, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- Hunt, L., Fair, J., Dyste, J., and Odland, M. 2015. Restoring Walker Meadows: Assessment and Prioritization. A report by American Rivers submitted to the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.
- Johnson, M.J., R.T. Magill, and C. van Riper, III. 2010. Yellow-billed cuckoo distribution and habitat associations in Arizona, 1998-1999. Pp. 197-212, In: *The Colorado Plateau IV*:

- Integrating research and resources management for effective conservation (van Riper, C., III, B. F. Wakeling, and T. D. Sisk, Eds). University of Arizona Press, Tucson, AZ. 335 pp
- Kettlmann, R. 2012. East Walker River Watershed Assessment and Plan. Accessed on 11/30/23 from <https://inyo-monowater.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/E-Walker-Plan-FINAL.pdf>
- Lahontan Cutthroat Trout Coordinating Committee. 2019. Updated Goals and Objectives for the Conservation of Lahontan Cutthroat Trout (*Oncorhynchus clarkii henshawi*). Retrieved from [https://www.fws.gov/sites/default/files/documents/Lahontan%20Cutthroat%20Trout%202019%20Updated%20Goals%20and%20Objectives\\_0.pdf](https://www.fws.gov/sites/default/files/documents/Lahontan%20Cutthroat%20Trout%202019%20Updated%20Goals%20and%20Objectives_0.pdf)
- Lopes, T.J., and Allander, K.K. 2009. Water budgets of the Walker River basin and Walker Lake, California and Nevada: U.S. Geological Survey Scientific Investigations Report 2009–5157, 44 p.
- Lopes, T.J., and Smith, J.L. 2007. Bathymetry of Walker Lake, west-central Nevada: U.S. Geological Survey Scientific Investigations Report 2007-5012
- Magness DR, Hoang L, Belote RT, Brennan J, Carr W, Stuart Chapin, III F, CliffordMorrisonMorton KWJM et al. 2022. Management foundations for navigating ecological transformation by resisting, accepting, or directing social–ecological change. *Bioscience* 72(1):30–44
- Morton, M.L. and Pereyra, M.E. 2010. Habitat use by Yosemite Toads: Life History Traits and Implications for Conservation. *Herpetological Conservation and Biology* 5(3):388–394
- Nevada Division of Environmental Protection (NDEP), Bureau of Water Quality Planning. 2022. Nevada 2020-2022 Water Quality Integrated Report.
- USDA 2023. United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service Wildfire Crisis Landscape Investments. [https://www.fs.usda.gov/sites/default/files/fs\\_media/fs\\_document/WCS-Second-Landscapes.pdf](https://www.fs.usda.gov/sites/default/files/fs_media/fs_document/WCS-Second-Landscapes.pdf)
- U.S. Geological Survey (USGS). 2023. Water Quality Samples for the Nation: USGS 384200118431901 Walker Lake 3 Center. Available at: [USGS - Walker Basin Hydro Mapper](#)
- Seiler, R.L., Lico, M.S., Wiemeyer, S.N., and Evers, D.C. 2004. Mercury in the Walker River Basin, Nevada and California—Sources, Distribution, and Potential Effects on the Ecosystem. U.S. Geological Survey Scientific Investigations Report 2004–5147
- Sharpe, Saxon. 2008. The Walker Basin, Nevada and California: Physical Environment, Hydrology, and Biology. Publication No. 41231. Desert Research Institute.
- TNC 2013 “Walker Lake Conservation Assessment.” The Nature Conservancy. Available here: [Walker LAke CAP \(squarespace.com\)](#)

Vernon, M. E. *Multiple Benefits Meadow Prioritization* [layer package]. Sierra Meadows Partnership, 2019. <https://databasin.org/datasets/5fba78cc81584609ad88795bc4bf7b9f/>

Ward, N.K., Lynch, A.J., Beever, E.A., Booker, J., Bouska K.L., Embke, H., Houser, J.N., Kocik, J.F., Kocik, J., Lawrence, D.J., Lemon, M.G., Limpinsel, D., Magee, M.R., Maitland, B.M., McKenna, O., Meier, A., Morton, J.M., Muehlbauer, J.D., Newman, R., Oliver, D.C., Rantala, H.M., Sass, G.G., Shultz, A., Thompson, L.M., & Wilkening, J.L. Reimaging large river management using the Resist-Accept-Direct (RAD) framework in the Upper Mississippi River. *Ecological Processes* 12, 48 (2023). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13717-023-00460-x>

Wheeler, D.P. 1992. The Walker River Atlas. California Department of Water Resources. [http://images.water.nv.gov/images/publications/River%20Chronologies/Walker\\_River\\_Atlas.pdf](http://images.water.nv.gov/images/publications/River%20Chronologies/Walker_River_Atlas.pdf).

Williams, A. P., Abatzoglou, J. T., Gershunov, A., Guzman-Morales, J., Bishop, D. A., Balch, J. K., & Lettenmaier, D. P. 2019. Observed impacts of anthropogenic climate change on wildfire in California. *Earth's Future*, 7, 892–910. <https://doi.org/10.1029/2019EF001210>

Yardas, David, and Joy Giffin. 2012. “Walker Basin Restoration Program Progress Report 2010-2011.” Washington, D.C.: National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. [https://static1.squarespace.com/static/550a1fc8e4b0e1de27f15703/t/595465282e69cfb2fcbda172/1498703148176/Walker\\_Progress\\_Report.pdf](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/550a1fc8e4b0e1de27f15703/t/595465282e69cfb2fcbda172/1498703148176/Walker_Progress_Report.pdf).

Zimmerman, T., G. Ivey, and J. Vest. 2013. Intermountain West Joint Venture 2013 Implementation Plan, Chapter 6: Waterbirds. Intermountain West Joint Venture, Missoula, MT.

## Project Budget

WBC is requesting \$299,918 in Reclamation funding to complete the proposal presented above. A summary of the project budget is found below in Table 3. A more detailed breakdown of project expenses can be found in the Attachment A – Budget Detail and Narrative spreadsheet.

**Table 3.** Summary of requested funding by category.

<b>Summary</b>			
<b>Figures in this summary table are calculated from entries made in subsequent categories, only blank white cells require data entry.</b>			
<b>6. Budget Object Category</b>	<b>Total Cost</b>	<b>Federal Estimated Amount</b>	<b>Non-Federal Estimated Amount</b>
<b>a. Personnel</b>	<b>\$127,262</b>		
<b>b. Fringe Benefits</b>	<b>\$38,179</b>		
<b>c. Travel</b>	<b>\$3,558</b>		

<b>d. Equipment</b>	<b>\$0</b>		
<b>e. Supplies</b>	<b>\$5,000</b>		
<b>f. Contractual</b>	<b>\$61,250</b>		
<b>g. Construction</b>	<b>\$0</b>		
<b>h. Other Direct Costs</b>	<b>\$20,000</b>		
<b>i. Total Direct Costs</b>	<b>\$255,249</b>		
<b>i. Indirect Charges</b>	<b>\$44,669</b>		
<b>Total Costs</b>	<b>\$299,918</b>	<b>\$299,918</b>	<b>\$0</b>
<b>Cost Share Percentage</b>		<b>100%</b>	<b>0%</b>

**Table 4.** Summary of non-federal and federal funding sources.

<b>Funding Source</b>	<b>Amount</b>
Non-federal	\$0.00
Requested Reclamation Funding	\$299,918

## Budget Narrative

### *Personnel*

The project budget includes personnel costs for Jessica Abbott, the project Principal Investigator (535 hours total over three years), and a Project Manager (2450 hours total over three years). Jessica will be responsible for high level project oversight and for supervising the Project Manager. Jessica will contribute to partner communications, group leadership, watershed plan development, and work with the Project Manager to track project budget, schedule, and deliverables. The Project Manager will lead project implementation including hiring contractors, working with contractors on outreach materials and the situation assessment, data compilation and synthesis, leading development of group structure and by laws, leading group meetings and workshops, and leading the development of the watershed restoration plan.

### *Travel*

Travel costs included in the budget will cover travel for the Principal Investigator and Project Manager to attend group meetings and workshops planned as part of the project. We included funds for five trips a year: four single day trips and one overnight trip. Travel costs are estimated based on traveling from Reno, where Walker Basin Conservancy's administrative office is located, to anticipated meeting locations in the Walker River Basin (average distance is used). For overnight trips costs associated with food and lodging are included based on federal per diem rates for the area.

### *Supplies*

The budget includes supply costs (\$3000) associated with hosting group and stakeholder meetings and workshops. This includes funds for providing food and beverages for meeting attendees, and audio/visual supplies like a projector and screen, flip charts, white boards, markers, and name tags. The budget also includes funds for outreach materials (\$2000) that will be developed by the social scientist and other team members. We anticipate costs associated with printing handouts, surveys, posters, and other written materials as well as postage to send materials to stakeholders in the Basin.

#### *Contractual*

The budget includes funding for contractors to help complete aspects of the project where external expertise is desired, particularly related to social science. We will hire contractors to help with the situation assessment described in the proposal. We plan to hire a social scientist to plan and facilitate stakeholder engagement as part of the situation assessment. We expect this will include some combination of stakeholder surveys, interviews, meetings, and/or workshops. We also plan to hire a contractor to help compile and summarize data characterizing the watershed, particularly socioeconomic data.

#### *Other*

To encourage stakeholder engagement from disadvantaged communities in the Basin we plan to offer honoraria to meeting participants to offset travel and time costs. We are planning to have 100 \$200 honoraria available, which could be used by the same individuals/groups for multiple meetings. We estimated \$200 as an amount that could cover travel costs and some time compensation for stakeholders attending meetings in the Basin.

## Environmental and Cultural Resources Compliance

The work proposed here focuses on stakeholder engagement and planning activities and does not involve on-the-ground work that would require environmental or cultural resources compliance review. See answers to questions below:

**Will the proposed project impact the surrounding environment (e.g., soil [dust], air, water [quality and quantity], animal habitat)?**

No, not applicable to proposed activities.

**Are you aware of any species listed or proposed to be listed as a Federal threatened or endangered species, or designated critical habitat in the project area? If so, would they be affected by any activities associated with the proposed project?**

There are listed species in the Walker River Basin, but the proposed project does not include on-the-ground work and thus will not impact listed species.

**Are there wetlands or other surface waters inside the project boundaries that potentially fall under CWA jurisdiction as “Waters of the United States”? If so, please describe and estimate any impacts the proposed project may have.**

Not applicable to proposed activities.

**When was the water delivery system constructed?**

Not applicable to proposed activities.

**Will the proposed project result in any modification of or effects to, individual features of an irrigation system (e.g., headgates, canals, or flumes)? If so, state when those features were constructed and describe the nature and timing of any extensive alterations or modifications to those features completed previously.**

Not applicable to proposed activities.

**Are any buildings, structures, or features in the irrigation district listed or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places? A cultural resources specialist at your local Reclamation office or the State Historic Preservation Office can assist in answering this question.**

Not applicable to proposed activities.

**Are there any known archeological sites in the proposed project area?**

Not applicable to proposed activities.

**Will the proposed project have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations?**

No.

**Will the proposed project limit access to, and ceremonial use of, Indian sacred sites or result in other impacts on Tribal lands?**

No.

**Will the proposed project contribute to the introduction, continued existence, or spread of noxious weeds or non-native invasive species known to occur in the area?**

No.

## Required Permits or Approvals

The work proposed here focuses on stakeholder engagement and planning activities and does not require any permits or approvals.

## Overlap or Duplication of Effort Statement

There is no overlap between the proposed project and any other active, pending, or anticipated proposals or projects in terms of activities, costs, or commitment of key personnel.

## Conflict of Interest Disclosure Statement

No actual or potential conflict of interest exists per FAIR requirements.

## Uniform Audit Reporting Statement

WBC was required to submit a Single Audit report for the most recently closed fiscal year and it is available through the Federal Audit Clearinghouse website. WBC's Employer Identification Number (EIN) is 47-1989228.

## Disclosure of Lobbying Activities

WBC has not engaged in covered lobbying activities and is not required to complete a Disclosure of Lobbying Activities form.

## Appendix A: Letters of Support

Letters of support for members of the Walker Workgroup and stakeholders in the Basin are included as attachments. Organizations providing letters of support include:

Bureau of Land Management

U.S. Forest Service

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Nevada Division of Natural Heritage

Walker River Paiute Tribe

American Rivers

Trout Unlimited

Wildlands Conservancy

## Appendix B: Official Resolution

An official resolution adopted by Walker Basin Conservancy's board of directors is attached.



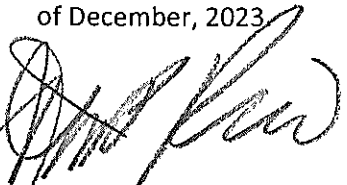
### Resolution of the Board of Directors

Walker Basin Conservancy, a Nevada Nonprofit Corporation

At a regularly scheduled and properly noticed meeting of the Board of Directors of the above nonprofit corporation held on November 28, 2023, among other matters, it was decided that the Board of Directors hereby approves the following resolution:

- The Board of Directors of the Walker Basin Conservancy grants legal authority to Executive Director Peter Stanton to enter into a legal agreement with the Bureau of Reclamation through the Cooperative Watershed Management Program.
- The application has been reviewed by the Board's designee and the Board's full support.
- The organization will work with Reclamation to meet established deadlines for entering into a grant or cooperative agreement.

The undersigned Secretary of the Corporation has read and acknowledged the resolution on this 1<sup>st</sup> day of December, 2023.



John Rice, Secretary  
Walker Basin Conservancy



# United States Department of the Interior



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT  
Bishop Field Office  
351 Pacu Lane, Suite 100  
Bishop, CA 93514  
[www.blm.gov/office/bishop-field-office](http://www.blm.gov/office/bishop-field-office)

November 30, 2023

Bureau of Reclamation  
Water Resources and Planning Office  
PO Box 25007  
Denver, CO 80225

Dear Review Committee:

The Bureau of Land Management, Bishop Field Office is pleased to support the Walker Basin Conservancy's proposal through the WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program to create comprehensive group of stakeholders focused on addressing critical needs within the Walker River Basin watershed.

The Walker Basin covers nearly 4,000 square miles from the headwaters in the Sierra Nevada in California to Walker Lake in Nevada and supports important ecosystems, agricultural and tribal communities, and recreation opportunities.

This proposal builds on existing partnerships to form an inclusive group focused on improving and maintaining watershed priorities such as instream flows, water quality, wildlife habitat, flood mitigation, community and agricultural water supply, and climate resilience.

Addressing these landscape-scale priorities requires a comprehensive approach that focuses on engagement with diverse stakeholders living and working in the Basin and finding multi-benefit solutions that balance ecological and community needs. The proposed work focuses on meaningful stakeholder engagement throughout the process of establishing the group's mission and structure and working on an integrated watershed management plan.

The Walker Basin Conservancy is well positioned to achieve the proposed goals given their experience tackling complex water issues in the Basin and established record of working with diverse stakeholders across the region.

Sincerely,

Sherri Lisius  
Field Manager  
Bishop Field Office

**File Code:** 1580

**Date:** November 27, 2023

Review Committee  
Bureau of Reclamation  
Water Resources and Planning Office  
PO Box 25007  
Denver, CO 80225

Dear Review Committee,

The Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest (HTNF) is writing you to express our support of the Walker Basin Conservancy's (WBC) proposal through the WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program to create a watershed group focused on addressing critical needs within the Walker River Basin. The HTNF Bridgeport Ranger District manages portions of the Upper Walker River watershed (both East and West branches) and the WBC is a key partner in managing this critical watershed.

The Walker Basin encompasses approximately 4,000 square miles from the headwaters in the Sierra Nevada in California to its terminus at Walker Lake near Hawthorne, Nevada. The Walker River and its tributaries provide many essential ecosystem functions as well as supporting socio and economic benefits that include tribal communities, agricultural production, and recreation opportunities. This proposal builds on existing partnerships to form an inclusive group focused on improving and maintaining watershed priorities such as instream flows, water quality, wildlife habitat, flood mitigation, community and agricultural water supply, and climate resilience.

This group would focus on addressing landscape-scale priorities that require a comprehensive approach and involves engagement with diverse stakeholders living and working within the Walker Basin. Together this group along with stakeholders would continue working towards solutions that balance ecological, economic, and community needs. Proposed work would involve stakeholder participation and engagement throughout the process of establishing the group's mission; ultimately working towards an integrated watershed management plan.

The WBC has experience working on complex water issues within the Basin and has an established record of working with diverse stakeholders across the region. Currently, the WBC has the capacity and expertise to lead and coordinate this effort, and therefore the HTNF is submitting this letter in support of their efforts. The HTNF looks forward to being an active and engaged partner and we sincerely appreciate your time and consideration as the group works towards solutions within the Walker Basin.



Sincerely,

AARON C. COOGAN  
District Ranger

cc: Don Kozlowski; Jeffrey O'Connell; [jessica.abbott@walkerbasin.org](mailto:jessica.abbott@walkerbasin.org)



# United States Department of the Interior

U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE  
Reno Fish and Wildlife Office  
1340 Financial Blvd., Suite 234  
Reno, Nevada 89502  
Ph: (775) 861-6300 | Fax: (775) 861-6301



November 28, 2023

Bureau of Reclamation  
Water Resources and Planning Office  
PO Box 25007  
Denver, CO 80225

Re: Cross-Boundary Collaboration: Developing a Watershed Group and Management Plan for the Walker River Basin

Dear Review Committee:

On behalf of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), I am writing to express my support for projects that intend to improve engagement within the Walker River Basin to better understand stakeholder concerns and needs, such as a proposed project to collaboratively develop a watershed management plan. This plan is needed to improve conservation outcomes for various species and resources by leveraging previous and on-going efforts and better prioritizing future ones.

The Walker River Basin is a relatively large area that encompasses nearly 4,000 square miles, from the headwaters in the Sierra Nevada in California to Walker Lake in Nevada; it supports important ecosystems, agricultural and tribal communities, and recreation opportunities. The proposed project would leverage existing, long-standing partnerships to form a larger, but more inclusive group focused on improving and maintaining watershed priorities, such as instream flows, water quality, wildlife and fish habitat, flood mitigation, community and agricultural water supply, and climate resilience. Addressing these landscape-scale priorities requires a comprehensive approach that focuses on engagement with diverse stakeholders living and working in the basin and finding multi-benefit solutions that balance ecological and community needs.

The proposed work focuses on meaningful stakeholder engagement throughout the process of establishing the group's mission and structure, so that it can begin working on a watershed management plan that integrates the best available science and is well-supported by those that live and work in the basin. To accomplish these goals, social science and partnership experts will be contracted to help determine how to best build the group, how to structure the group, and how to best coordinate and lead the group towards the development of a collaborative watershed management plan over the next several years. The Walker Basin Conservancy is well positioned

to achieve the proposed project goals given their experience tackling complex water issues in the basin and established record of working with diverse stakeholders across the region.

This proposed project would benefit a suite of listed and at-risk species, including Lahontan cutthroat trout, Sierra Nevada yellow-legged frog, Sierra Nevada red fox, whitebark pine, Yosemite toad, California spotted owl, and Bi-state sage grouse, to name a few, by increasing communication, coordination, and collaboration within the basin. The Service is currently involved in several different conservation-oriented working groups in the basin and would directly benefit by improved coordination and communication among those groups, which is a main goal of the proposed project. The Service would be a stakeholder directly involved in this process as well, providing technical information and guidance regarding its priorities for listed and at-risk species conservation. Lastly, the synergy that a collaborative group and a subsequent watershed management plan could accomplish are in line with the Service's mission and focus.

If you have any questions regarding this correspondence or require additional information, please contact me or Sean Vogt at (775) 861-6330.

Sincerely,

Jodie Mamuscia  
Field Supervisor



**NEVADA**  
— DIVISION OF —  
**NATURAL HERITAGE**

**STATE OF NEVADA**  
Department of Conservation & Natural Resources

Joe Lombardo, *Governor*  
James A. Settelmeyer, *Director*  
Kristin Szabo, *Administrator*

Bureau of Reclamation

Water Resources and Planning Office

PO Box 25007

Denver, CO 80225

Dear Review Committee:

The Nevada Division of Natural Heritage (NDNH) is pleased to support the Walker Basin Conservancy's proposal through the WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program to create a watershed group focused on addressing critical needs within the Walker River Basin.

The Walker Basin covers nearly 4,000 square miles from the headwaters in the Sierra Nevada in California to Walker Lake in Nevada, encompassing critical wetlands and associated habitat for many sensitive species tracked by NDNH such as the Yellow-billed Cuckoo. Watershed planning in this Basin is essential to ensure the longevity of wetlands and their dependent species in the face of competing water needs. The comprehensive approach described in this proposal, focusing on engagement with diverse stakeholders, synthesizing existing information, and considering both ecological and human needs, will strengthen watershed planning efforts. As the state's repository of biodiversity data to support effective conservation planning that promotes the survival of sensitive plants, animals, and ecological communities, NDNH is very interested in this project. We look forward to participating with the watershed group and providing input with regards to the wetlands and sensitive species.

The Walker Basin Conservancy is well positioned to achieve the proposed goals given their experience tackling complex water issues in the Basin and established record of working with diverse stakeholders across the region.

Sincerely,

*Chantal Iosso*

Chantal Iosso

Wetland Program Coordinator



## Walker River Paiute Tribe

1022 Hospital Road • P.O. Box 220 • Schurz, Nevada 89427

Telephone: (775) 773-2306

Fax: (775) 773-2585

November 27, 2023

Bureau of Reclamation  
Water Resources and Planning Office  
PO Box 25007  
Denver, CO 80225

RE: Letter of Support

Dear Review Committee:

The Walker River Paiute Tribe ("Tribe") is pleased to support the Walker Basin Conservancy's ("Conservancy") proposal through the Bureau of Reclamation's WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program to create a watershed group focused on addressing critical needs within the Walker River Basin.

The Walker Basin covers nearly 4,000 square miles from the headwaters in the Sierra Nevada in California to Walker Lake in Nevada and supports important ecosystems, agricultural and tribal communities, and recreation opportunities. This proposal builds on existing partnerships to form an inclusive group focused on improving and maintaining watershed priorities such as instream flows, water quality, wildlife habitat, flood mitigation, community and agricultural water supply, and climate resilience.

It is critical for our Tribe to be involved as we are responsible for ensuring that water purchased for Walker Lake by the Conservancy gets to our historical lake. Weber Dam is a major measuring and distribution point for the water that has been identified for the lake. We are known as the Agai Dicutta (Trout Eaters) and without the Lahontan Cutthroat Trout (LCT) in the lake we have lost a great part of our cultural identify. Walker Lake was once within the entire boundary of our reservation, and we still hold historical ownership of the lake. We want to ensure that as much water gets to the lake as possible.

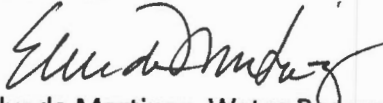
Addressing these landscape-scale priorities requires a comprehensive approach that focuses on engagement with diverse stakeholders living and working in the Basin and finding multi-benefit solutions that balance ecological and community needs. The proposed work focuses on



meaningful stakeholder engagement throughout the process of establishing the group's mission and structure and working on an integrated watershed management plan. That plan will have to include erosion issues that were caused by this year's major flood. We are still disappointed that FEMA was not able to assist our tribe and other upstream stakeholders in financing projects. The flooding impacted farmlands, personal property and roadways.

The Conservancy is well positioned to achieve the proposed goals given their experience tackling complex water issues in the Basin and established record of working with diverse stakeholders across the region. Thank you for your consideration in funding this proposal.

Sincerely,



Elveda Martinez, Water Resources Coordinator  
WALKER RIVER PAIUTE TRIBE

cc: WRPT Grant File



November 27<sup>th</sup>, 2023

Bureau of Reclamation  
Water Resources and Planning Office  
PO Box 25007  
Denver, CO 80225

Dear Review Committee:

American Rivers is pleased to support the Walker Basin Conservancy's proposal through the WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program to create a watershed group focused on addressing critical needs within the Walker River Basin.

The Walker Basin covers nearly 4,000 square miles from the headwaters in the Sierra Nevada in California to Walker Lake in Nevada and supports important ecosystems, agricultural and tribal communities, and recreation opportunities. Between 2013 and 2015, American Rivers assessed every accessible meadow larger than 15 acres in the Walker basin and established the Walker Workgroup to pursue restoration at five top-priority meadows. In the intervening years, American Rivers and the Walker Workgroup have accelerated the pace and scale of meadow restoration in the Walker River basin by implementing restoration at three priority meadows and initiating planning at two additional sites. This proposal builds on the Walker Workgroup's track record of success to launch the development of an inclusive group with a broader focus on improving and maintaining watershed-wide priorities such as instream flows, water quality, wildlife habitat, flood mitigation, community and agricultural water supply, and climate resilience.

Addressing these landscape-scale priorities requires a comprehensive approach that focuses on engagement with diverse stakeholders living and working in the Basin and finding multi-benefit solutions that balance ecological and community needs. The proposed work focuses on meaningful stakeholder engagement throughout the process of establishing the group's mission and structure and working on an integrated watershed management plan. The objectives of this partnership align perfectly with American Rivers' mission to protect wild rivers, restore damaged rivers, and conserve clean water for people and nature.

The Walker Basin Conservancy is well positioned to achieve the proposed goals given their experience tackling complex water issues in the Basin and established record of working with diverse stakeholders across the region. American Rivers urges you to support this important proposal.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Julie Fair". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Julie Fair  
Director of California Headwaters Conservation



## Inland Trout Program

Truckee, CA 96161

[www.tu.org](http://www.tu.org)

December 1, 2023

Bureau of Reclamation  
Water Resources and Planning Office  
PO Box 25007  
Denver, CO 80225

### **Re: Walker Basin Conservancy WaterSMART Proposal**

Dear Review Committee:

Trout Unlimited is pleased to support the Walker Basin Conservancy's proposal through the WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program to create a watershed group focused on addressing critical needs within the Walker River Basin.

The Walker River Basin covers nearly 4,000 square miles from the headwaters in the Sierra Nevada in California to Walker Lake in Nevada and supports important ecosystems, agricultural and tribal communities, and recreational opportunities. The proposal builds on existing partnerships to form an inclusive group focused on improving and maintaining watershed priorities such as instream flows, water quality, fish and wildlife habitat, flood mitigation, community and agricultural water supply, and climate resilience.

Addressing these landscape-scale priorities requires a comprehensive approach that focuses on engagement with diverse stakeholders living and working in the Basin and finding multi-benefit solutions that balance ecological and community needs. The proposed work focuses on meaningful stakeholder engagement throughout the process of establishing the group's mission and structure and working on an integrated watershed management plan.

The Walker Basin Conservancy is well positioned to achieve the proposed goals given their experience tackling complex water issues in the Basin and established record of working with diverse stakeholders across the region.

Sincerely yours,

Michael Cameron  
Northern Sierra Project Manager  
(775) 560-1940



# THE WILDLANDS CONSERVANCY

*Behold the Beauty*

November 27, 2023

Bureau of Reclamation  
Water Resources and Planning Office  
P.O. Box 25007  
Denver, CO 80225

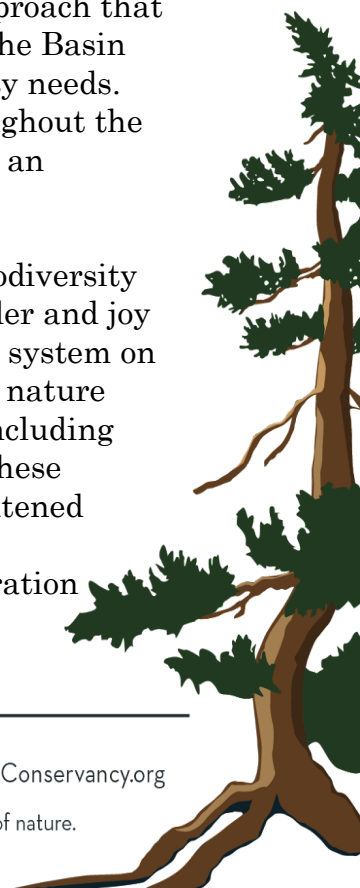
Dear Review Committee:

The Wildlands Conservancy (TWC) is pleased to support the Walker Basin Conservancy's proposal through the WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program to create a watershed group focused on addressing critical needs within the Walker River Basin.

The Walker Basin covers nearly 4,000 square miles from the headwaters in the Sierra Nevada in California to Walker Lake in Nevada and supports important ecosystems, agricultural and tribal communities, and recreation opportunities. This proposal builds on existing partnerships to form an inclusive group focused on improving and maintaining watershed priorities such as instream flows, water quality, wildlife habitat, flood mitigation, community and agricultural water supply, and climate resilience.

Addressing these landscape-scale priorities requires a comprehensive approach that focuses on engagement with diverse stakeholders living and working in the Basin and finding multi-benefit solutions that balance ecological and community needs. The proposed work focuses on meaningful stakeholder engagement throughout the process of establishing the group's mission and structure and working on an integrated watershed management plan.

The Wildlands Conservancy is dedicated to preserving the beauty and biodiversity of the earth and providing programs so that children may know the wonder and joy of nature. TWC owns and operates the largest nonprofit nature preserve system on the west coast. Within the Walker Basin, TWC owns and manages three nature preserves protecting 2,800 acres of land and 10+ miles of river streams including the West Walker River and Little Walker River. Conservation goals on these preserves include: enhancement of stream/riparian habitats for the threatened Lahontan cutthroat trout, restore wetland meadow habitats, improve habitats supporting the bi-state sage grouse, and protecting wildlife migration



corridors. These preserves are open to the public free of charge for passive recreation including hiking, wildlife watching, picnicking, and fishing. TWC currently manages 4 miles of trails and plans to continue developing new public access opportunities on the West Walker River and its tributaries in northern Mono County. Developing a Watershed Management Program for the Walker Basin will benefit TWC's current and future projects within the basin.

The Walker Basin Conservancy is well positioned to achieve the proposed goals given their experience tackling complex water issues in the Basin and established record of working with diverse stakeholders across the region. We encourage diligent review and approval of their proposal.

Best Regards,



John Trammell  
Eastern Sierra Nevada Regional Director  
The Wildlands Conservancy