

**Protection of Desert Tortoise Habitat
Lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation Program
Program Decision Document 09-003: Land Approval**

Steering Committee Resolution

The Steering Committee approves Reclamation securing 230 acres of existing unprotected occupied desert tortoise habitat within the Chuckwalla Bench Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) for up to a total of \$276,000.

Benefits

Habitat Protected: **230 acres of desert tortoise habitat**

- The MSCP is required to protect 230 acres of unprotected occupied desert tortoise habitat
- The Chuckwalla Bench Area was established as an ACEC under the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) California Desert Conservation Area Plan in 1980. Land within the ACEC has been designated as critical habitat for the desert tortoise.
- Most of the land within the ACEC is owned and managed by BLM, but there are a number of small private in-holdings.
- Working with the Coachella Valley Mountains Conservancy, multiple parcels of private unprotected land inhabited by desert tortoise have been identified. These parcels range in size from 40 to 120 acres.
- Reclamation will work to secure these parcels for ownership and future management by BLM.

Cost Analysis

- Based on previous acquisitions within the ACEC, the overall range of costs to secure unprotected, inhabited, desert tortoise habitat is \$795 - \$1,200 per acre. Securing 230 acres would range from \$182,850 to \$276,000.
- No additional management fees or habitat endowments are anticipated to secure the property in perpetuity.
- The LCR MSCP Program Documents did not include an estimate for securing desert tortoise habitat.