

Q1 Bond Money Put to Good Use

By Joe Doucette

In November of 2002, Nevada voters approved Question 1, an initiative spearheaded by The Nature Conservancy with support from numerous state agencies, county governments, and conservation organizations; to provide monies for parks, clean water and wildlife habitat.

The passage of Question 1 authorized the state to issue up to \$200 million in general obligation bonds for projects to protect and preserve natural resources across Nevada. The Nevada Department of Wildlife's (NDOW) portion was \$27.5 million and is extremely important for Nevada's wildlife resources and has been used to support wildlife related projects, as well as to enhance state-owned wildlife facilities, which will ultimately benefit all Nevadans.

"As of the summer of 2008, \$21 million worth of Q1 bonds have been sold with most of the proceeds having already been spent or allocated for projects around the state," explains Laura Richards, NDOW Diversity Division Chief and coordinator of Q1 projects for NDOW. "Projects funded by the bond include fencing to protect riparian areas, acquisition of crucial mule deer winter range, restoration of wildland fire damaged sagebrush habitat, bat gates on abandoned mines, hatchery refurbishment and many more, too numerous to list."

Recently, NDOW completed acquisition of 4,161 acres of the Izzenhood property in Elko and Lander counties using Q1 bond funds combined with mining mitigation money. "The Izzenhood is the most critical mule deer winter range in Area 6 that will benefit not only the Area 6 mule deer herd, but pronghorn antelope, pygmy rabbits, sage sparrows and other sage brush dependent species," says Ken Gray, NDOW Big Game Biologist. "We have lost more than 80% of the Area 6 winter range and ensuring that this piece of property is available for mule deer is critical to the herd."

In a joint acquisition with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (USFWS) Stillwater National Wildlife Refuge, NDOW partnered to acquire 40 acres of water rights to be transferred to Carson Lake Wetlands in Churchill County. This project will protect and enhance important habitat for fish and wildlife, particularly habitat for waterfowl, shorebirds and wading birds. Carson Lake is an internationally important area for shorebird migration and is a nationally important area for numerous species of waterfowl and wading birds.

The Lockes Ranch in Nye County which is one of only two locations supporting endemic populations of springfish, was recently purchased by NDOW to help conserve the threatened Railroad Valley springfish. NDOW purchased the 430 acres that make up the ranch in 2005 and is currently working with federal and state partners to implement restoration actions at several of the spring systems to maximize conservation benefits for the springfish and other endemic wildlife species, using State Wildlife Grant funds, USFWS Section 6 Endangered Species Act Grant funds and Question 1 Bond funds.

"These are examples of how NDOW has made the most of its Q1 money by partnering with other agencies and organizations to give wildlife and Nevada residents the best value for the money spent," says Richards. "By partnering, we can combine Q1 funds with other available grants and private money, allowing us to acquire, improve and rehabilitate even more habitat for wildlife."

These are just a few of the more than 40 major projects that have been or are being funded using Question 1 money. With the help of dedicated biologists and employees, input from the public and hard work by volunteers, the state's Question 1 Bond Fund is successfully being used to help Nevada's wildlife.

