City of Moab Water Conservation Plan Section on Matheson Wetlands:

Matheson Wetlands:

The Matheson Wetland is a unique and rare wetland in the American Southwest along the Colorado River. The wetlands are not incorporated into the City of Moab’s town limits but they are sandwiched between the City of Moab and the Colorado River. They are affected by the City of Moab and the entire Mill/Pack Creek hydrobasins surface and groundwater practices. The wetlands are owned by the State of Utah Department of Natural Resources and The Nature Conservancy in approximately 50/50 split. The Wetlands are co-managed by the same two agencies.

The wetlands have had difficulty maintaining hydric vegetation during the previous two decades due to several anthropogenic and natural impacts. Climate change and drought have reduced the regularity of high seasonal flows in the Colorado that would flood the wetlands. Mill Creek historically provided some surface water and maintained the groundwater table but currently it is entrenched and several feet below the surface area of the wetlands. Increased domestic use of springs on the North West portion of the valley has also altered the water budget. There is also some concern that decreases in the fresh water layer by any of the previously stated means could affect the level of the brine layer under the fresh water layer and allow it to reach the surface or leach to the Colorado River.

This conservation plan suggests that the City of Moab support the wetland monitoring plan being developed by the State of Utah Division of Water Rights and management agencies of the wetlands. It is further suggested that the City of Moab and other Spanish Valley institutions pursue stormwater management plans the slow water down as opposed to diverting directly to Mill and Pack Creek.