

## WRI- Family Activity

Today we went in search of the old Pioneer Pile Dam. This particular dam was a hinge point in the history of Washington County. One reason is because it was the most extensive and expensive dam attempted up to that time. Another reason is because its destruction marked the final straw for many good hardy pioneers who gave up after its loss. And perhaps the most important reason was because for those who kept courage after this defeat, their long hoped for and long sought miracle, a dam capable of taming the mighty Virgin, was finally granted. After this loss, their next dam survived a hundred years and brought the stability they had long been praying for.

Our activity lasted about 4 hours and we had a lot of fun. We don't know if we ever found the dam, but we know we loved the adventure as we searched for it. We parked on a dirt road just off 300 East in Washington (just north of the Washington Field bridge- see yellow diamond on map). From there we followed the river upstream (black squiggly line). At first we just followed the many 4-wheeler trails until one of them took us to the river. We did not think that we were far enough upstream when the 4-wheeler trails ended and we didn't want to get wet so we bush whacked and followed along the base of the hill where the tamaracks were not so thick. After doing this for a while the canyon narrowed and became more steep. We still thought we were not far enough



Figure 1 Parking Area and Approximate Path of Hike.

up the river so we cut through the willows and brush to the river. Once at the river again we decided we needed a break so we took off our shoes, rolled up our pant legs, and began to wade a little. The water was freezing. After a while we got used to the cold water and then we really started having fun. We walked along the river and in the river and really enjoyed the nice weather and clear stream (the Virgin is often very muddy because of all the erosion up steam, but this day it was clear and beautiful).

After a while we found another family out enjoying the river. We talked with them while our kids played in the river with their kids. It was quite a treat. Providentially, the man was a Staheli, a descendent of one of the early pioneer

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Figure 2 Rebecca, Joshua and little Joseph on one of the 4-Wheeler Trails on the North side of the river.

families (the Staheli Family was one of the Swiss Immigrants that settled in Santa Clara in 1861). When he heard about our interest in the dam, and our non-profit, he offered me his grandma's phone number and told me she had some really cool pictures of the old dams and such. He told us that he had seen it and that it was further upstream still about another half mile. He said it was easier to access from the other side of the river, but we will save that trail for later, when we actually go down to the old dam and write about its history. On the way back we were in the water a lot more. It was a perfect day and the water was so cool and nice.



**Figure 3 The Whole Family, Further Up the Trail, Looking West / Southwest**



**Figure 4 The Kids Running Ahead, Looking East / Northeast**

Club). Even though we don't know if we ever saw the remnants of the old dam, we did have a lot of fun and we saw some other cool things. Following is a list of some of the plants and animals we saw, and a few pictures. Over time I will try to learn the scientific names of more of these things and other interesting tidbits, but for today it will just be pictures.

The first part of our hike, the squiggly line shown on the map, was about 3/4 mile each way (1.5 miles round trip). The second part of our hike, not shown, was about 1/4 mile each way (0.5 mile round trip). So all in all we got a pretty good workout (free exercise, but don't tell the guys that work at the Summit Athletic



**Figure 5 The Desert's Contrasts: Beautiful Blooms Backdropped by Jagged Rocks & Rugged Cliffs**

## CRITTERS & GREENERY

Fauna: two ducks, a huge beetle, lots of lizards, lots of footprints of critters in the sand, and a tomato caterpillar.

Flora: lots of bushes and flowers, cottonwoods, tamarisks, and willows.



**Figure 6** Huge Beetle Hanging Out in the Willows (its body was about 1.5 inches long)



**Figure 7** A Male & Female Mallard Duck Swimming in the River (the male, with the green head, is easy to see, the female is to the lower right)



**Figure 8** A Beautiful View Looking East Toward Sand Mountain (this picture is actually on the second trail, which we will cover when we find the dam)



**Figure 9** A Local Savage (he is not as dangerous as he looks, we fed him and then he stopped causing trouble, another successful application of Brigham Young's counsel on Indian relations)