

Local Collaboration to Develop an Integrated Watershed Plan for the Lower Virgin River

Tanya Anderson on behalf of the Virgin River Coalition

February 6, 2019

Why We Do What We Do

People and Nature

Native Fish



Kevin Guadalupe

Agricultural area near Bunkerville, NV



Riparian Birds



Mike Swink

What is Collaboration?

The merging of perspectives and expertise

- 1) by multiple stakeholders,
- 2) through an open and interactive process,
- 3) to accomplish a shared goal that a single stakeholder cannot solve alone





Components of Collaboration

Process

- Working from the same information
- Working toward the same outcomes
- An agreed-upon process
- Everyone participates

Context

- Voluntary participation
- Local perspective
- Representation of all stakeholders
- Everyone participates
- Empowered process



Collaboration

Benefits

Process

- Builds understanding
- Builds relationships
- Combines expertise
- Works across boundaries
- Opens up creative solutions

Outputs

- Better decisions
- Access to pooled resources
- Resolved tensions

Outcomes

- Increased likelihood of implementation

Challenges

Process

- Conflicting missions
- Historic mistrust
- Institutional barriers
- Lack of understanding
- Lack of participation
- Constrained resources
- Personnel change

A wide, muddy river flows through a dry, hilly landscape. The water is a thick, brownish-tan color, indicating high sediment content. The banks are covered with sparse, dry, yellowish-brown vegetation. In the background, there are rolling hills and mountains under a clear blue sky. The overall scene suggests a natural, possibly undisturbed, river environment in an arid region.

Objective: To bring all relevant partners together for the benefit of people and nature in the Virgin River Watershed

Where is the Virgin River

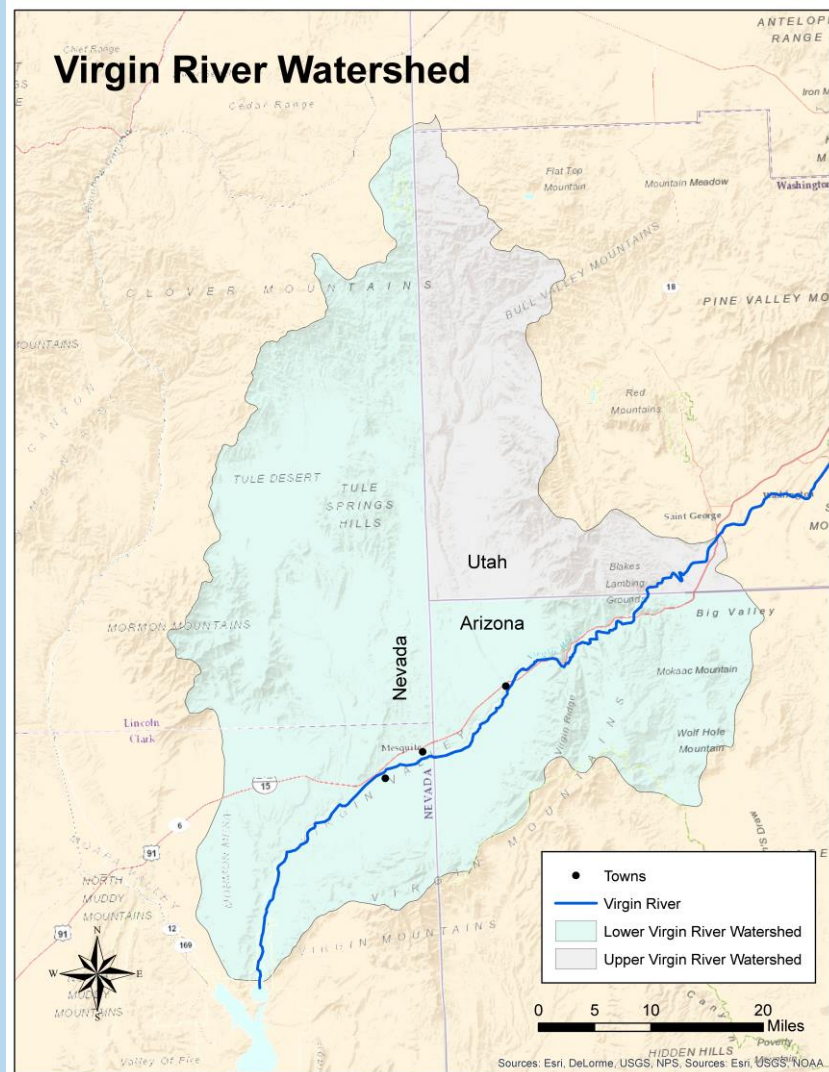
Crosses three states

- Originates in Zion NP and ends at Lake Mead NP
- Currently only focused on the watershed within Arizona and Nevada

~60 miles (96km) in our focus area for a total 152 miles (244km)

~1.3M acres (HUC 8)

- >75% area in focus area



Why are we working here?

- Two federally endangered fish –
Woundfin and Virgin River Chub
- One endangered bird –
Southwestern Willow Flycatcher
- Virgin River flows into Lake Mead and
contributes to water supply for
Southern Nevada and other
downstream users



Kevin Guadalupe



Mike Swink

Lower Virgin River Challenges

- Anti-government sentiment
- History of failed planning attempts resulted in wariness and distrust
- Planning fatigue
- Balancing rural-urban dynamics with a limited water supply



Overcoming Challenges

- Neutral facilitator
- Balance between governmental and local participants; limit how many from each group
- Seeking feedback



D. Campbell

Workshop Outcomes

Consensus Driven

1st workshop September 2017

- Mission, Vision, charter and drafted targets - through a series of break-out groups
- Expert presentations to establish baseline knowledge for all participants
- Feedback from the group – resulted in changed locations and length of meetings
- Collegial relationships



Workshop Outcomes - continued

Consensus Driven

2nd workshop October 2017

- Mission, vision, charter and drafted targets were finalized
- Invited agency decision-makers to show agency support
- Drafted strategies
- Worked to strengthen relationships with key partners



Workshop Outcomes - continued

Consensus Driven

3rd workshop (December 2017)

- Focused on developing and refining strategies and results chains
- Idea of MOU was proposed
- Workshop

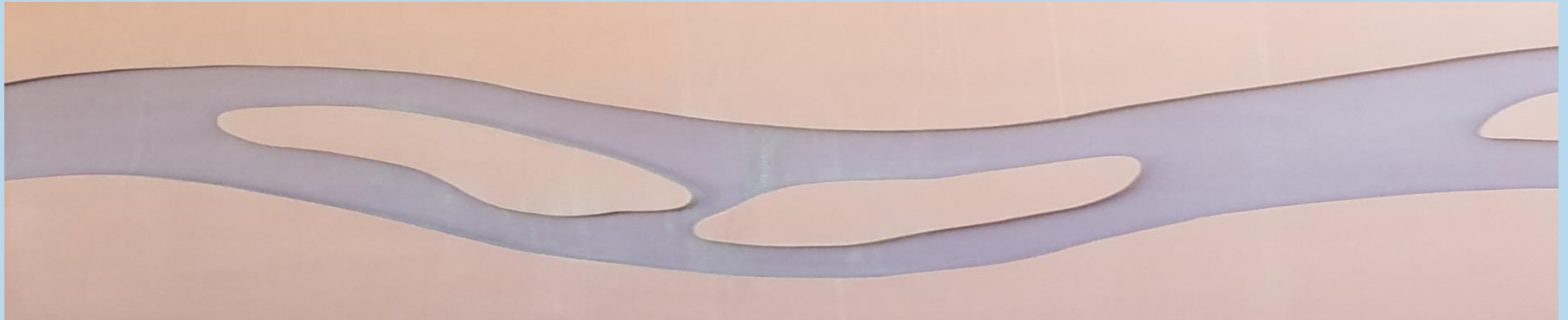


Workshop Outcomes - continued

Consensus Driven

4th, 5th, & 6th workshops (Apr 2018 – Feb 2019)

- Develop a Memorandum of Understanding
- Flow study by USGS was proposed and funded by NDOW, BLM, and BOR



Lessons Learned

- Focus on local participation
- Pull together key people who will commit to organizing and making decisions
- Find the right person to facilitate the process
- Get the right people at the table



Lessons Learned

- Develop an interactive and productive meeting agenda
- Ask decision - makers to attend meetings
- Provide food
- Persistence



Martin Swinehart

Acknowledgements

- **Deborah Campbell - Campbell and Associates**
- **Kristen Jespersen - RiversEdge West**
- **Caryn Wright - Desert Conservation Program**
- **Rob Sutter - Enduring Conservation Outcomes**
- **Nifer Wilkening - US Fish and Wildlife Service**
- **Brian Wooldridge - US Fish and Wildlife Service**
- **Enterprise Foundation**
- **Virgin River Coalition**



Mike Swink



Questions?