

WALKER CANYON FLOOD

DECEMBER 31, 1996 - JANUARY 5, 1997

Photos Courtesy of the Mono County
Sheriff's Office

Walker River, Mono County

The early January 1997 storm, combined with snowmelt from up to 9,000 feet elevation, caused record flows in the West Walker River in Mono County. Stream gages above and below the town of Walker were washed out after recording near-100-year flows. The eventual peak flow rate was estimated around a 200-year flood. The runoff removed much of the earth and rock from the narrow floodplain in the Walker Canyon, above the town. Of ten miles of Highway 395 in the canyon, six miles were severely damaged and impassable.

As the record flows reached Walker, sediment filled the channel and caused the river to carve multiple channels through the town. The west approach fill of the Eastside Lane bridge on Highway 395 at the upper end of the community was washed away and allowed the river to bypass the bridge. Extensive damage was sustained downstream. Thirty-four houses were destroyed as the stream undercut many of them, and 69 others were damaged, some left hanging over one of the new channels. Damage extended to a mobile home park a mile downstream, destroying six homes and damaging ten more.

The Corps, under emergency flood fight provisions of PL 84-99, DWR, and the federal Bureau of Land Management contributed to the three-week effort to re-channel and stabilize the river from the canyon mouth through Walker to the mobile home park. By January 29, the channel was restored to its previous capacity.

Topaz Lake, Mono County

Topaz Lake is a scenic off-stream storage reservoir for the Walker River Irrigation District. Water is diverted from the West Walker River about 14 miles downstream of the town of Walker to serve agriculture in Smith Valley, Nevada. Diverted water enters the lake from the south and can be routed northeasterly back to the river. In 1997, the high flows deposited large quantities of sediment in the river channel below the diversion structures which had been damaged by previous floods and never repaired. River flows bypassed an existing dike and entered the diversion channel, and flooding occurred downstream in the city of Yerington, Nevada.

Local Perspective:

Above Average Snowfall beginning in the late Fall of 1996

Warm Weather System Coupled With Rain Up to 10,000 Feet in Elevation Near New Year's Eve

Warm Weather persisted for approximately Four Days Increasing the Snowpack Melt

The Rains Continued During This Period to Further Melt the Snowpack

Additional Impacts:

USMC MWTC - Housing in Coleville, Ca The Base for Active Duty Marines on CA HWY 108

CA HWY 108 - Loss of Sonora Bridge

Town of Bridgeport - Moderate Flooding Along US HWY 395 and the East Walker River

Bridge Damage at East Side Road and US HWY 395 (January 3, 1997)



Eastside Road and US HWY 395



Aerial Overview of Eastside Road at US HWY 395



West Walker River Upstream of Hazel's Hole (January 2, 1997)



US HWY 395 South of Walker, California



Aerial Overview of the Southern Portion of Antelope Valley



Walker, California Near Meadow Drive (Currently)



US HWY 395 1 mile south of Walker, California



US HWY 395 at Hazel's Hole



Walker Canyon US HWY 395 North of Chris Flats Campground



Highway Damage US HWY 395



Flood Damage Nobel Property Walker, California



Structure Damage form Erosion



Mountain Gate Lodge



Mountain Gate Lodge South of Walker, California



Mountain Gate Lodge Walker, California (DESTROYED)



Mountain Gate Lodge Looking South



Mountain Gate Lodge Looking Northeast



Mountain Gate Lodge



Mountain Gate Lodge Alongside US HWY 395

