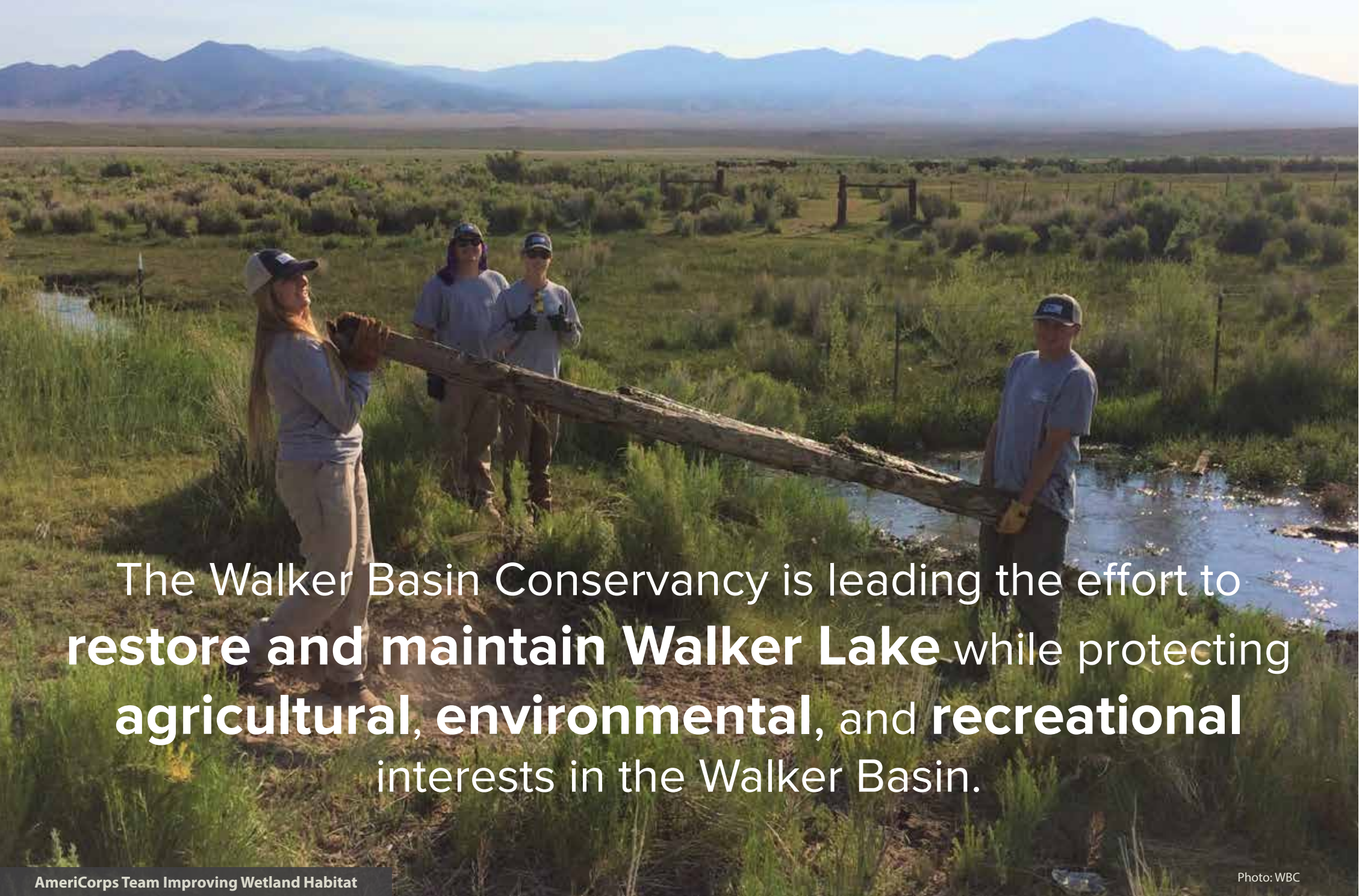


10 Year Report



Walker
Basin
Conservancy



The Walker Basin Conservancy is leading the effort to **restore and maintain Walker Lake** while protecting **agricultural, environmental, and recreational** interests in the Walker Basin.

AmeriCorps Team Improving Wetland Habitat

Photo: WBC



The American West often evokes visions of arid, wide-open spaces, grandiose natural formations, and rugged landscapes. The Walker Basin encompasses this vision and the spirit of the true American West. Walker Lake is a dazzling sapphire, gleaming amid a dry and somewhat unforgiving land where only the hardest survive. The Walker River, the lifeblood of the region, brings a smattering of green to a palette that otherwise consists of browns, grays, and purples. To ensure that the Walker River can continue to support the region, the Walker Basin Conservancy is leading the effort to restore, preserve, and honor the unique biodiversity and rich cultural history of the Basin.

This report encapsulates a timespan from 2009 - 2019 during which the Walker Basin Restoration Program (Program) worked with agricultural, tribal, environmental, and recreational stakeholders to restore Walker Lake and preserve the natural resources of the Basin. In 2017, the Walker Basin Conservancy took the lead as the steward of the Program to ensure successful restoration of Walker Lake. As of the 10-year anniversary of the Program, approximately 46% of the water needed to restore Walker Lake was acquired. Reaching another milestone, after a lengthy legal process, a portion of this water was delivered to Walker Lake for the first time in 2019. However, as much as has been accomplished in the last 10 years, there is much more work ahead.

We will continue to work with local stakeholders to acquire water rights for Walker Lake and once again make the lake habitable to the threatened Lahontan cutthroat trout and other wildlife. As we look to the future of the Walker Basin, we seek innovative approaches to continue to restore and preserve its natural splendor and to support the vibrant communities that call it home. The Walker Basin Restoration Program is an investment in our future, the future of the West, for generations to come.

Jeff Bryant

Executive Director - Walker Basin Conservancy



Photo: WBC

Walker River State Recreation Area ribbon cutting ceremony with Governor Sandoval and Walker Basin Conservancy staff.



Photo: Mark Gamba

The Walker Basin Restoration Program leases over 2,500 acres annually to support the local agronomy.

10 Years of Leading the Community Effort to Restore Walker Lake and Steward Lands

In 2017, the Walker Basin Conservancy accepted the lead role to implement and manage the Walker Basin Restoration Program, previously administered by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.

“The Walker Basin Conservancy’s restoration program has made invaluable contributions to our collective efforts to protect and restore Nevada’s unique natural resources. Since its inception in 2015, the Conservancy has exceeded expectations in its work to restore Walker Lake while simultaneously contributing to protecting the broader landscape within the Walker Lake and River watershed.

As part of this work, the Walker Basin Conservancy was the critical, indispensable partner working with the State of Nevada to establish the Walker River State Recreation Area, the first new Nevada state park in the last decade.”

Brad Crowell

Director - Nevada Department of Conservation and Natural Resources

**ESTABLISHED THE 12,100-ACRE
WALKER RIVER STATE
RECREATION AREA**



**ACQUIRED 46% OF THE WATER
RIGHTS NECESSARY TO RESTORE
WALKER LAKE’S FISHERY**

**BUILT A NURSERY THAT CAN PRODUCE
AN ESTIMATED 150,000 NATIVE
PLANTS ANNUALLY TO BE USED
FOR RESTORATION EFFORTS AND
NATIVE SEED PRODUCTION**



**33 MILES OF
THE WALKER
RIVER CORRIDOR
OPENED TO
PUBLIC RECREATION**



**DELIVERED WATER
RIGHTS FOR THE
RESTORATION OF
WALKER LAKE FOR
THE FIRST TIME IN 2019**

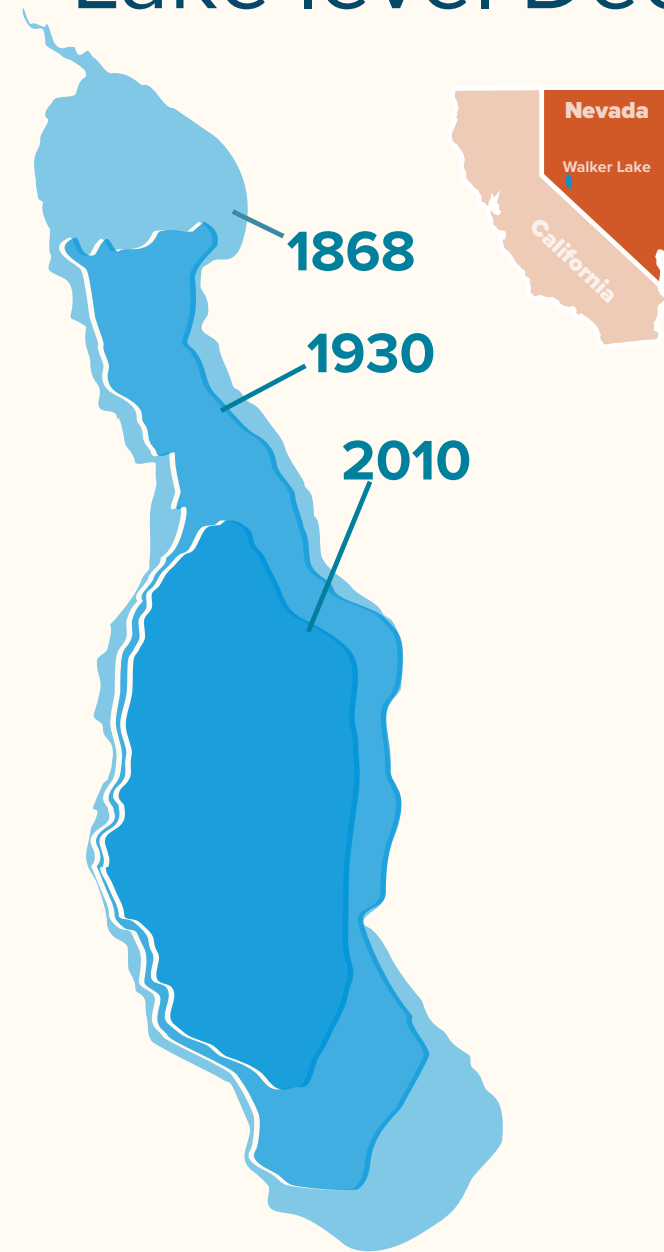




Since 1868, Walker Lake has **lost 90% of its volume and 50% of its surface area,** and lake salinity levels have **increased by more than 400%.**

Photo: Martin Swinehart

Lake level Decline



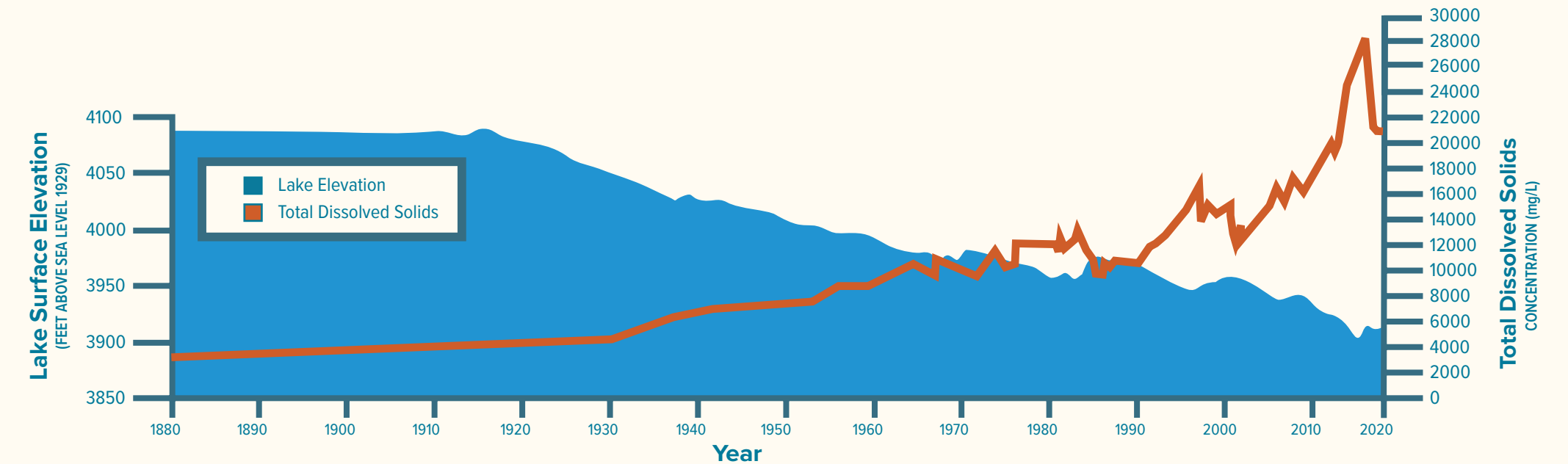
History of Walker Lake

Decades of reduced freshwater inflows have resulted in the decline of the lake's volume and an increase in lake salinity, which today threatens to cause the ecological collapse of Walker Lake.

During the last quarter of the 19th century, farmers and ranchers established communities in the Walker Basin, part of the ancestral home of the Northern Paiute Tribe. As agriculture in the region grew, the natural flows of the Walker River were diverted to meet increasing irrigation demands.

Dams built on both the east and west forks of the Walker River in the 1920s allowed water to be stored and used for irrigation later in the season. As water management intensified over the years, the natural flow of the Walker River became greatly altered, and water inflow into Walker Lake steadily declined, causing the lake level to plummet.

As a result of declining lake levels, Total Dissolved Solids (TDS, primarily salts) in Walker Lake have increased dramatically to the point that the lake can no longer support native fish and wildlife populations.



Wildlife of Walker Lake and the Walker Basin

The Walker Basin is home to diverse and important native plant and animal species uniquely adapted to life in this dry and rugged landscape.

The health of Walker Lake is critical for recovering the threatened Lahontan cutthroat trout and supporting migratory waterfowl and other wildlife that previously used the lake.

Migratory waterfowl, including the common loon, once used Walker Lake as a stopover on the Pacific Flyway. The annual Loon Festival that took place at Walker Lake stopped in 2009 because there were not enough loons using the lake. That same year, the stocked Lahontan cutthroat trout stopped surviving in Walker Lake. The absence of both iconic species as well as other key indicator species is driven by declining water levels and the resulting increase in Total Dissolved Solids (TDS) in the lake.



Common Loon

Photo: John Picken

Lahontan Cutthroat Trout

Photo: USFWS

Large-scale wildfires and the invasion of exotic plants have degraded wildlife habitat throughout the Western United States. Walker Basin Conservancy's restoration and conservation efforts on acquired properties are expanding and improving habitat for the array of wildlife within the Basin.

“Restoring Walker Lake not only benefits those native species directly associated with the ecosystem of the lake, but also supports a wide variety of native species throughout the Walker Basin.”

Steve Tomac - Senior Advisor



Willow Flycatcher

Photo: David Menke, USFWS



Mountain Whitefish

Photo: National Park Service



Collared Lizard

Photo: Daniel Schwen



Desert Bighorn Sheep

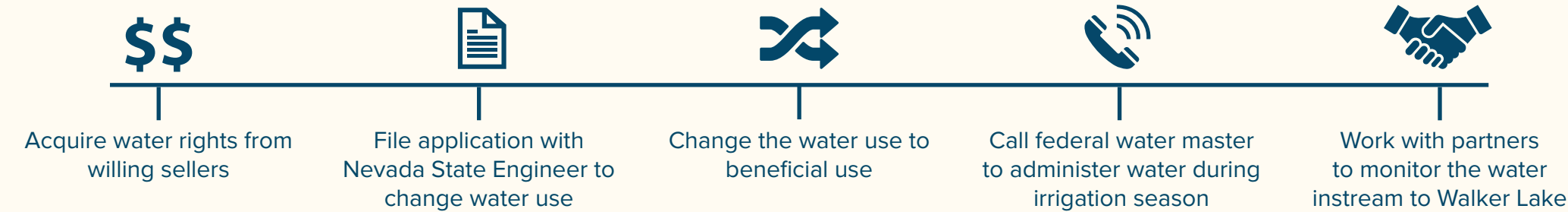
Photo: Magnus Kjaergaard

Water Conservation

To restore Walker Lake, the Walker Basin Conservancy works with willing sellers in the Basin to acquire water rights and convey water instream to Walker Lake for the benefit of wildlife and the environment.

Acquiring and Monitoring Water Instream

In order to monitor acquired water instream to Walker Lake, the Conservancy does the following:



The Walker Basin Conservancy works closely with the Walker River Paiute Tribe to ensure that Program water will flow through the Paiute Reservation on the lower Walker River to Walker Lake, without impacting the Tribe's existing water rights. This is accomplished through a Lower Walker River Conveyance Agreement between the Walker Basin Conservancy and the Walker River Paiute Tribe.



Photo: Nico Sunseri

After years of collaborative efforts by the Walker Basin Conservancy and its partners, on July 5, 2019, water acquired for the primary purpose of restoring Walker Lake flowed into the lake for the first time.

This was a critical milestone for restoration goals at Walker Lake that include the eventual reintroduction of the threatened Lahontan cutthroat trout.

As of the beginning of 2020, we acquired **46%** of the water needed to restore Walker Lake to target levels.



July 5, 2019
Acquired water rights are delivered to Walker Lake for the first time.

Photo: WBC

1,207
Acres of land seeded

816
Acres restored

2,471
Acres with grazing leases



AmeriCorps Members Install Irrigation

Photo: WBC

AmeriCorps by the numbers

67 Members enrolled since 2018

42,992 Total hours served



Through the Walker Basin Conservancy's stewardship activities, we strive to balance agricultural interests, wildlife needs, cultural activities, and recreational use, while creating sustainable landscapes. Conservancy staff work alongside AmeriCorps National Service Members to accomplish on-the-ground restoration goals. AmeriCorps is a national service program that provides opportunities for young adults and new professionals to learn conservation principles and develop new skills while completing valuable service projects on our public lands.

LAND CONSERVATION

Walker Basin Conservancy's activities balance agricultural interests, cultural activities, wildlife habitat, and recreational use, while preserving native ecosystems.

"The Walker Basin Conservancy is responsible for restoration on over 15,000 acres of land where water use will be reduced for the benefit of Walker Lake...that's a big responsibility, and we take the stewardship of that land very seriously."

Laura Patten - Land Conservation Director

Stewardship efforts such as native plant revegetation, noxious weed control, and streambank stabilization improve habitat for important species like sage grouse and Lahontan cutthroat trout. They also benefit the local community by decreasing wildfire risk, suppressing dust, and preventing erosion while keeping the local agricultural economy strong.

In 2019, the Walker Basin Conservancy built a 900-square-foot propagation tunnel and a 7,200-square-foot shade tunnel to grow native plants in house for restoration purposes. Since the start of propagation efforts, the Walker Basin Conservancy was able to germinate 8,000 plants in the nursery and transplant 600 willows along the East Walker River.



Photo: WBC

Streamflow Monitoring



Photo: WBC

Native Plants Sprouting at Nursery

Public Lands and Our Community

In addition to stewardship, Walker Basin Conservancy has greatly expanded public access on acquired lands benefiting the local community and economy.

13,700 Acres of recently established public lands

A total 33 miles of Walker River corridor opened to the public for the first time in a century

The Walker Basin Conservancy facilitated the conveyance of over 12,100 acres of land and nearly 30 miles of the East Walker River to the State of Nevada to become the **Walker River State Recreation Area**. Nevada State Parks manages the property, allowing public access to previously private lands.

Nearly 1,600 acres of upland and riparian land, including more than three miles of the Walker River, was transferred to the State of Nevada and is now part of the **Mason Valley Wildlife Management Area**, which provides public access for hunting, fishing, and general recreation.



Walker River State Recreation Area

Photo: Nico Sunseri



Mason Valley Wildlife Management Area

Photo: Martin Swinehart

Local Projects with National Support

Senator Cortez Masto swears in new AmeriCorps National Service Members at the Walker River State Recreation Area. AmeriCorps Service Members help the Conservancy accomplish restoration goals that benefit the lands and communities within the Walker Basin.



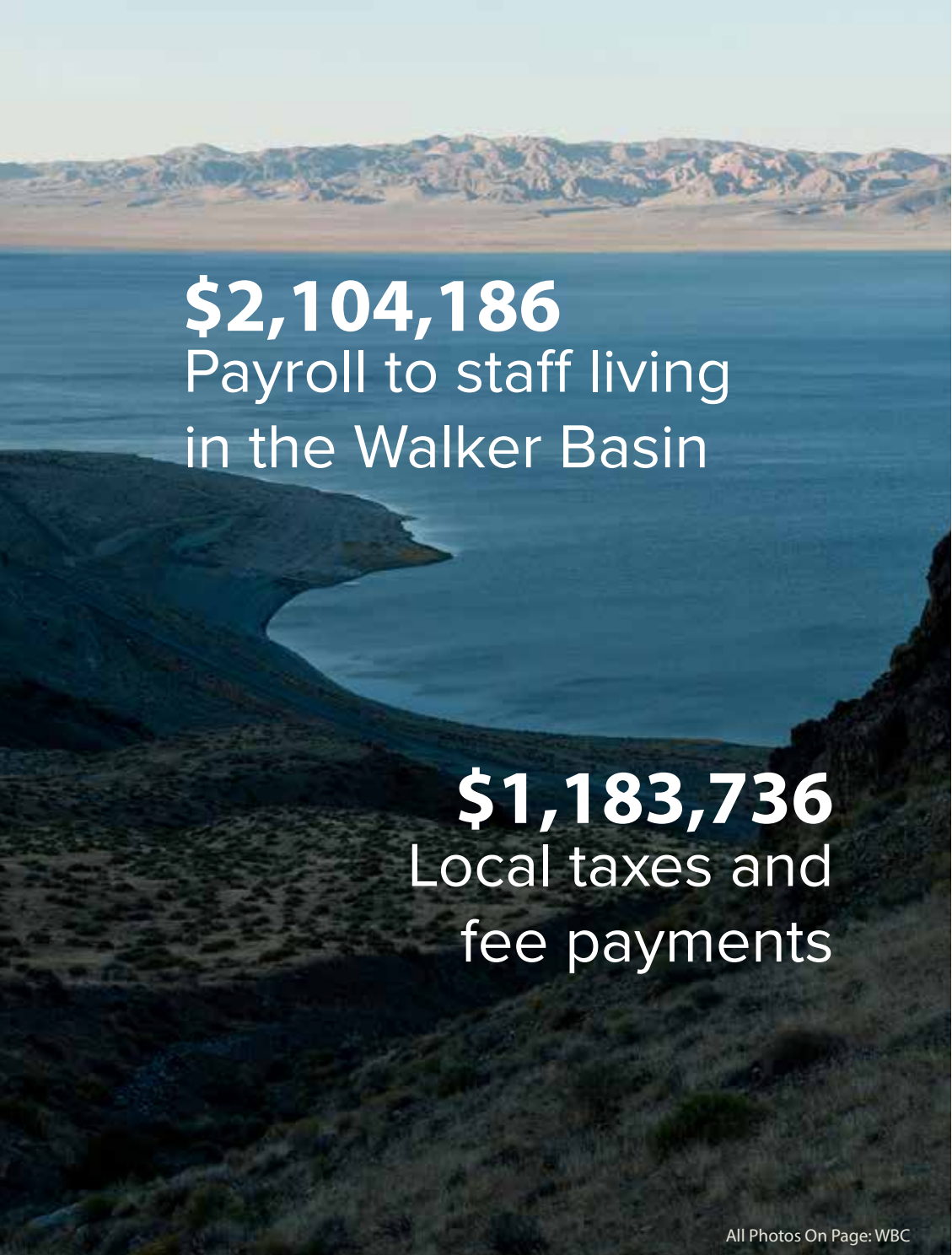
Broedi Riccio

The Conservancy recruits local involvement in our program. Broedi Riccio's story is a great example of our efforts to inspire the community to be part of our work. Broedi was first introduced to the Walker Basin Conservancy's youth field work crew by his local high school government teacher and immediately applied to the program. He loved the work and wanted a permanent job with the Walker Basin Conservancy. He joined the AmeriCorps Program and was able to continue doing field work and gaining experience. In November 2019, Broedi was hired on full time as a Field Technician and now lives in Yerington with his dogs, Gemma and Rayder.



Photo: WBC

Earth Day Community Volunteer Event



\$2,104,186
Payroll to staff living
in the Walker Basin

\$1,183,736
Local taxes and
fee payments

Investing in the Walker Basin

Our work extends beyond water and land conservation; we invest in the long-term sustainability of local communities. The work of the Walker Basin Conservancy and the establishment of the Walker River State Recreation Area (WRSRA) support full-time and seasonal employees who not only live and work in the Walker Basin but have also become part of the culture and community. Additionally, the recreation area has brought more visitors to the Basin increasing tourism for local communities.



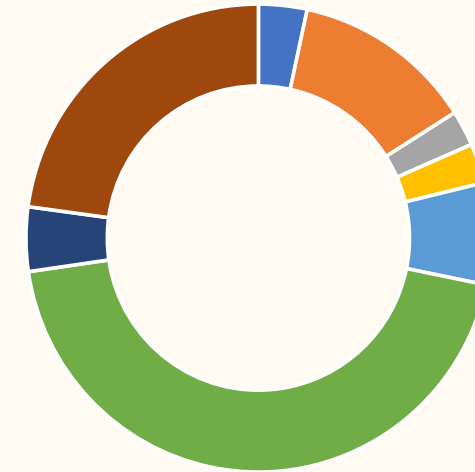
Expanded Public Lands Impact

- 6** Seasonal WRSRA Employees
- 12** Full-time WRSRA Employees
- 80,000+** Visitors to WRSRA

Financial Information

The Walker Basin Conservancy works diligently and efficiently to oversee the conservation and stewardship initiatives established by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and the Walker Basin Restoration Program.

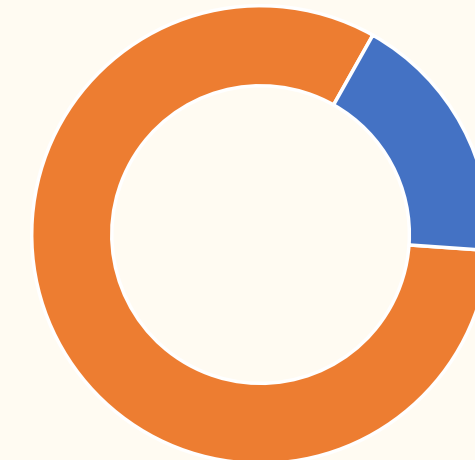
Local Operating Expenses



Auto-related Expenses	\$174,670
Contract Services	\$653,837
Insurance	\$127,170
Property-related Improvements	\$141,697
Rent and Utilities	\$363,733
Salaries and Payroll	\$2,304,543
Supplies and Materials	\$229,965
Taxes, Fees, and Water Assessments	\$1,183,736

Total Operating Expenses \$5,179,351

Acquisition Expenses



By National Fish and Wildlife Foundation	\$75,796,113
By Walker Basin Conservancy	\$16,581,370

Total Acquisition Expenses \$92,377,483

Total Expenditures \$97,556,834

Our Past, Present,...

and Future.

In 2009, the **Walker Basin Restoration Program** was established by Public Law 111-85 for the primary purpose of restoring and maintaining Walker Lake, while also protecting agricultural, environmental, and habitat interests in the Walker Basin.

In 2015, the **Walker Basin Conservancy** was established to oversee the conservation and stewardship initiatives associated with the **Walker Basin Restoration Program**. Funding and authority for this was central to the **National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's** commitments to agricultural and watershed interests.

By the end of 2019, the **Walker Basin Restoration Program** acquired approximately **46% of the water necessary** to restore Walker Lake to the primary restoration goal of 12,000 mg/L TDS.

Continue to acquire water and increase instream water to benefit Walker Lake.

Sustain and expand interdisciplinary conservation efforts on lands associated with water acquisition activities.

Increase native plant and seed production for the purpose of broad revegetation and landscape restoration in the Basin.



Photo: Jackson Shedd



Photo: Kathy Trujillo

One of the great restoration stories of the American West is being written; will you help write the final chapters?

Visit walkerbasin.org to learn more about how you can support our work.



Field Station: 1 US HWY 95A East - Yerington, NV 89557 - (775) 463-9887

Administrative office: 615 Riverside Dr. Ste. C - Reno, NV 89503 - (775) 463-9887

Cover Photo: Kathy Trujillo

Walker Basin Restoration Program

10-Year Report



Walker
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Conservancy