

# **Phase I Groundwater Model Refinement**

Nevada Environmental Response Trust Site; Henderson, Nevada

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# <span id="page-3-0"></span>**1 Introduction**

On behalf of the Nevada Environmental Response Trust (the Trust), ENVIRON International Corporation, Inc. (ENVIRON) has prepared this report describing refinements made to the groundwater flow model of the Nevada Environmental Response Trust Site (the Site), located in Clark County, Nevada. The initial purpose of the groundwater model is to support the optimization of the existing groundwater extraction and treatment system (GWETS) at the Site, as described in the 2013 GWETS Optimization Work Plan (ENVIRON 2013b), approved by the Nevada Division of Environmental Protection (NDEP) on December 3, 2013 (NDEP 2013). In addition, the groundwater model will be used to support the remedial investigation and feasibility study (RI/FS), as described in the RI/FS Work Plan (ENVIRON 2014a).

The initial version of the groundwater model for the Site was developed by Northgate Environmental Management Inc. (Northgate) and was approved on April 4, 2013 by NDEP for use in capture zone evaluation and is referred to as the "Northgate Model." The Northgate Model is a steady-state flow model calibrated to Site conditions in 2008/2009, which is documented in the Capture Zone Evaluation Report (Northgate 2010). As described in the 2013 GWETS Optimization Project Work Plan, modifications to the Northgate Model are being implemented by ENVIRON in two phases. The first phase of modifications, which is discussed in this report, includes: 1) an update of the model to reflect more recent conditions and pumping and injection rates of the GWETS, American Pacific Corporation (AMPAC) and Olin/Stauffer/ Syngenta/Montrose (OSSM) remediation systems; 2) preliminary refinement of the model representation of stream-aquifer interactions near Las Vegas Wash; and 3) other changes to the model requested by NDEP or necessary to support the 2013 GWETS Optimization Project. In addition, a conceptual water budget for the model area was developed as part of the first phase activities.

The updated model resulting from this work is referred to as the "Phase I Model". This report documents the updates and refinements to the Northgate Model made to develop the Phase I Model. The components of the Phase I Model that were not modified from the Northgate Model are generally not described in this report since they are described in the Northgate Model documentation (Northgate 2010). The Phase I Model has been used to support the calculation of GWETS performance metrics that are presented in the 2013 Semi-Annual Remedial Performance Report for Perchlorate and Chromium (ENVIRON 2014b).

The second phase of modifications will involve updating and recalibrating the model to incorporate the results of aquifer testing and the conceptual water balance, and further refine the representation of stream-aquifer interactions at Las Vegas Wash. This "Phase II Model" will then be used to evaluate the performance of alternative extraction scenarios at the Site well fields as part of the 2013 GWETS Optimization Project.

# <span id="page-4-0"></span>**2 Site Background**

A brief summary of Site background relevant to the discussion of the groundwater model is provided in this section. A complete background summary is provided in the RI/FS Work Plan (ENVIRON 2014a).

The Site is located within the Las Vegas Valley in the southern region of Clark County, Nevada. Las Vegas Valley is bordered by a set of mountains that includes the Spring Mountains to the west, the Sheep Range and Las Vegas Range to the north, the Frenchman Mountains and Sunrise Mountains to the east, and the River Mountains and McCullough Mountains to the south (Figure 1). The most significant stream in the valley is the Las Vegas Wash, which flows generally from west to east before discharging into Lake Mead. The climate in the area varies from semi-arid in the mountains to arid in the lowlands. Rainfall averages about 4.5 inches per year and occurs in storms of high intensity and short duration that often lead to floods. Evaporation in the area is significant and can be higher than 80 inches per year in the lower portion of the valley (UNLV 2003).

NDEP has defined three water-bearing zones (WBZs) that are of interest in the vicinity of the Site: the Shallow, Middle, and Deep WBZs (NDEP 2009). Groundwater flow occurs predominantly in shallow quaternary alluvium (Qal) which overlies the much lower hydraulic conductivity Upper Muddy Creek formation (UMCf). A distinct paleo-channel drainage network is present in the shallow aquifer system. The ground surface across the Site generally slopes downward to the north. The Shallow WBZ extends to approximately 90 feet below ground surface (bgs), and consists of saturated portions of the Qal and the uppermost portion of the UMCf. The Shallow WBZ is unconfined to partially confined, and is considered the water table aquifer. The groundwater in the shallow aquifer flows to the north and the groundwater gradient generally mimics the surface topography. There is generally an upward vertical gradient from the UMCf to the alluvium. The extraction wells at the Site are screened in the Shallow WBZ.

There are currently three operating extraction wells fields that are associated with the Site: 1) the on-site Interceptor Well Field (IWF) with downgradient barrier wall; 2) the off-site Athens Road Well Field (AWF); and 3) the off-site Seep Well Field (SWF). These well fields are operated to remove perchlorate and hexavalent chromium from shallow groundwater and reduce the amount of perchlorate discharged to Las Vegas Wash. In addition to these well fields, neighboring companies AMPAC and OSSM operate separate groundwater capture systems west of the Site. Groundwater monitoring is being conducted at the Titanium Metals Corporation (TIMET) site, located to the east of the Site. TIMET's groundwater remediation system construction began in 2009 and is expected to be operational in March 2014 (GEI 2014).

# <span id="page-5-0"></span>**3 Previous Groundwater Models**

The Phase I Model is based on the original groundwater flow model developed for the Site by Northgate. The Northgate Model is a steady-state model calibrated to Site conditions existing during 2008/2009 (Northgate 2010). The primary focus of developing the Northgate Model was to carry out capture zone analyses of the IWF and AWF. The Las Vegas Wash in the model is beyond these two regions of interest and was simulated using a constant head boundary for simplicity. Hence, the surface-groundwater interactions that occur along the Las Vegas Wash were not simulated in detail in the model.

The active area of the Northgate Model domain is wedge-shaped, narrowing from south to north towards the Las Vegas Wash and covering an area of about 10,000 acres. From south to north, the model domain extends from south of Lake Mead Parkway to the Las Vegas Wash, an area approximately 20,000 feet (about 4 miles) in total length. Laterally, the model extends west of the Site to include the existing AMPAC and OSSM groundwater capture systems, and east of the Site to include the monitoring wells at the TIMET site. The model is discretized laterally into 200 by 200 foot grid cells. In the vertical direction, the model domain extends downwards from Shallow WBZ, and through the Middle WBZ and ends near the top of the Deep WBZ. These units were discretized vertically into six model layers.

In addition to the Northgate Model, several other groundwater flow models have been developed and documented for the Black Mountain Industrial (BMI) Complex and surrounding region. The subsections below describe groundwater flow models pertinent to the Site.

# <span id="page-5-1"></span>**3.1 United States Geological Survey Model**

A regional groundwater model of the valley-fill aquifer system of the Las Vegas Valley was developed by the United States Geological Survey (USGS) to evaluate possible groundwater management alternatives related to overdraft problems, while maximizing use of groundwater resources (USGS 1996). The model incorporates processes such as land subsidence due to groundwater withdrawal, discharges to washes, evapotranspiration, and springflow. The fourlayered model consists of 60 columns and 72 rows with uniform grid size of 3,000 feet by 3,000 feet. The model was developed in two phases. In the first phase, the predevelopment groundwater conditions, representing a period from 1912 through spring 1972, were simulated. The second phase model simulated the period from summer 1972 through spring 1981, representing development conditions. As a part of the modeling efforts, a conceptual water budget was compiled for the two simulation phases.

# <span id="page-5-2"></span>**3.2 University of Nevada at Las Vegas Model**

A groundwater model to study perchlorate transport from several contaminated sites to the Las Vegas Wash was developed by a team at the University of Nevada at Las Vegas (UNLV) on behalf of the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) (UNLV 2003). The computer model was developed for saturated conditions using the software Visual MODFLOW 2.8 and was calibrated using WinPEST, an automated calibration tool. The model results included an evaluation of the time of travel and potential perchlorate migration pathways from the contaminant sources to the Las Vegas Wash. In addition to the time of travel and

concentration distribution, the transport model also evaluated the influence of domestic and industrial wastewater disposal via the infiltration ponds on the development of the plumes.

# <span id="page-6-0"></span>**3.3 Las Vegas Wash Model**

A groundwater transport model was developed by NDEP to study groundwater/surface water interactions and perchlorate transport along the Las Vegas Wash (McGinley 2003). The purpose of the modeling work was to develop a predictive tool to address temporal distributions of perchlorate in the Las Vegas Wash. MODFLOW was used to simulate groundwater flow, with the Las Vegas Wash simulated using the River Package. Only the alluvium aquifer system was simulated in the model.

# <span id="page-6-1"></span>**3.4 Athens Road Well Field Model**

A solute transport groundwater model was developed by McGinley & Associates to quantify the efficiency of capture at the AWF (McGinley & Associates 2007). The model predicted capture efficiency of 99.5% at the AWF. However, the perchlorate concentration data for downgradient wells did not appear to indicate complete capture was being achieved. The disparity between observations and calculations was attributed to limitations of the conceptual site model developed for the study area.

# <span id="page-6-2"></span>**3.5 Basic Remediation Company Model**

A groundwater transport model for the BMI Common Areas was developed by Daniel B. Stephens & Associates on behalf of the Basic Remediation Company (BRC) (BRC 2009). As part of the modeling effort, historical, present, and future conceptual water balances of the study area were developed. A series of predictive solute transport simulations were also conducted for perchlorate, arsenic, hexavalent chromium, and selenium.

# <span id="page-6-3"></span>**3.6 AMPAC Model**

On behalf of AMPAC, Geosyntec Consultants (Geosyntec) developed a conceptual and numerical model of groundwater flow in the area north of the former Pacific Engineering and Production Company of Nevada (PEPCON) facility in Henderson, Nevada (Geosyntec 2010). A steady-state numerical model was developed to validate the conceptual model against available site data and to develop quantitative estimates of design parameters and operations to remediate the perchlorate plume in groundwater that originates at the PEPCON site. The model was implemented in MODFLOW 2000 and used to simulate saturated groundwater conditions.

# <span id="page-7-0"></span>**4 Conceptual Water Balance**

A conceptual water balance was derived for groundwater within the Phase I Model domain. The model domain is shown on Figure 2. The purpose of the water balance is to provide an independent evaluation of the inflows and outflows of groundwater within the model domain that can be used to guide model refinement. The Phase I Model represents the approximately steady-state period in second quarter of 2012. The conceptual water balance incorporates data from the same time period to allow comparison of water balance components. Vertically, the model domain includes the Shallow and Middle WBZs, but does not include deeper portions of the UMCf.

The methods and data sources for individual water balance components are listed in Table 1a and are described in the following sub-sections.

# <span id="page-7-1"></span>**4.1 Groundwater Outflow**

The major groundwater outflow components in the model area are groundwater extraction, groundwater outflow to the Las Vegas Wash, and evapotranspiration from groundwater, each of which are discussed in this section.

# <span id="page-7-2"></span>**4.1.1 Groundwater Extraction**

Groundwater extraction is presently conducted from five well fields at three sites within the model area: the Site, OSSM, and AMPAC. The total groundwater extraction at these sites was aggregated from available data for second quarter 2012. At the Site, the combined average extraction rates for second quarter 2012 for the IWF, AWF and SWF were 62 gallons per minute (gpm) (12,012 cubic feet per day [cfd]), 275 gpm (52,885 cfd), and 577 gpm (111,018 cfd), respectively (ENVIRON 2012a). The combined average extraction rate for this time period was 148 gpm (29,125 cfd) for the OSSM system (Hargis and Associates, 2012) and 512 gpm (98,560 cfd) for the AMPAC system (AMPAC 2013).

# <span id="page-7-3"></span>**4.1.2 Outflow to Las Vegas Wash**

Since the rate of groundwater discharge from the Site and neighboring areas to the Las Vegas Wash cannot be directly measured, this quantity was indirectly estimated by comparing measured sources of inflows and outfalls along the reach of the Las Vegas Wash that forms the northern model boundary. The data compiled for this estimate includes streamflow data from USGS gauging stations, City of Henderson (COH) treated wastewater outflows, and treated effluent discharge rates from the Site, AMPAC, and TIMET. This data is presented in Table 1b, and the locations of various stream gauge and outfall locations are shown in Figure 1.

For this analysis, the reach of Las Vegas Wash adjoining the model domain was divided into two sub-reaches bounded by USGS stream gauges. Reach A extends from the Las Vegas Wasteway Gauge (#09419679) to the Pabco Road Gauge (#09419700), and includes a tributary of Las Vegas Wash (Duck Creek, #09419696) and inflows from several wastewater outfalls. Reach B extends from the Pabco Road Gauge to the Three Kids Gauge (#09419696). Conceptually, the calculation performed for each sub-reach involved summing all known inflows and outflows of surface water and groundwater. Groundwater inflow to Las Vegas Wash was assumed to be composed of underflow and lateral discharges. Since there was relatively little

precipitation during the water balance period, it was assumed that there was no significant rainfall runoff to Las Vegas Wash. After performing the summation, any missing flow was assumed to originate from groundwater discharges along the length of the sub-reach. The groundwater inflow to each of these sub-reaches was estimated separately, scaled to exclude groundwater inflow to Las Vegas Wash beyond the model boundary, and then summed together for entry into the overall water balance. This calculation did not separately estimate potential seepage from Las Vegas Wash due to pumping at the SWF, instead presenting overall groundwater discharge to Las Vegas Wash as a net outflow.

The streamflow data was downloaded from the  $USGS<sup>1</sup>$  $USGS<sup>1</sup>$  $USGS<sup>1</sup>$  for the above mentioned stream gauge stations. For the second quarter of 2012, the average streamflow during the water balance period was 250 cubic feet per second (cfs) at the Las Vegas Wasteway Gauge, 5.6 cfs at the Duck Creek Gauge, 281 cfs at the Pabco Road Gauge, and 285 cfs at the Three Kids Gauge. The COH wastewater outfall reportedly discharged 14 cfs to Las Vegas Wash during second quarter [2](#page-8-2)012<sup>2</sup>. The AMPAC outfall location is approximately 40-50 yards south of the Site discharge location and reportedly produces effluent at a rate roughly equal to the combined extraction rates from the AMPAC wells<sup>[3](#page-8-3)</sup>. The average Site, AMPAC, and TIMET outfalls to Las Vegas Wash were 2.0 cfs<sup>[4](#page-8-4)</sup>, 1.1 cfs<sup>[5](#page-8-5)</sup>, and 1.0 cfs<sup>6</sup> in second quarter 2012, respectively.

A portion of the streamflow in Las Vegas Wash is lost to evaporation. The total area of Las Vegas Wash (including Duck Creek) is approximately 450 acres between the Las Vegas Wasteway and Pabco Road gauging stations. Available daily evaporation data from 1997-1999 for four stations located in or near Lake Mead indicate an average evaporation rate of 81 inches per year (Westenburg et al. 2006). Multiplying the area of Las Vegas Wash by the evaporation rate results in an estimated 4.2 cfs of surface water evaporated from Las Vegas Wash within the model area. The outflow due to evaporation was allocated to Reaches A and B based on the relative area of each reach.

As shown in Table 1b, after accounting for known and estimated flows, the estimated groundwater inflow to Las Vegas Wash along Reaches A and B from both sides of Las Vegas Wash was 16.1 cfs. Assuming that 80% of the groundwater discharge is from the south side of Las Vegas Wash, there is an estimate groundwater discharge of 8.0 cfs (693,000 cfd) within the model area.

## <span id="page-8-0"></span>**4.1.3 Evapotranspiration From Groundwater**

Evapotranspiration from shallow groundwater may occur in the areas of phreatophytes found along Las Vegas Wash. Given the limited areal extent of phreatophytes, evapotranspiration from groundwater is expected to be very small compared to other water balance components. Hence, no estimate of evapotranspiration was developed for the water balance.

<span id="page-8-4"></span><span id="page-8-3"></span>

<span id="page-8-5"></span>

<span id="page-8-2"></span><span id="page-8-1"></span><sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Data downloaded from http://waterdata.usgs.gov/usa/nwis/sw<br>
<sup>2</sup> Per data received via email from Howard Analla of the City of Henderson, dated 7/09/2013.<br>
<sup>3</sup> Per email communication with Gary Carter of AMPAC, dated 9

<span id="page-8-6"></span> $6$  Based on the maximum permissible flow rate for TIMET's effluent outfall, NPDES Permit number- NV0000060

# <span id="page-9-0"></span>**4.2 Groundwater Inflow**

The major groundwater inflow components in the groundwater model domain are areal recharge, mountain block recharge from the southern edge of the model, seepage from Las Vegas Wash, and vertical inflow from the UMCf.

# <span id="page-9-1"></span>**4.2.1 Areal Recharge From Precipitation**

Areal recharge rate from rainfall was estimated from published values for arid and semi-arid regions, which have been found to range between 0.1% and 5% of average total rainfall (Scanlon et al. 2006). Based on interpolated climate data produced by Oregon State University's PRISM Climate Group (PRISM 2013), the average precipitation rate near the Site was 4.32 inches per year for the period 1990-2012. Assuming 2.55% (average of 0.1% and 5%) of precipitation as net areal recharge, the total areal recharge for the model area (4 X 10<sup>8</sup>) square feet) is expected to be 11,000 cfd.

# <span id="page-9-2"></span>**4.2.2 Recharge from Surface Water Bodies**

Recharge from several surface water bodies in the model domain were evaluated separately and incorporated into the water balance. A significant source of surficial recharge to groundwater is a series of unlined ponds operated by COH as a bird viewing preserve. An average of 1.22 million gallons per day (MGD) of inflow to the ponds was recorded by COH for the period from 2008 to 2013. The ponds have an area of approximately 110 acres. Assuming COH is maintaining a relatively constant level of surface water in the ponds, and assuming an evaporation rate of 81 inches per year (see Section 4.1.2), the recharge from the ponds to the shallow groundwater aquifer is estimated to be 5.6 feet per year. The total pond recharge rate was estimated to be 74,000 cfd.

Several facilities near the Site operate infiltration ponds and trenches that present potential sources of focused recharge. The OSSM treatment system discharges treated groundwater to recharge trenches located north of the OSSM extraction wells (Figure 1). Based on the OSSM third quarter 2012 monitoring report, an average of 147 gpm (29,000 cfd) of water was discharged to the trenches between January and September 2012 (Hargis and Associates 2012). Other historical sources of focused recharge, including the former recharge trenches at the Site, former COH Rapid Infiltration Basins (RIBs), BMI Pond, TIMET Pond, and the AMPAC reinjection system were not active during the Phase I Model period.

# <span id="page-9-3"></span>**4.2.3 Lateral and Vertical Boundary Inflows**

The southern lateral boundary inflow was estimated using the hydraulic conductivity of the UMCf and the head gradient at the southern boundary of the Site. The alluvium is unsaturated along the southern boundary, and the UMCf is partially saturated. Within the water balance domain, the UMCf consists of two distinct interbedded units, composed of either coarse-grained sediments (UMCf-cg) or fine-grained sediments (UMCF-fg) (ENVIRON, 2014a)<sup>[7](#page-9-4)</sup>. Plate 6 of the RI/FS Workplan (ENVIRON 2014a) is a cross-section illustrating the orientation of these units near the southern model boundary. As shown in the Plate 6, the shallowest interval of the UMCf-fg pinches out before reaching the IWF.

<span id="page-9-4"></span> $7$  The Phase I Model doesn't represent the UMCf-fg and UMCf-cg as separate units.

Based on the depiction of the saturated portion of the UMCf-fg and UMCf-cg in Plate 6, 30% of the southern boundary thickness was allocated to the UMCf-fg, and 70% was allocated to the UMCf-cg. The horizontal hydraulic conductivity for the UMCf from the Northgate Model (0.72 feet per day [feet/day]) was used for the UMCf-fg, and the hydraulic conductivity of the UMCf-cg (6 feet/day) was obtained from the AMPAC model (Geosyntec 2010). The horizontal head gradient measured during second quarter 2012 upgradient of the Site boundary was approximately 0.0077 feet per foot (feet/foot) (ENVIRON 2014a). The southern model boundary is 20,000 feet in length and the thickness of UMCf is 267 feet in the model. Using these values, an inflow of approximately 183,000 cfd is expected from the southern boundary.

The vertical boundary inflow consists of upward flow from the deeper portion of the UMCf in the Deep WBZ. The average vertical head gradient between pairs of wells in the IWF and the AWF was about 0.11 feet/foot during second quarter 2012. The well pairs used for this purpose are M-71/M-163, M-74/M-165, PC-135A/PC-134A, and PC-136/PC-137. Using this head gradient, the total surface area of the model, and a representative UMCf vertical conductivity of 4.8  $\times$  10<sup>-3</sup> feet/day, a vertical inflow of approximately 220,000 cfd is expected from the Deep WBZ.

Because the model area is oriented along the general direction of groundwater flow, net inflows and/or outflows along the eastern and western lateral boundaries of the conceptual water balance area are expected to be minimal. However, in the vicinity of Las Vegas Wash, there will be groundwater underflow into the model area on the western boundary and out of the model area on the eastern boundary. These underflows were estimated by roughly estimating the width and depth of saturated alluvium, the hydraulic gradient, and hydraulic conductivity at the model area boundaries. The width of the alluvium was estimated based on the USGS geologic map shown in Figure 1. The depth and hydraulic conductivity of the alluvium were based on McGinley (2003). A hydraulic gradient of 0.005 was assumed for this estimate. The inflow from the western boundary was estimated to be 510,000 cfd, and the outflow at the eastern boundary was estimated to be 31,000 cfd.

# <span id="page-11-0"></span>**5 Phase I Groundwater Model Update**

To support the 2013 GWETS Optimization Project, the Northgate Model was updated to reflect the more recent configuration and extraction and injection rates of the Site, AMPAC, and OSSM remediation systems. A regional water balance was prepared (as discussed in Section 4) to guide further model refinements. An initial evaluation of the stream-aquifer interaction in the vicinity of the SWF was also conducted and the model was updated accordingly. The key model components revised in this phase are described in the following sections.

# <span id="page-11-1"></span>**5.1 Model Solver**

The Northgate Model was developed using an early and unpublished version of the MODFLOW-NWT code. Minor revisions were made to the model so it can be run using MODFLOW-NWT version 1.0.7 (Niswonger 2011), a recent version of the code that is available on the USGS website<sup>[8](#page-11-4)</sup>. MODFLOW-NWT is a version of MODFLOW-2005 with a Newton formulation of the groundwater flow equation that is designed to solve problems that are nonlinear due to unconfined aquifer conditions and/or some combination of nonlinear boundary conditions.

# <span id="page-11-2"></span>**5.2 Model Extent**

The model extent was revised at the northern boundary of the model to more accurately represent Las Vegas Wash. This boundary was revised based on the Las Vegas Stream centerline shape file available at the Clark County Regional Flood Control District (CCRFCD) website<sup>[9](#page-11-5)</sup>. The model boundary was also extended in the northwestern part of the model area to incorporate the Duck Creek tributary stream channel in the simulation. With these changes, the total model area has increased by about 40 acres as compared to the Northgate Model. The revised model extent is shown in Figure 2.

# <span id="page-11-3"></span>**5.3 Selection of Steady-State Time Period**

The Northgate Model was calibrated to Site conditions existing during 2008/2009 (Northgate 2010). A goal of the Phase I Model development was to update the groundwater model to reflect more recent hydrologic and pumping conditions. Groundwater hydrographs and other hydraulic records (rainfall and evaporation rates) were reviewed to identify a relatively stable period to use for steady-state modeling. The data reviewed suggests that steady state groundwater conditions existed at the Site between late 2010 and 2012 (Figure 2a through 2d of the 2013 Semi-Annual Report; ENVIRON 2014b). Higher water levels were measured starting in November 2012 due to higher than average rainfall during fourth quarter 2012 through first quarter 2013. Between April and June 2013, many of the active IWF extraction wells, which are located directly upgradient of the barrier wall, had water levels that were approximately 5 to 15 feet higher than the same period in 2012 (ENVIRON 2013a). Therefore, the Phase I Model was revised to represent the most recent observed steady-state period of second quarter 2012.

<span id="page-11-5"></span><span id="page-11-4"></span> $^8$  Available from http://water.usgs.gov/nrp/gwsoftware/modflow\_nwt/ModflowNwt.html  $^9$  Available from ftp://www.ccrfcd.org/Shapefiles/

## <span id="page-12-0"></span>**5.4 Spatial Discretization and Layer Refinement**

The following refinements were made to the model layer elevations to better represent the Site topography and stratigraphy:

- Model layers 1 and 2 in the Northgate Model, representing the Qal, were combined together in a single layer in the Phase I Model since the saturated thickness of the alluvium is relatively thin throughout the model area. The revised model has five layers, with the top layer representing the Qal and the lower four layers representing the shallow and deeper parts of the UMCf.
- The layer thicknesses of top two layers were adjusted to match the geometry of the slurry wall as discussed in Section 5.7.1. The updated layer thicknesses are given in Table 4.
- The top surface of model layer 1 was updated to use elevation values from the USGS Digital Elevation Model (DEM) for the Site area.
- The Qal and UMCf contact elevation surface was refined by performing an interpolation using LeapFrog Hydro 3D geological modeling software (LeapFrog). The source data used for the interpolation included Qal/UMCf contact elevations reported for more than 1,000 wells within the model domain (McGinley 2014), and geological cross-sections for the Site well fields and other areas within the model domain.<sup>10</sup> The contact elevation was manually adjusted near the UMCf ridge in the AWF area to produce a more realistic surface. The revised contact elevation was then imported into the model as the bottom elevation of layer 1.

The grid size was further refined within the study area boundary around three well fields as shown in Figure 4. The grid was also refined near Las Vegas Wash to more accurately simulate surface water-groundwater interaction.

### <span id="page-12-1"></span>**5.5 Areal Recharge**

The Northgate Model has spatially distributed recharge rates assigned to different areas based on land use. These land use areas were retained in the Phase I Model and are shown in Figure 3.

The areal recharge rates for residential, industrial, undeveloped, and golf course areas selected by Northgate were not changed in the Phase I Model update. Recharge rates that have been updated include:

• Based on the calculations described in Section 4.2.2, an estimated recharge of 5.61 feet/year was applied to the area of the COH Bird Viewing Preserve in the Phase I Model. This estimated value is higher than the recharge rate of 2.43 X 10<sup>-3</sup> feet per day or 0.9 feet per year (Appendix E, Table 1E, Northgate 2010) used in the Northgate Model to represent recharge from these ponds.

<span id="page-12-2"></span><sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Particular cross sections incorporated in the interpolation included: Plate 6 from the RI/FS Workplan (ENVIRON, 2012b); Plates 3, 4 and 5 from the 2012 Annual Remedial Performance Report (ENVIRON 2013a); cross-sections presented in the geophysical investigation of Las Vegas Wash (McGinley 2003); and Figure 4-8 of the BRC Closure Plan (BRC 2007) .

- Additional recharge of 0.01 feet/day was assigned in the areas of unlined storm water retention ponds on the Site. It was assumed that 75% of the rainfall falling on the Site will become recharge. No recharge was applied in the lined pond areas around the IWF.
- The former on-site recharge trenches, former COH RIBs, BMI Pond, TIMET Pond, the AMPAC reinjection system are inactive; therefore, no focused recharge is applied in those locations in the Phase I Model.
- The OSSM remediation system discharges treated groundwater to recharge trenches located north of the OSSM extraction wells (Figure 2). Based on the OSSM third quarter 2012 monitoring report, an average of 147 gpm (29,125 cfd) of water was discharged to the trenches from Jan-Sept 2012 (Hargis and Associates 2012). The model was updated to incorporate this recharge rate.

The spatial distribution of recharge rates in the Phase I Model is shown on Figure 3 and listed in Table 2. These preliminary recharge rates may be revised during the next phase of model calibration, as needed.

## <span id="page-13-0"></span>**5.6 Changes to the GWETS and Other Extraction Systems**

The Phase I Model was updated to use the available second quarter 2012 extraction and injection rates for on-site and off-site wells. The combined average extraction rates for second quarter 2012 for the IWF, AWF and SWF were 62 gpm (12,012 cfd), 275 gpm (52,885 cfd) and 577 gpm (111,018 cfd), respectively. The combined average extraction rate for the OSSM wells was 148 gpm (29,125 cfd) (Hargis and Associates 2012). The on-site recharge trenches downgradient of the IWF were no longer in use in 2012. The total injection of treated water through OSSM recharge trenches was assumed to be equal to the OSSM combined pumping rate of 148 gpm (29,125 cfd).

For the AMPAC extraction system, the combined average extraction rate for all wells, shown in Figure 2, was 512 gpm for the Phase I Model period (AMPAC 2013). The AMPAC injection wells that were active in the Northgate Model are no longer in use and so are inactive in the revised model. Five new AMPAC extraction wells (AMEW wells) were constructed in the first quarter of 2012. These wells are not active in the revised model because they are screened in a coarse-grained UMCf that is not currently represented in the model. The total AMPAC extraction initially configured in the model is about 237 gpm (46,000 cfd). It is unknown whether this system rate is sustainable over the long-term. Hence, the AMPAC wells were configured in the model to allow extraction to reduce automatically based on the water level at each pumping well. The final modeled flow rate for the AMPAC system is presented in the water balance in Table 5.

The extraction well screen elevations were adjusted based on the revised model layers as discussed in Section 5.4 of this report. The locations of a few wells in the IWF were revised based on the updated coordinates provided by McGinley and Associates (McGinley 2014). The revised extraction rates applied to the Phase I Model are listed in Table 3. The overall extraction rates in the revised model are similar to the Northgate Model.

# <span id="page-14-0"></span>**5.7 Hydraulic Properties**

The hydraulic properties of the slurry wall and the alluvium aquifer layer were revised in the Phase I model. The effective porosities of the aquifer material were also updated in the model based on available values.

## <span id="page-14-1"></span>**5.7.1 IWF Barrier Wall**

The conductivity of the hydraulic flow barrier (barrier wall), located immediately north of the IWF, was revised based on the reported hydraulic conductivity value of the material used to construct the wall by Vector Engineering. The reported range of conductivities used during construction was  $4.7 \times 10^{-8}$  centimeters per second (cm/sec) to  $8.0 \times 10^{-7}$  cm/sec (Vector 2001). This range is similar to the average hydraulic conductivity measured by permeability testing of the barrier wall at four locations of  $8.8 \times 10^{-7}$  cm/sec, as reported in the Capture Zone Evaluation Report (Northgate 2010). For modeling purposes, the value of  $4.7 \times 10^{-8}$  cm/sec was used to represent the barrier wall's hydraulic conductivity.

According to the conceptual site model developed by ENSR International Corporation (ENSR), the slurry wall is about 1,600 feet long, 3 feet wide, and 60 feet deep, and was constructed to tie into approximately 30 feet of UMCf (ENSR 2005). The layer thicknesses were adjusted in the Phase I Model to accurately represent the slurry wall configuration.

# <span id="page-14-2"></span>**5.7.2 Hydraulic Conductivity Distribution**

The hydraulic conductivity distribution in the Phase I Model is mostly unchanged from the Northgate Model. The horizontal and vertical hydraulic conductivities for layers representing the UMCf were not changed. For layer 1 (Qal), areas adjoining Las Vegas Wash were updated with horizontal conductivity values ranging between 250 to 485 feet/day. A horizontal-to-vertical anisotropy ratio of 10:1 was used to define the vertical hydraulic conductivity in the area near Las Vegas Wash. The hydraulic conductivity zones were adjusted to extend the paleochannels in model layer 1 up to the Las Vegas Wash. The hydraulic conductivity values for paleochannels were kept unchanged.

In the area of UMCf ridge in the AWF, the conductivity value of layer 1 was modified to match that of layer 2 since there the alluvium is not saturated in this area. The horizontal hydraulic conductivity values remained unchanged for the remainder of the Qal. The spatial distribution of hydraulic conductivity values in the alluvial aquifer is shown on Figure 4.

# <span id="page-14-3"></span>**5.7.3 Aquifer Porosity**

The effective porosities were modified for all model layers in order to produce accurate estimates of groundwater velocities and particle travel times. In the Northgate Model, the porosities for the Qal and UMCf aquifers were set to 0.4 and 0.54, respectively. For the Phase I Model, the Qal layer was set to have a uniform porosity of 0.1, which is the same value used in the UNLV and BRC Models (see Section 3). The effective porosity of layers representing the UMCf was reduced to 0.2, consistent with the value used in the BRC Model and similar to the value used in the UNLV Model (0.25).

# <span id="page-15-0"></span>**5.8 Boundary Conditions**

The groundwater model has lateral inflows from the upgradient (southern) boundary and vertical inflow from the bottom boundary of the model. These inflow components were revised as described in the following sections.

## <span id="page-15-1"></span>**5.8.1 Vertical Inflows from Bottom Boundary**

The vertical inflow from the bottom boundary is simulated in the model using the general head boundary (GHB) package. The Northgate Model included an area of downward flow from the Qal to UMCf near the downgradient area of the Las Vegas Wash. Since there are no definitive data that show vertically downward flow from the Qal to the UMCf anywhere in the model area, the area of downward flow was removed from the Phase I Model.

The GHB reference heads were refined in certain areas of the Phase I Model to match observed vertical head differences measured at well clusters. It was assumed that these head differences vary along the general direction of groundwater flow, but not transverse to groundwater flow. Near the IWF, the reference heads were revised using the measured head differences between well pairs M-135/M-161 and M-71/M-162, where a vertical head difference of about 11 feet was measured in second quarter 2012. Near the AWF, well pair PC-136/PC-137 showed a vertical head difference of about 2.4 feet measured in second quarter 2012. For areas between the IWF and AWF, the vertical head difference between the alluvium and UMCf was interpolated from values determined from well clusters at the IWF and AWF. This linear relationship was also extrapolated to estimate the head differences in the model domain to the north and south of these well fields. The estimated head difference at each model location was then subtracted from the water table surface from second quarter 2012 to determine the reference head. The resulting reference heads in the Phase I Model now range from 1906 feet at the southernmost boundary to 1530 feet at the northernmost boundary. A constant GHB conductance value of 0.0636 square feet per day was assigned throughout the model domain.

## <span id="page-15-2"></span>**5.8.2 Lateral Boundary Inflows**

The upgradient boundary inflows were not changed except for the addition of extra inflows in several cells added to the model due to grid refinement as discussed in Section 5.4. The boundary inflows may be adjusted during the next phase of model calibration.

# <span id="page-15-3"></span>**5.8.3 Model Boundary near Las Vegas Wash**

In the Northgate Model, the downgradient model boundary at Las Vegas Wash was simulated using constant head cells. As part of the Phase I Model update, this boundary is now implemented with the MODFLOW Stream Package (Prudic 1989). The Stream Package is intended for modeling stream-aquifer interactions, and can be used to simulate the flow entering and exiting the model domain through Las Vegas Wash.

As described in Section 5.2, the geometry of Las Vegas Wash has been updated in the Phase I Model to align with the centerline of Las Vegas Wash (Figure 5). To implement the Stream Package, the stream stage elevations along Las Vegas Wash were interpolated from the average stream stages recorded in 2012 for the three USGS gauging stations shown in Figure 6. The streambed elevations were interpolated from the streambed elevation profiles given in

the Flood Insurance Study Report, Clark County, Nevada (FEMA 2011b). The interpolated streambed elevations along the northernmost model boundary are also shown on Figure 6.

The other important inputs required for the stream boundary were the stream width, thickness of streambed, stream length in each boundary cell, streambed conductivity, and the net flow of surface water entering at each segment of the stream boundary. The stream length within each boundary cell is the actual length of the stream falling in the individual model cell. A uniform stream width of 50 feet was used in the model. The streambed conductivity range of 0.05 feet/day to 0.55 feet/day was used in the model, with lower values in the upstream portion above the Duck Creek confluence. The stream in this area is braided and the streambed is expected to have lower conductivity. The higher conductivity values were applied in the downstream portion of Las Vegas Wash. The streambed conductivity values may be revised during the next phase of model calibration.

Four segments of Las Vegas Wash are simulated in the model. The main segment (Segment #1) extends across the entire downgradient model boundary. Three minor segments that flow to Las Vegas Wash are also simulated, including Duck Creek (Segment # 2), a small tributary stream carrying surface water discharges near Pabco Road (Segment # 3), and the C-1 Channel (Segment # 4) (Figure 5). The inflows entering each stream segment were estimated from various measured sources of discharge to Las Vegas Wash, including streamflow data from USGS gauging stations, COH treated wastewater outflows, and effluent discharge rates from the Site, AMPAC, and TIMET outfalls.

The Las Vegas Wasteway and Duck Creek stream gauges are located upstream of the model boundary, and recorded average streamflows of 250 and 5.6 cfs, respectively, for second quarter 2012. The average rate of COH treated water discharge to Las Vegas Wash was 14 cfs (obtained from COH via e-mail) during the second quarter 2012. The average Site, AMPAC and TIMET outfalls to the Las Vegas Wash were 2.0 cfs, 1.1 cfs and <1 cfs respectively for 2012. For Segment # 3, a combined flow of 16.6 cfs from Site, AMPAC, TIMET, and COH was assigned.

The reported average streamflow at the Pabco Road gauging station for second quarter 2012 was approximately 281 cfs. This value was not used as input to the model, but may be used for calibrating boundary parameter values during the future calibration phase.

# <span id="page-17-0"></span>**6 Model Results**

To evaluate the model calibration, the head targets from the Northgate Model were updated with measured groundwater elevation data from the second quarter of 2012. In addition to the 263 targets from the Northgate Model, data from an additional 193 targets were added to the Phase I Model to increase the calibration dataset<sup>[11](#page-17-3)</sup> (Figure 7). There are 12 target locations in the Northgate model that fall in the same cells as the additional targets. These 12 targets were deleted in the Phase I Model. The revised list of target wells and their groundwater elevations for second quarter 2012 is provided in Appendix A. The measured groundwater elevations were also presented in the 2012 Annual Performance Report (ENVIRON 2012a).

# <span id="page-17-1"></span>**6.1 Modeled Groundwater Balance**

Table 5 presents a comparison of the major flow components of the conceptual water balance to the Northgate Model and updated Phase I Model. These models simulate different extraction and other boundary conditions. Although the water balances are not directly comparable, they provide confirmation that the major model flow components remain generally similar after the changes made for the Phase I Model update.

A significant difference between the Northgate Model and Phase I Model results is the net outflow to Las Vegas Wash from the model area. This outflow increased by 54,000 cfd in the Phase I Model. The difference may be attributed to the modified stream stage elevations which are about 10 feet higher in the Phase I Model, as compared to the constant head boundary cells in the Northgate Model.

As previously mentioned, the Phase I Model is configured to allow reduced extraction to avoid dewatered conditions. The initial total AMPAC pumping input to the model (46,000 cfd) was automatically reduced by the solver to 33,000 cfd. The conceptual water balance incorporates all AMPAC extraction within the boundary during the second quarter of 2012, including extraction from the deep UMCf wells, and is therefore a higher number (99,000 cfd).

Table 5 demonstrates that the Phase I Model has increased inflow to groundwater due to infiltration from the COH Bird Viewing Preserve, relative to the Northgate Model. This change results from increasing the infiltration rate from 0.8 to 5.6 feet/year. Primarily due to higher heads near the stream boundary, there is also an increase in groundwater outflow due to evapotranspiration in the Phase I Model.

# <span id="page-17-2"></span>**6.2 Calibration Statistics and Simulated Groundwater Elevations**

Figure 8 shows a plot characterizing the match between modeled and observed heads at wells used as calibration targets. The plot illustrates that there is generally good agreement between modeled and observed heads, with points generally falling close to the 1:1 correlation line. The simulated heads appear to be biased low near the upgradient model boundary, particularly in layer 5. This deviation will be addressed when the upgradient boundary is recalibrated for the

<span id="page-17-3"></span> $11$  The groundwater elevations for the extra target wells were obtained from data files received from APMAC, TIMET, and OSSM via email in August 2012.

Phase II Model. No other global bias in the modeled heads is evident. The "goodness-of-fit"  $R^2$ value is 0.98, demonstrating an acceptable fit to the observed heads.

Table 6 provides a comparative summary of calibration statistics for the Northgate Model and updated Phase I Model. A positive residual mean value indicates that the simulated heads are lower than the observed heads. The calibration statistics for the Phase I Model have been presented for both the original set of target wells from the Northgate Model, and the 444 observation wells in the updated target list. However, the results with different target sets and from different calibration periods are not directly comparable.

Figure 9 shows the simulated heads in the Shallow WBZ. The overall heads are generally consistent with the contoured groundwater elevations for second quarter 2012 presented in Plate 2 in the 2012-2013 Annual Performance Report (ENVIRON 2012a).

# **7 Conclusions**

The Phase I Model reasonably simulates groundwater conditions at the Site and can be used to begin evaluating the performance of the GWETS. Upon completion of the aquifer testing program of the 2013 GWETS Optimization Project, the Phase I Model will be recalibrated and verified against the field data and aquifer testing results. In the recalibration phase, the hydraulic parameters of the Site geologic materials will be updated, as needed. The calibration may also require adjusting other parameter values and boundary conditions to improve the overall accuracy of the model. The conceptual water balance will be used to guide model development.

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**Tables**

#### **TABLE 1A: CONCEPTUAL WATER BALANCE SUMMARY**

**Nevada Environmental Response Trust Site**

**Henderson, Nevada**



#### **Notes:**

cfd = cubic feet per day AMPAC = American Pacific Corporation UMCF = Upper Muddy Creek Formation COH = City of Henderson IWF = Interceptor Well Field

AWF = Athens Road Well Field

SWF = Seep Well Field

NA = Not Applicable Next Association of the New Applicable NERT = Nevada Environmental Response Trust NE = Not Evaluated OSSM = Olin Chlor-Alkali/Stauffer/Syngenta/Montrose

## **TABLE 1B: GROUNDWATER INFLOWS AND OUTFLOWS AT LAS VEGAS WASH**

**Nevada Environmental Response Trust Site Henderson, Nevada**

#### *Flows along Reach A (Las Vegas Wasteway to Pabco Road)*





### **TABLE 1B: GROUNDWATER INFLOWS AND OUTFLOWS AT LAS VEGAS WASH**

**Nevada Environmental Response Trust Site**

**Henderson, Nevada**

#### *Flows along Reach B (Pabco Road to Three Kids)*







#### **Notes**

 $cfs = cubic$  feet per second  $cfd = cubic$  feet per day

[a] Assumes: 80% of groundwater discharge is from the south side of Las Vegas Wash; 71% of Reach A is within model domain; and 48 % of Reach B is within model domain.

### **TABLE 2: PHASE I GROUNDWATER MODEL - AREAL RECHARGE DISTRIBUTION**

**Nevada Environmental Response Trust**

#### **Henderson, Nevada**



#### **Notes:**

ft/d = feet per day

COH = City of Henderson

NERT = Nevada Environmental Response Trust

RIB = Rapid Infiltration Basin

TIMET = Titanium Metals Corporation

Residential areas, industrial areas, and recharge from Tuscany Golf Course were not revised from the Northgate Model (Northgate 2010).

# **TABLE 3: GROUNDWATER EXTRACTION RATES - SECOND QUARTER 2012 Nevada Environmental Response Trust Site**

**Henderson, Nevada**



## **TABLE 3: GROUNDWATER EXTRACTION RATES - SECOND QUARTER 2012 Nevada Environmental Response Trust Site**

**Henderson, Nevada**



#### **Notes:**

cfd = cubic feet per day

AMPAC = American Pacific Corporation

OSSM = Olin Chlor-Alkali/Stauffer/Sygenta/Montrose

NERT = Nevada Environmental Response Trust

AMPAC's AMEW wells are not simulated in the model

### **TABLE 4: PHASE I GROUNDWATER MODEL LAYERS**

### **Nevada Environmental Response Trust**

### **Henderson, Nevada**



#### **Notes:**

 $ft = feet$ 

UMCf = Upper Muddy Creek Formation

#### **TABLE 5: MODELED WATER BALANCE SUMMARY**

#### **Nevada Environmental Response Trust Site**

**Henderson, Nevada**



#### **Notes:**

IWF = Interceptor Well Field

AWF = Athens Road Well Field

SWF = Seep Well Field

cfd = cubic feet per day AMPAC = American Pacific Corporation UMCF = Upper Muddy Creek Formation NERT = Nevada Environmental Response Trust NE = Not Evaluated OSSM = Olin Chlor-Alkali/Stauffer/Syngenta/Montrose

## **TABLE 6: CALIBRATION STATISTICS**

**Nevada Environmental Response Trust Site Henderson, Nevada**

<b>Parameters</b>	<b>Northgate Model</b>	<b>Phase I</b> (Northgate Targets)	<b>Phase I Model</b> (Revised Targets)
Residual Mean (RM) in feet	1.76	$-0.58$	0.02
<b>RMS</b> Error	7.61	7.82	8.55
<b>Residual Standard Deviation</b>	7.40	7.80	8.55
Range of Observations	285.84	286.23	310.17
<b>Residual Sum of Squares</b>	1.52 $\times$ 10 <sup>4</sup>	1.54 $\times$ 10 <sup>4</sup>	$3.25 \times 10^{4}$
Number of Observations	263	251	444

# **Figures**



**LOCATION MAP** Nevada Environmental Response Trust Site Henderson, Nevada  $\begin{array}{ccc} 0 & \ \\ \text{Nevac} & \ \\ \text{Date:} & \ \\ 2/28/2014 & \ \end{array}$ 





 $\Omega$ 

1.25 2.5 Miles

# **C** ENVIRON

# **EXPLANATION A USGS Stream Gauge Station City Of Henderson -Outfall O** NERT/AMPAC/TIMET Outfall NERT Property Boundary Study Area  $-$  Fault Lines Geological Map Reference: E.C.Bingler, 1977, Geologic Map of the Las Vegas SE Quadrangle, Nevada: Nevada Bureau of Mines and Geology Map 3Ag, 1:24,000 scale Modern wash deposits **Geology** Permian **Quaternary Tertiary** Triassic

Bell, J.W., 1980, Geologic Map of the Henderson Quadrangle, Nevada: Nevada Bureau of Mines and Geology Map 67, 1:24,000 scale

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NERT = Nevada Environmental Response Trust

# **Appendix A**

**Model Target Groundwater Elevations**





















**Nevada Environmental Response Trust Site Henderson, Nevada**



#### **Notes:**

ft amsl = feet above mean sea level

Group 1: Observation Wells are the same as those listed in the Northgate model (Northgate 2010)

Group 2: Additional observation wells data for second quarter 2012

Highlighted wells have groundwater elevations from Northgate model.

Easting and northing location data and mid screen elevations are compiled from All Well Database (McGinley 2012).