

# Virgin River Confluence Project Phase I & II



**Description:** The confluence of the Virgin River with Ash and LaVerkin Creeks occurs in a unique and dramatic canyon of cottonwood and willows framed by black basalt cliffs. Cindercone and sandstone hills stand juxtaposed in tribute to the powerful forces of the Hurricane Fault which shaped the Hurricane Valley many thousands of years ago. The parcel lends itself to educational programming opportunities which highlight geology, history, and riparian biology.

**Location:** The Confluence Project encompasses over 550 acres of varied terrain with approximately 3.5 miles of riparian frontage on the main stem of the Virgin River and two of its tributaries—Ash and LaVerkin Creeks. The project is located in Washington County, Utah.

**Acreage:** Phase I - 125 acres  
Phase II - 405

**Grant funding:** Phase I - \$500,000  
Phase II - \$500,000

**Total Project Cost:** Phase I - \$2,124,000  
Phase II - \$1,950,000

**Grant awarded:** Phase I - May 2000  
Phase II - November 2001

**Partners:** Virgin River Land Preservation Association, The Conservation Fund, National Fish and Wildlife, and Washington Co.

**Local Support:** Rep. Dennis H. Iverson, Rep. J. W. (Bill) Hickman, Rep. Stephen Urquhart, Mayor Douglas Garner, Hurricane City, Mayor Douglas Wilson, LaVerkin City, Washington, Co., Washington Co. Water Conservation District, Utah Department of Natural Resources, Virgin River Management and Recovery Program, US Fish and Wildlife Service

**Conservation Easement Held by:** Utah Department of Natural Resources



## Public Benefits

**Historical significance:** Petroglyphs carved into the lava rock document the prehistoric significance of the site, and it the documented site where the Escalante Expedition crossed the Virgin in 1776.

**Water Quality:** Purchasing this land protects the County's water supply for future development. The confluences feeds fresh creek water into the mineral rich river below Pah Tempe Hot Springs. Because both LaVerkin and Ash Creek are perennial year round flows of fresh water, they re-water the riverbed below the Quail Lake Diversion and reduce the high mineral content present.

**Wildlife Habitat:** The area contains approximately 3.5 miles of riparian frontage providing critical habitat for various endangered and threatened fish species, including the Woundfin, Virgin River Chub and Virgin Spinedace. Thick stands of cottonwood and willow provide habitat for native bird species such as the endangered Southwestern Willow Flycatcher. The western boundaries of the project are contiguous with Washington County's Red Cliffs Desert Reserve established with a habitat conservation plan for the desert tortoise.

**Recreation:** The project secures easy access to the river from both the north and south—the only gentle breaks in the canyon rim for miles either up or down stream. The canyon where Ash and LaVerk Creeks join the Virgin River provides unparalleled opportunities for picnicking, hiking, bird watching and horseback riding among shady stands of cottonwood and sandy beaches.