

Lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation Program



Balancing Resource Use and Conservation

Imperial Ponds Conservation Area

Imperial Ponds Conservation Area is located on Imperial National Wildlife Refuge to the east of the Colorado River. The project area is within a portion of the refuge known as the Intensive Management Area, which consists of fields, marshes, and ponds that are managed for waterfowl, marsh birds, native fish, riparian obligate bird species, and other wildlife. Three primary features of the site include:



Fish Ponds. Six ponds have been constructed to provide approximately 80 acres of habitat for endangered razorback sucker and bonytail fish species. The ponds are independently managed to provide a diversity of depths and habitat features, including rip-rap for cover and hummocks on which to place native wetlands plants.

The Imperial Ponds are a major LCR MSCP focus area for restoration research as well as native fish life history research, due to the size of the site, the built-in management tools (wells, pumps, independent water management, easy site access and onsite power). Reclamation is currently designing a series of spawning

beds as part of a series of research efforts into native fish life history within constructed ponds. In addition, native plants are being established along selected pond shorelines, to demonstrate suppression techniques for undesirable non-native vegetation, as well as bankline stabilization, maintaining wind-driven circulation in the ponds, and creating shade to lessen the impact of extreme summer heat in the ponds.

Cottonwood-Willow Forest. An existing 4-acre cottonwood-willow nursery on the Refuge will be expanded by 34 acres, using materials excavated from the ponds. The excavated material was spread over approximately 100 acres; the acreage not used for new forest is managed for migratory waterfowl. Both yellow-billed cuckoo and Southwestern willow flycatchers have been sighted in the existing nursery. The additional forested area and the waterfowl acreage will create a vegetation mix that makes this an ideal site for attracting the threatened and endangered species the LCR MSCP is designed to protect. Field leveling and irrigation system installation for the new area was completed in 2008; the fields are currently being managed with grass cover crops, and tree planting will be scheduled once the soils are ready (2010 or 2011).

Field 18 Marsh Unit. A 12-acre marsh unit was created on the southeast corner of the Refuge in 2008, and already has attracted California black rail, Yuma clapper rail, and Western Least Bittern -- three LCR MSCP covered marsh bird species.

LCR MSCP covered species located at Imperial Ponds Conservation Area include: bonytail and razorback suckers in the constructed ponds; least bittern, Yuma clapper rail, black rail and Yuma hispid cotton rat at marsh sites; and migrating willow flycatchers and possible resident yellow-billed cuckoos at the nursery. For more information and documentation about this activity, visit the LCR MSCP website at: www.lcrmscp.gov.

Imperial Ponds Conservation Area Planting Plan

