Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Program

USDA - Natural Resources Conservation Service

Utah – Salinity Control Unit Summary FY 2015

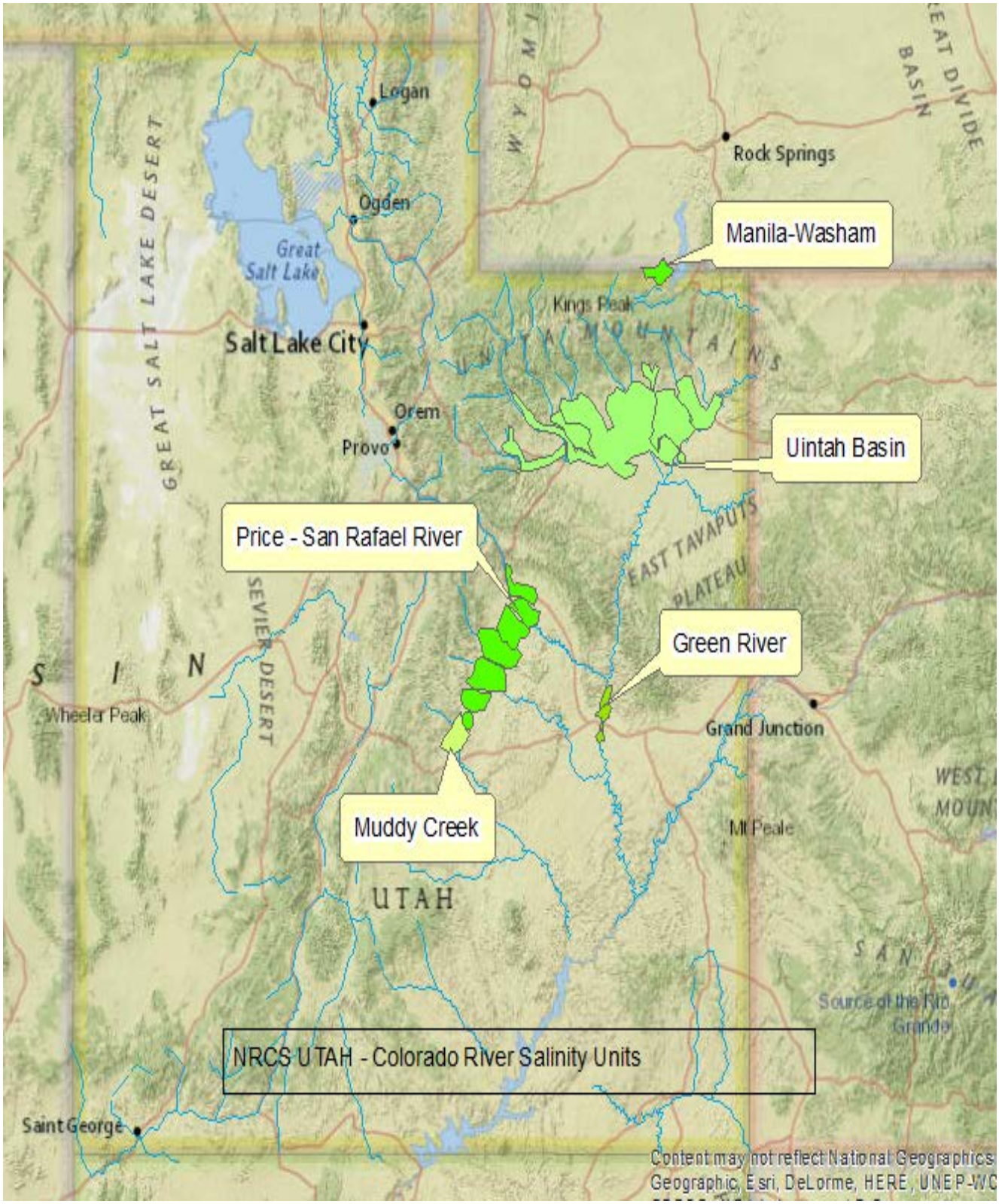
It is estimated that in the 1960s, more than two-thirds of water taken from the Colorado River was used to irrigate agricultural lands. Flood irrigation was the main type of irrigation and resulted in massive amounts of salt being dissolved by excess irrigation water and carried back to the river. With irrigation being controllable and a contributor to the salt load in the river. It was determined that irrigation system improvements, both on-farm and off-farm, would provide the most economical opportunity to reduce salt loading by improving irrigation efficiencies to reduce deep percolation and seepage conditions.

The Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Act of 1974 authorized federal funding of salinity control projects to manage salinity in the Colorado River. Each of the listed Salinity Control Units were facilitated through the Salinity Control Act (PL-93-320) and subsequent legislation authorizes the USDA Soil Conservation Service to implement and manage salinity control throughout the Colorado River Basin. **(More specific information is presented in Appendix 1.)**

USDA – Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) formerly USDA-Soil Conservation Service (SCS), both referred to herein as NRCS, initiated a funding program to make a variety of irrigation system improvements on the land to reduce deep percolation and reduce salt load potential into the Colorado River. Salinity control projects were launched in Utah starting with Uintah Basin Unit in 1982, Price-San Rafael Rivers Unit in 1997, Manila-Washam Unit in 2007, Green River Unit in 2010 and Muddy Creek Unit in 2010. (Figure 1. Location Map)

Along this path of reducing salt loading the Colorado River Salinity Control Forum (CRSCF) through Basin States funding supported many special projects in the designated salinity units. In 2010 CRSCF recommended to the NRCS irrigation improvement work should include Basin State Funding for small individual projects in other catchments within the Colorado River basin. These projects were outside of the salinity control designated Units addressed salt treatment benefits on other irrigated fields. These became known as Out-of-Project Units-Tier 2 improvement projects and funded based on their predicted salinity control savings in tons per year of salt reduction.

Figure 1. Utah Salinity Control Project Units – Location Map



Wildlife Habitat Replacement for each Project Unit

The Salinity Control Act – Environmental Assessment (EA) requires areas within the designated project units where wildlife habitat values were lost due to irrigation improvements, will be replaced concurrently and proportionally to the installation of the improved irrigation system acres. NRCS and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service have agreed on set wildlife habitat replacement acreage amounts for each designated project unit. NRCS is responsible to apply, greater than 2% of the irrigation improvement acres in wildlife replacement habitat acres with-in each Unit.

Table 1. Utah Project Summary FY 2015- Salinity Wildlife Habitat Replacement for Salinity Project Units below, shows what NRCS wildlife habitat replacement to date and two units have exceeded the 2% expectations established in Salinity Control Act EA. The Price San Rafael Rivers wildlife goal of 721 acres is now at 3,352 acres, showing 465% complete. The Uintah Basin wildlife goal of 3,200 acres is now at 21,000 acres, showing 656% complete. Manila has completed 8 acres of habitat replacement and Muddy Creek 1 acres to date. While Manila, Muddy Creek and Green River Units are short of meeting the 2% goal the NRCS continues to promote the need for replacement habitat requirements in these Units and will continue Outreach Efforts to meet these goals.

Table 1. Utah Project Summary FY 2015 – Salinity Wildlife Habitat Replacement for Salinity Project Units

Salinity Control Project Unit	Project Unit - Start Time	Salinity Wildlife Habitat Current EIS Goal*	FY 2015 Salinity Wildlife Habitat Applied	FY 2015 Applied Current - In Surplus or (Deficit)	FY 2015 Wildlife Habitat Active in Contracts	FY 2015 Salinity Wildlife Habitat Acres Cumulative Accomplished toward Total Project Goal
Location	Year	Acres	Acres	Acres	Acres	Percent
Green River	2010	42	-	(42)	0	0%
Manila - Washam	2007	156	8	(148)	2.2	5%
Muddy Creek	2010	121	1	(120)	1.4	1%
Price San RaFael Rivers	1997	721	3,339	2,618	13.1	> 100%
Uintah Basin (Amended)	1982/1991	3,200	21,000	17,800	0	> 100%
* Habitat Replacement Goal (Typically >2% of Goaled Improved Irrigation Acres).						

Utah Salinity Unit Reports:

Green River Unit – Salinity Project

The **Green River, Utah Salinity Control Unit** is located straddling the Green River and the county line between Emery and Grand Counties encompassing 4,000 agricultural acres irrigated with water diverted from the Green River. This area is approximately 3 miles east to west and 16 miles north to south. Water, diverted to irrigate cropland and pasture, deep percolates through the saline soil formation, dissolving and transporting salts to the river system. Salts come from a source of dissolved solids from Cretaceous marine deposits.

The Green River Unit was established by a 2009 Environmental Assessment (EA) with a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI). The first USDA projects were funded in FY 2010. Salt load reduction is achieved by improving irrigation efficiency and reducing deep percolation. The 2009 EA anticipated treating 2,080 acres, controlling 6,540 tons/year of salt at a cost of $115/ton. During FY 2015 NRCS treated 388 acres, controlling 1284 tons/year of salt at a cost of $28/ton. Cumulative thru FY 2015

NRCS has treated 513 acres, controlling 1944 tons/year of salt, on-farm. Of the original 2080 acres to be treated, another 1,567 acres or 75% will continue to be converted to improved irrigation systems.

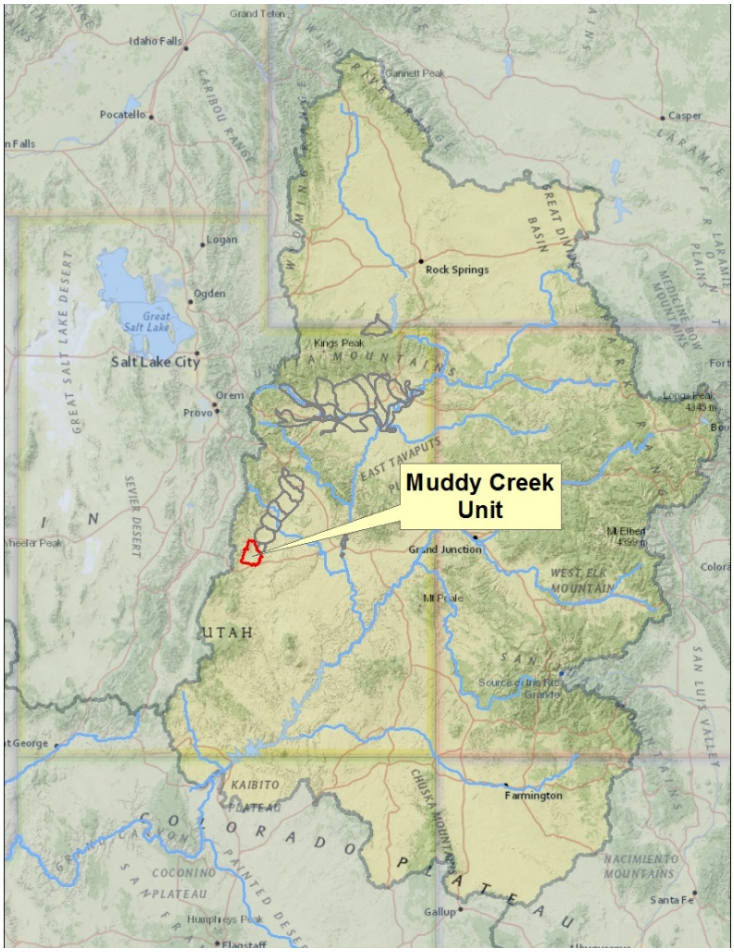
The lack of a gravity pressurized water source is the primary impediment to improving flood systems to sprinkler systems. No salinity related wildlife habitat replacement has taken place in Green River Unit to date. **(See Table 2. Utah Project Summary FY 2015 – Acres Treated and Tons per Year)**

Manila – Washam Unit – Salinity Project

The **Manila-Washam Salinity Control Unit** located on the north slope of the Uinta Mountains, encompasses 11,100 agricultural acres irrigated with water diverted from tributaries to Flaming Gorge Reservoir in Daggett County, Utah. The irrigated portion of the area, approximately 20 miles east to west and 8 miles north to south. Water, diverted to irrigate cropland and pasture, deep percolates through saline sediment, dissolving and transporting salts to the river system. Salts come from a source of dissolved solids from Tertiary Lacustrine deposits on the south side and Cretaceous marine Mancos Shale deposits to the north.

Manila-Washam was established by a 2006 Environmental Assessment (EA). NRCS first funded salinity control projects in FY 2007. Salt load reduction is achieved by improving irrigation efficiency and reducing deep percolation. The 2006 EA anticipated treating 7,780 acres, controlling 17,430 tons/year of salt at a cost of $98/ton.
During FY 2015 NRCS treated 262 acres, controlling 627 tons/year of salt at a cost of $43/ton. Cumulative thru FY 2015, NRCS has treated 4,003 acres, controlling 9,569 tons/year on-farm. Of the original 7,780 acres to be treated, another 3,777 acres or 48% will continue to be converted to improved irrigation systems. In FY 2015 2.2 acres of salinity related wildlife habitat replacement has taken place in Manila_Washam Unit. **(See Table 2. Utah Project Summary FY 2015 – Acres Treated and Tons per Year)**

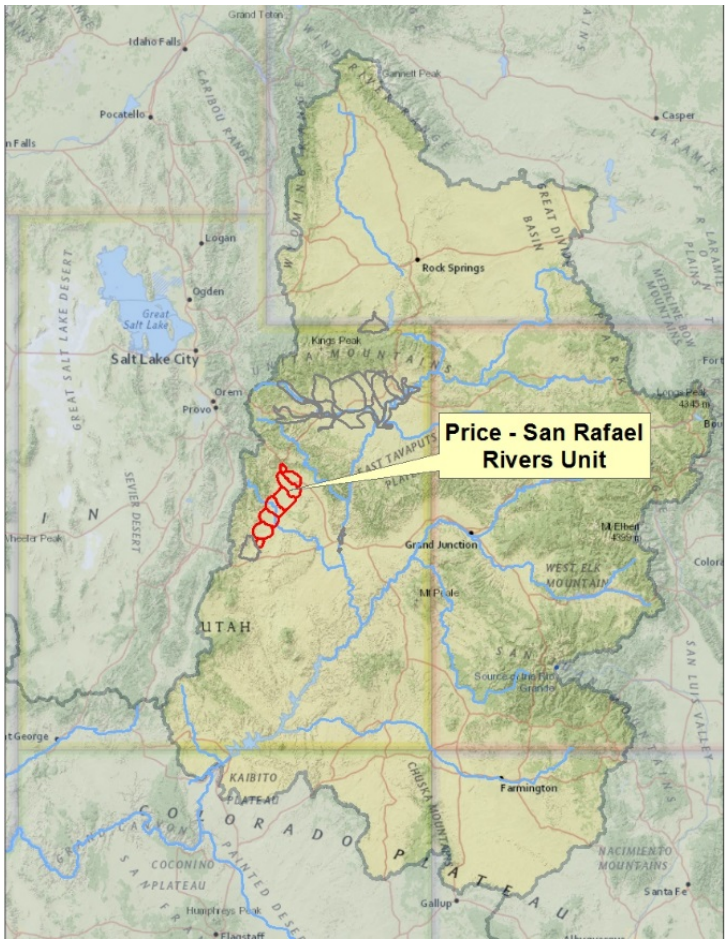
Muddy Creek Unit- Salinity Project



The **Muddy Creek Salinity Control Unit** located in the southern portion of Emery County, Utah, encompasses 6,050 agricultural acres irrigated with water diverted from Muddy Creek and its tributaries. This area, approximately 13 miles east to west and 17 miles north to south. Water, diverted to irrigate cropland and pasture, deep percolates through saline soil formations, dissolving and transporting salts to the river system. Salts come from a source of dissolved solids from Cretaceous marine deposits.

Muddy Creek Unit was established by a 2004 Environmental Assessment (EA) with a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI). The first NRCS projects were funded in FY 2010. Salt load reduction is achieved by improving irrigation efficiency and reducing deep percolation. The 2004 EA anticipated treating 6,050 acres, controlling 11,677 tons/year of salt at a cost of $153/ton. During FY 2015 NRCS treated 122 acres, controlling 154 tons/year of salt at a cost of $105/ton. Cumulative thru of FY 2015 NRCS has treated 192 acres, controlling 247 tons/year of salt, on-farm. Of the original 6,050 acres to be treated, another 5,858 acres or 97% will continue to be converted to improved irrigation systems. Lack of hydrologic infrastructure is the primary obstacle to the progress. In FY 2015 no habitat replacement has taken place in the Muddy Creek Unit. **(See Table 2. Utah Project Summary FY 2015 – Acres Treated and Tons per Year)**

Price San Rafael Rivers Unit – Salinity Project



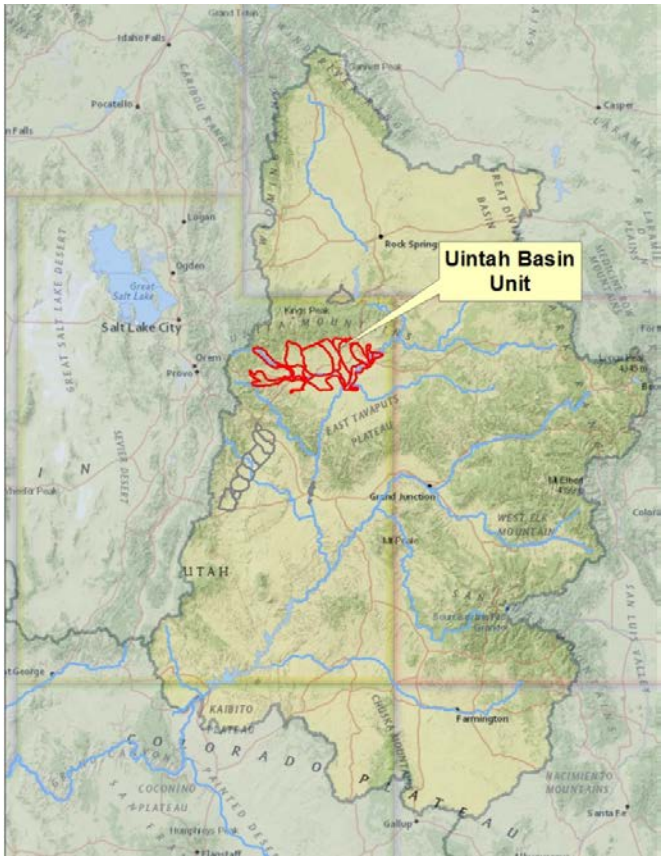
The **Price San Rafael Rivers Unit** is located in eastern Utah, encompasses 66,450 agricultural acres of irrigated land. Water is diverted for irrigation from tributaries of the Price and San Rafael Rivers in Carbon and Emery Counties. Irrigation water diverted to grow crops deep percolates through the

surface soil of marine deposits of saline sediment, dissolving and transporting salts back into the river system. Salts come from the source of dissolved solids from Cretaceous marine Mancos Shale deposits.

In 1993 Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) prepared jointly by U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (USBR) and Soil Conservation Service (now NRCS), established the PSR Salinity Control Unit. The first salinity control projects in the PSR were funded in FY1996. Salt load reduction is achieved by improving irrigation system efficiency and reducing excessive irrigation water that goes into deep percolation. The 1993 EIS anticipated treating 36,050 acres, controlling 146,900 tons/year of on-farm salt at a cost of $65/ton.

During FY 2015 NRCS treated 1312 acres, controlling 3735 tons/year of salt at a cost of $65/ton. Cumulative thru FY 2015 NRCS has treated 33,526 acres, controlling 95,633 tons/year of salt, on-farm. Of the original 36,050 acres to be treated, another 2524 acres or 7% will continue to be converted to improved irrigation systems. In FY 2015 13.1 acres of wildlife habitat replacement has taken place in the Price San Rafael Unit. **(See Table 2. Utah Project Summary FY 2015 – Acres Treated and Tons per Year)**

Uintah Basin Unit– Salinity Project



The **Uintah Basin Salinity Control Unit** located in northeastern Utah, encompasses 225,000 irrigated agricultural acres irrigated with water diverted from tributaries of the Duchesne and Green Rivers south of the Uinta Mountains and north of Ouray, Utah. This area, approximately 95 miles east to west by 40 miles north to south. Water diverted to irrigate cropland and pasture, deep percolates through saline soil Formations, transporting dissolved salts to the river system. Salts come from a source of dissolved solids from Tertiary saline lacustrine deposits.

The 1974 SCA named four specific salinity control projects (Paradox Valley Unit, Grand Valley Unit, Crystal Geyser Unit, Las Vegas Wash Unit) which directed expedited planning reports for irrigation source control in Uinta Basin (UB), Lower Gunnison, Colorado River Indian Reservation, and Palo Alto Irrigation District. After multiple studies, UB Unit was established by a 1982 environmental impact statement. (USDA funding of salinity control projects started in 1980 using grant programs already in place.) Salt load reduction is achieved by improving irrigation efficiency and reducing deep percolation.

The 1982 EIS anticipated treating 160,000 acres, controlling 140,500 tons/year of salt at a cost of $196/ton. A second EIS was written in 1991 expanding UB Unit by 20,800 acres, 8900 acres would be treated (7.5% improved flood) to reduce salt load by 8600 tons/year on salt at a cost of $188/ton.

Treatment options have been continuously reevaluated. It is now expected that 70% of the original 225,000 irrigated acres will ultimately be treated which is goaled at 160,000 acres.

During FY 2015 NRCS treated 923 acres, controlling 692 tons/year of salt at a cost of $196/ton. Cumulative thru FY 2015 NRCS has treated 158,092 acres, controlling 128,029 tons/year of salt, on-farm. Of the original 160,000 acres to be treated, another 1908 acres or 1% will continue to be converted to improved irrigation systems. In FY 2015 no acres of wildlife habitat replacement has taken place in the Uintah Basin Unit. **(See Table 2. Utah Project Summary FY 2015 – Acres Treated and Tons per Year)**

Table 2. Utah Project Summary FY 2015 – Acres Treated and Tons per Year

Project Unit	Project - Salinity Unit Start Year	Project - EIS Treatment Goal (Acres)	FY 2015 Practice Treatment in Project (Acres)	FY 2015 Cummulative Cropland Treated (Acres)	FY 2015 Treated Acres Accomplished Toward Goal (Percent)	Project - EIS Salt Saving Treatment Goal (Tons)	FY 2015 Salt Savings Treated (Tons)	FY 2015 Cummulative Salt Savings Treated (Tons)	FY 2015 Treated Tons Accomplished Toward Goal (Percent)	FY 2015 Amortized Cost Per (Ton) *
Green River	2010	2,080	388	513	25%	6,540	1,284	1,944	30%	$ 28
Manila_ Washam	2007	7,780	262	4,003	51%	17,430	627	9,569	55%	$ 43
Muddy Creek	2010	6,050	122	192	3%	11,677	154	247	2%	$ 105
Price San RaFael Rivers	1997	36,050	1,312	33,526	93%	146,900	3,735	95,633	65%	$ 65
Uintah Basin (amended)	1982/1991	160,000	923	158,092	99%	140,500	692	128,029	91%	$ 196
Out-of-Project Units-Tier 2	2012	n/a	n/a	4,324	n/a	n/a	n/a	3,211	n/a	n/a

* Shown as Amortized cost per ton. (Federal Financial Assistance (FA) cost plus Technical Assistance (TA) cost) X (the annual amotiization factor based on annual percentage rate for each year) = Cost per ton. The Federal TA is based on each FA dollars times 0.67 and the amortization period is in

Figure 2. Utah Salinity Project Status Summary FY 2015 below demonstrates the cumulative accomplishment to date for wildlife habitat replacement.

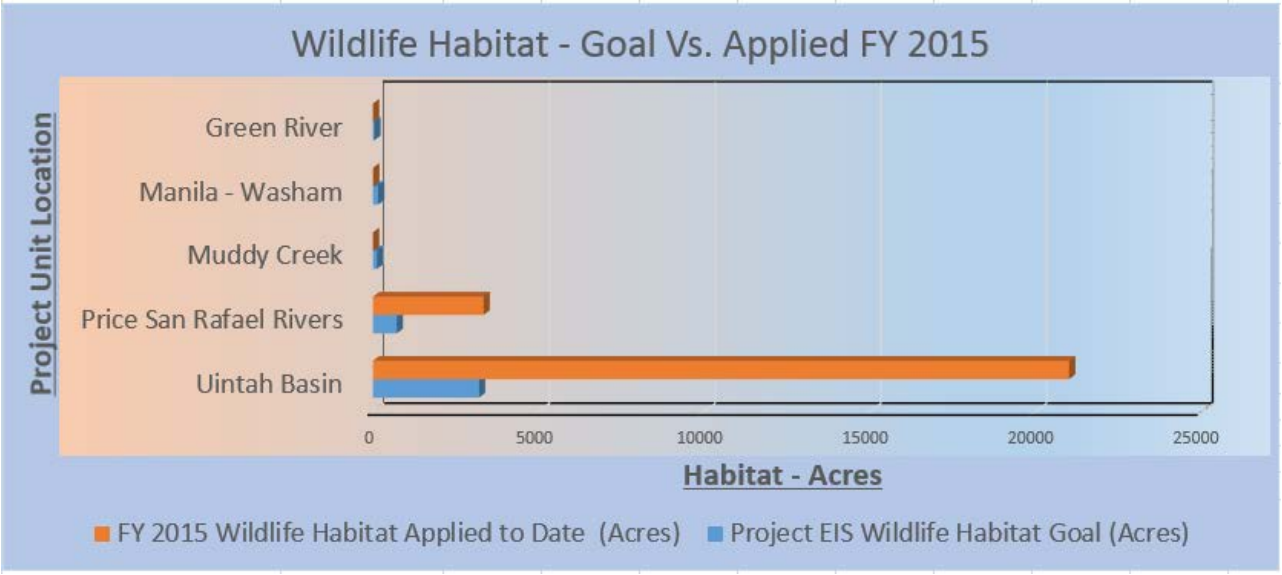


Figure 3. Utah Salinity Project Status Summary FY 2015 delivers cumulative accomplishment to date for tons of salt treated.

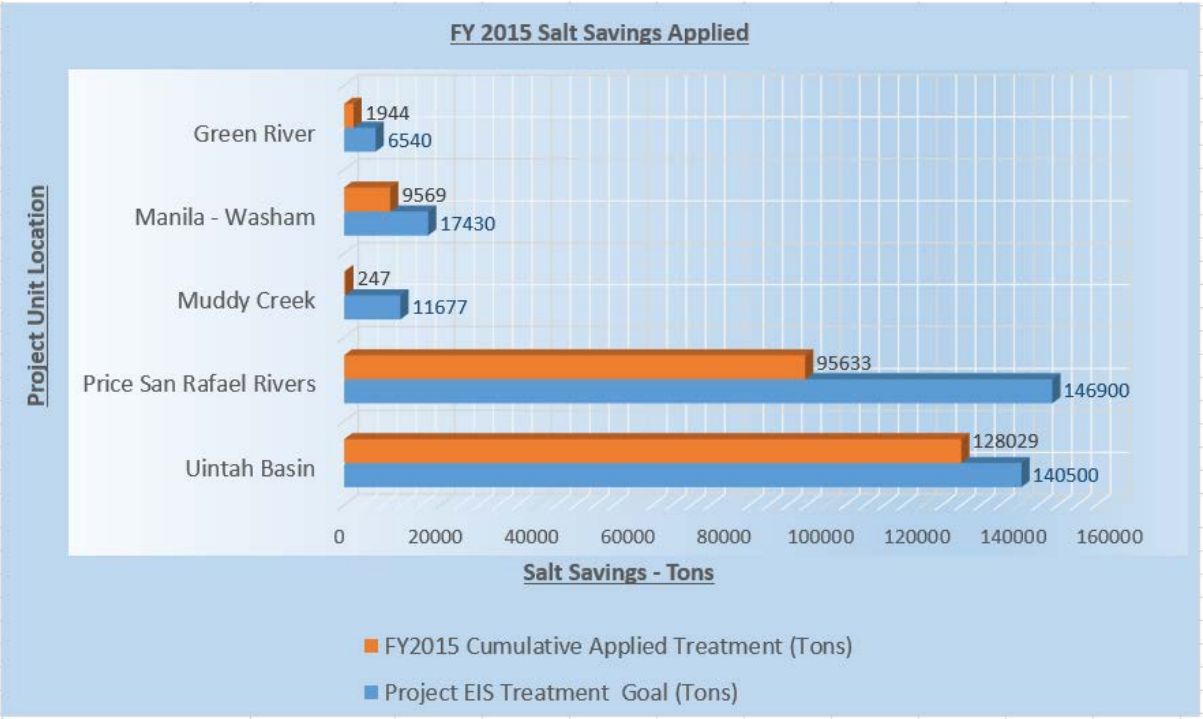


Figure 4. Utah Salinity Project Status Summary FY 2015 presents cumulative accomplishment to date for acres treated.

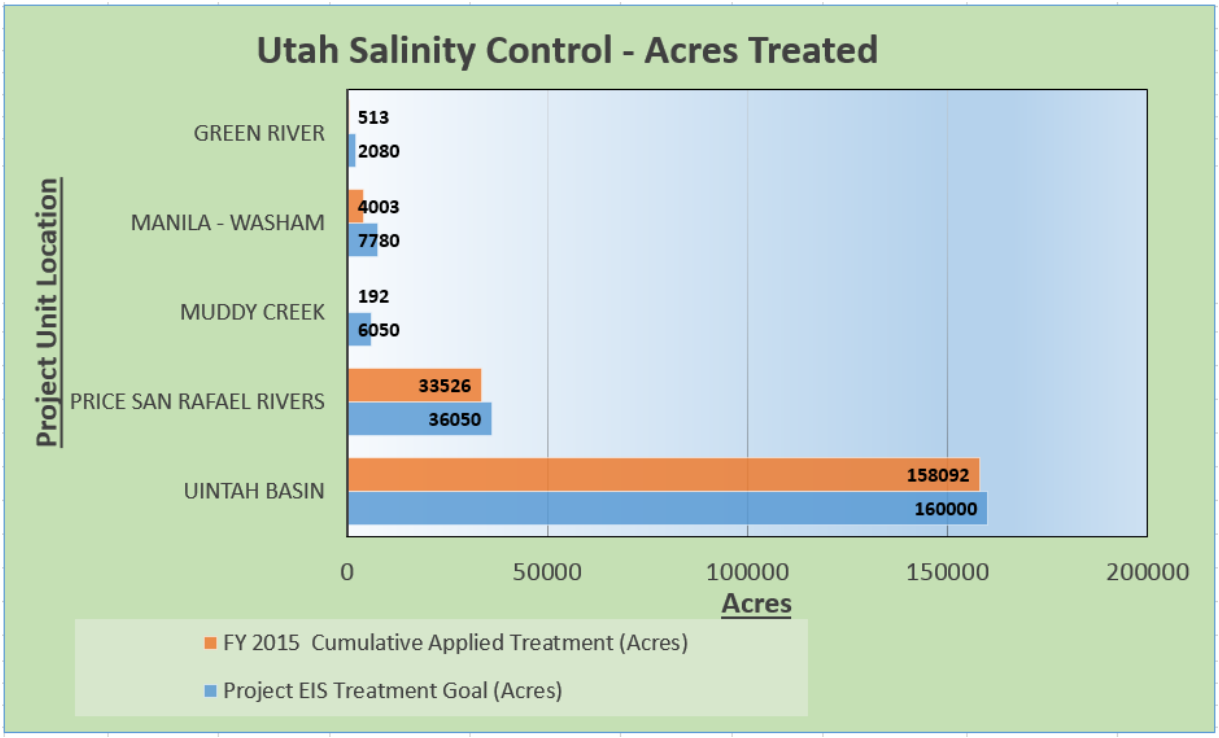


Table 3. Utah Salinity Project - Applied Funding FY 2015 represents the number of applications received in each Unit, the total application acres, requested application funds and the number or contracts obligated, with contracted acres and Salinity EQIP funds obligated per Unit.

Salinity Control Units Applied Funding FY2015						
Salinity Units	**Application Number**	**Application Acres**	**Application Dollars**	**Contract Number**	**Contract Acres**	**EQIP Contract Dollars**
Out of Project Units-Tier 2	*0	*0	*0	*0	*0	*0
Green River	4	388	$628,352	5	388	$604,405
Manila - Washam	8	250	$550,000	5	262	$546,349
Manila - Washam Wildlife	1	2	$8,400	1	2	$8,335
Muddy Creek	3	468	$248,639	1	122	$239,657
Price - San Rafael Rivers	42	2914	$4,400,000	26	1312	$2,446,476
Price - San Rafael Wildlife	3	13	$8,801	3	13	$8,152
Uintah Basin	118	7000	$7,600,000	15	923	$1,390,490
*** Out of Project Units - Tier 2 did not have any application or funds obligated for these projects FY2015**						

For information on the Colorado River Salinity Control Program USDA – NRCS Utah for the Green River Unit, Manila-Washam Unit, Muddy Creek Unit, Price San Rafael Rivers Unit, and Uintah Basin Unit. Please see USDA - NRCS

Web site: http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/ut/programs/financial/eqip/

Bureau Reclamation web site: http://www.usbr.gov/uc/progact/salinity/

Search under headings USDA Monitoring & Evaluation Reports for Salinity Projects for each one of the five Units reports “Unit name UT – 2014”.

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APPENDIX 1. Summary of legislation providing authority to USDA to conduct Colorado River Basin Salinity Control activities

First Legislation

Public Law (PL) 93-320 "Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Act, June 6, 1974 (SCA)

Title II-Measures Upstream from Imperial Dam Section 201. *(c) In conformity with section 201(a) of this title and the authority of the Environmental Protection Agency under Federal Laws, the Secretary (of Interior), the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, and the Secretary of Agriculture are directed to cooperate and coordinate their activities effectively to carry out the objective of this title."*

The Secretary of the Interior is directed in **Section *202*** to construct four salinity control units: (1) The Paradox Valley unit, Montrose County, Colorado, (2) The Grand Valley Unit, Colorado, (3) the Crystal Geyser Unit, Utah and (4) the Las Vegas Wash Unit, Nevada.

First USDA Project

The Grand Valley unit would include all measures to reduce seepage from canals and laterals as well as limiting excess water application to irrigated lands. *"The Secretary (of Interior) will enter into agreement with the Secretary of Agriculture to develop a unified control plan for the Grand Valley unit. The Secretary of Agriculture is directed to cooperate in the planning and construction of on-farm systems measures under programs available to that Department."* This language provided the first authority for USDA to conduct Colorado River Basin salinity control activities. USDA used its authority provided in the Food and Agriculture Act of 1977. Title XV. Section 1501 – **the Agricultural Conservation Program** (ACP).

Projects Planned

The **(SCA) Section 203,** also authorized and directed the Secretary (of Interior) to expedite planning reports for (a) Irrigation source control: Lower Gunnison, Uinta Basin, Colorado River Indian Reservation, Palo Verde Irrigation District (b) Point source control: LaVerkin Springs, Littlefield Springs, Glenwood-Dotsero Springs and (c) Diffuse source control: Price River, San Rafael River, Dirty Devil River, McElmo Creek, Big Sandy River. USDA cooperated with USDI in the preparation of all of these reports.

CRSC Program Created

PL98-569 "Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Act, Amendment. October 30, 1984, provided that (c)(1) *"The Secretary of Agriculture may establish a voluntary cooperative salinity control program with landowners to improve on-farm water management and reduce watershed erosion on non-Federal lands and on lands under the control of the Department of Agriculture for the purpose of assisting in meeting the objective of this title. (2) In carrying out such program, the Secretary of Agriculture shall-*

(A) identify salt-source areas and determine the salt load resulting from irrigation and watershed management practices;

(B) develop, in consultation with the public and affected governmental interests, plans for implementing measures that will reduce the salt load of the Colorado River by improving on-farm irrigation water management including improvement of related laterals and by improving watershed erosion management practices, such measures to include voluntary replacement of incidental fish and wildlife values foregone;

(C) provide technical and cost-sharing assistance for the voluntary implementation of plans through contracts and agreements with individuals or groups of owners and operators of farms, ranches, and other lands as well as with local governmental and nongovernmental entities such as irrigation districts and canal companies, except that a portion of the costs of implementing such plans shall be shared by the participants on the basis of benefits received and other appropriate factors, as determined by the Secretary of Agriculture, and except that such contracts and agreements shall provide for continuing operation and maintenance of measures installed under this subsection, including measures to replace incidental fish and wildlife values foregone, with additional cost-sharing assistance;

(D) provide continuing technical assistance for irrigation water management as well as monitoring and evaluation of changes in salt contributions to the Colorado river to determine program effectiveness;

(E) carry out related research, demonstration, and education activities; and

(F) in entering into contracts or agreements pursuant to section 202©(2)©, require a minimum of 30 per centum cost-sharing contribution from individuals or groups of owners and operators of farms, ranches, and other lands as well as from local governmental and nongovernmental entities such as irrigation districts and canal companies, unless the Secretary finds in his discretion that such cost-sharing requirement would result in a failure to proceed with needed on-farm measures."

New Projects Approved

This **SCA amendment** led to the establishment of USDA's **Colorado River Salinity Control Program (CRSCP).** Under this program, six project areas were planned and authorized: Grand Valley, Lower Gunnison, McElmo Creek, Colorado; Uinta Basin, Price-San Rafael Rivers, Utah; and Big Sandy River, Wyoming. Each project area is described by its respective environmental impact statement (EIS) except the Lower Gunnison and Uinta Basin which are included in a single, combined EIS.

PL104-127 the Federal Agricultural Improvement and Reform Act of 1996, April 4, 1996, Section 336(c) amended the **Salinity Control Act** and established a new authority for USDA, i.e. the **Environmental Quality Incentives Program.**

EQIP Created

"(c) COLORADO RIVER BASIN SALINITY CONTROL PROGRAM- (I) IN GENERAL-Section 202 of the Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Act (43 U.S.C. 1592) is amended by striking subsection (c) and inserting the following: (c) SALINITY CONTROL MEASURES – The Secretary of Agriculture shall carry out salinity control measures (including watershed enhancement and cost-share measures with livestock and crop producers) in the Colorado River Basin as part of the environmental quality incentives program established under chapter 4 of subtitle D of title XII of the Food Security Act of 1985."

Additionally, Section 334 of the 1996 Farm Bill amended the Food Security Act of 1985 by adding a new Chapter 4 to Subtitle D of Title XII of the 1985 Act (i.e. EQIP). In particular, as amended, Section 1240 of the 1985 Act provided as follows:

"Sec. 1240. PURPOSES.

The purposes of the environmental quality incentives program established by this chapter are to-

(1) combine into a single program the functions of-

(A) the agricultural conservation program authorized by sections 7 and 8 of the Soil Conservation and Domestic Allotment Act (as in effect before the amendments made by section 336(a)(1) of the Federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform act of 1996);

(B) the Great Plains conservation program established under section 16(b) of the Soil Conservation and Domestic Allotment Act (as in effect before the amen dements made by section 336(b)(1) of the Federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform Act of 1996);

(C) the water quality incentives program established under chapter 2 (as in effect before the amendment made by section 336(h) of the Federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform Act of 1996); and

(D) the Colorado River Basin salinity control program established under section 202(c) of the Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Act (as in effect before the amendment made by section 336(c)(1) of the Federal Agricultural Improvement and Reform Act of 1996)."

CRSC language removed "Section 2301 of the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 (the 2002 Farm Bill) amended Section 1240 of the Food Security Act of 1985 and the reference to the Colorado River Basin salinity control program was removed, presumably since its purposes had already been incorporated into EQIP and thus the reference to the former program was no longer needed."

(Communication from Martha Joseph, Special Assistant to the Deputy Chief for Programs, NRCS, Washington , D.C. 16 March 2016.)

EQIP was reauthorized in the Food Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 (2002 Farm Bill), the Food, Conservation and Energy Act of 2008 (2008 Farm Bill) and the Agricultural Act of 2014 (2014 Farm Bill) that is in effect through fiscal year 2018.

Basin States Program

The 2008 Farm Bill amended the Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Act to create the "Basin States Program" as follows:

Subsection 202(a) (7) BASIN STATES PROGRAM-

(A) IN GENERAL – A Basin States Program that the Secretary, acting through the Bureau of Reclamation, shall implement to carry out salinity control activities in the Colorado River Basin using funds made available under section 205(f).

(B) ASSISTANCE – The Secretary, in consultation with the Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Advisory Council, shall carry out this paragraph using funds described in subparagraph (A) directly or by providing grants, grant commitments, or advance funds to Federal or non-Federal entities under such terms and conditions as the Secretary may require.

(C) ACTIVITIES – Funds described in subparagraph (A) shall be used to carry out, as determined by the Secretary-

(i) Cost effective measures and associated works to reduce salinity from saline springs, leaking wells, irrigation sources, industrial sources, erosion of public and private land, or other sources;

(ii) Operation and maintenance of salinity control measures constructed under the Colorado River Basin salinity control program; and

(iii) Studies, planning and administration of salinity control activities.

The Basin States Program authority provides the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation a mechanism to cooperate with the USDA-NRCS to identify, plan, fund and implement salinity control projects that might otherwise not be assisted through the EQIP.