

Mudface.net
 Biodiversity at the Las Vegas Wash
 Student Instruction Sheet

The Las Vegas Wash was once a perennial desert wash, which filled with rainwater during late winter storms, late summer monsoons and other flooding events. Now, because of increasing development and rising human populations in the Las Vegas Valley, the wash has become a year-round river. As the increasing population requires more and more water, the wash must be able to carry higher volumes of urban runoff, shallow groundwater, stormwater, and treated wastewater down through the valley and back into Lake Mead. The wash is very important to humans and to native wildlife, offering recreational opportunities and food, shelter, and habitat for wildlife.

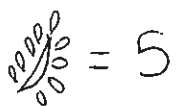
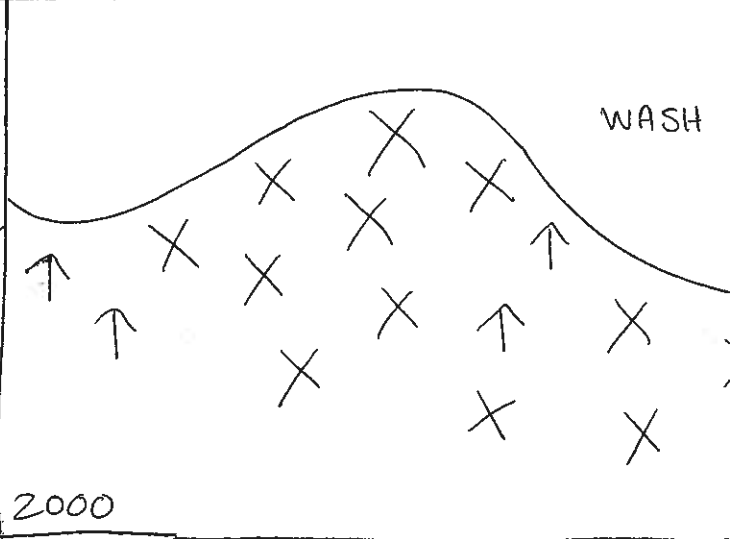
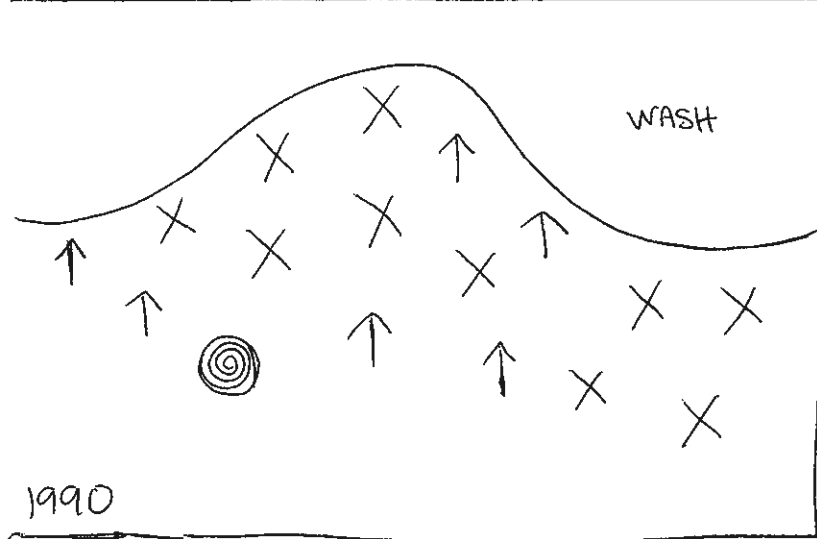
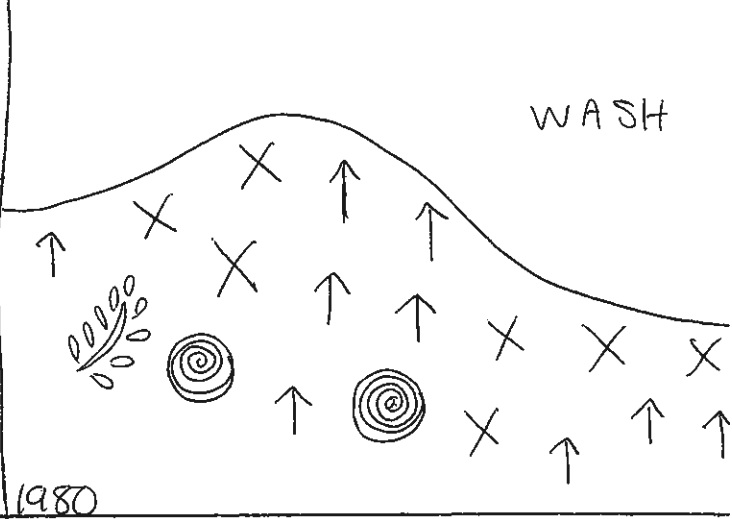
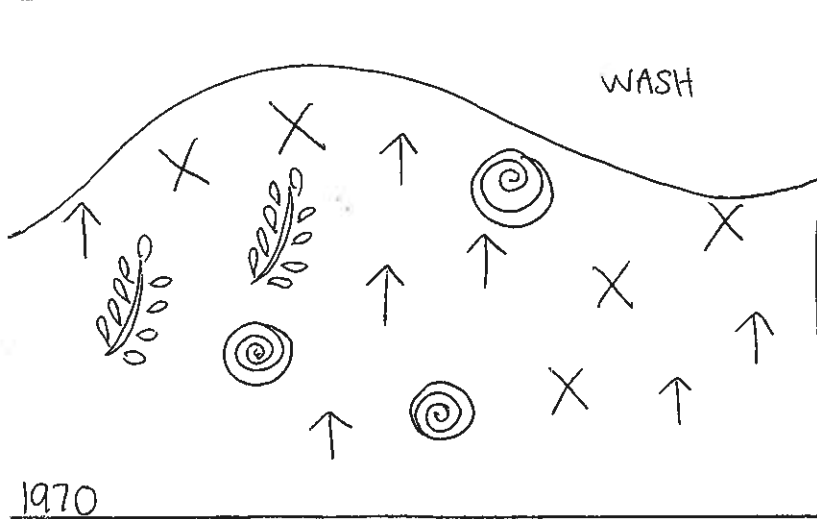
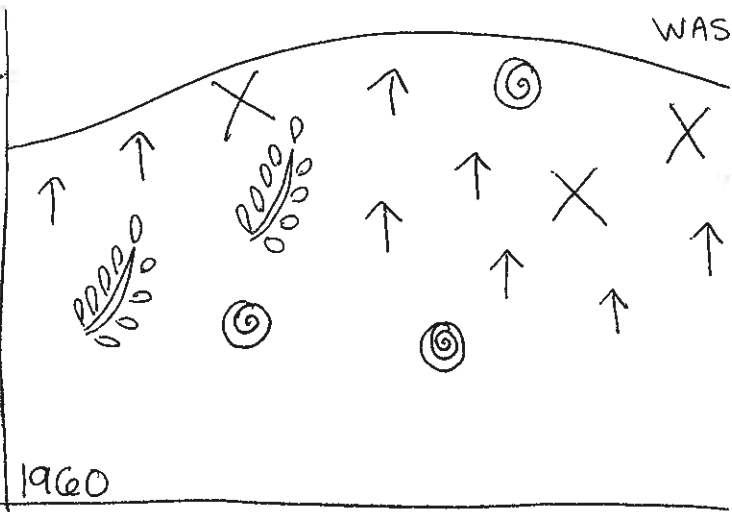
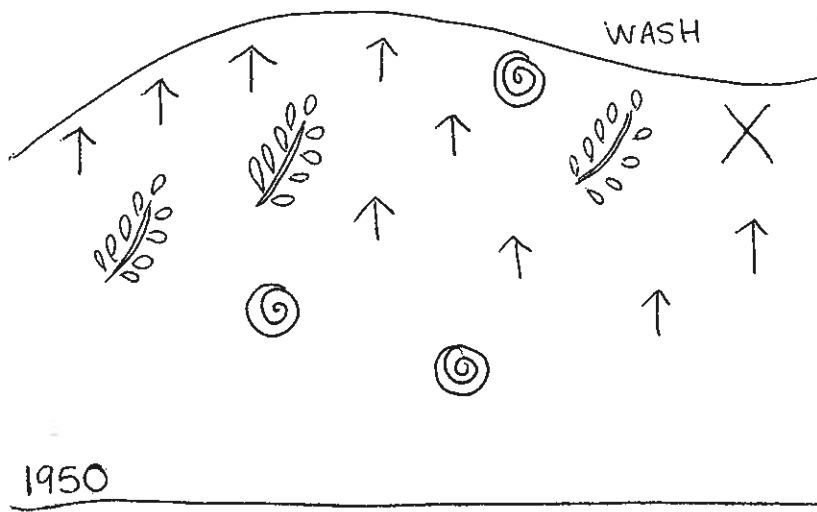
One invader threatens the biodiversity of the wash: the invasive Tamarisk tree. It crowds out native plants, creates super-salty soil, grows in dense monocultures and decreases the variety of habitat available for wildlife and birds.

You have been hired on as a restoration practitioner in charge of evaluating a site at the wash for restoration needs. There are 6 aerial drawings of the site for 1950 through year 2000. For each 10-year drawing of the site, list the number of plants growing there for each plant species. Record their numbers in the table below.

Plant Name	Year 1950	Year 1960	Year 1970	Year 1980	Year 1990	Year 2000
Arrow weed						
Desert Broom						
Mesquites						
Tamarisk						

- Describe what has happened to the biodiversity of the site over time? How has it changed?

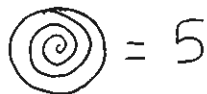
- Which plant has become dominant?



Mesquites

↑ = 20

Arrow weed



Desert Broom

X = 10

Tamarisk