

**Protection of Unprotected Occupied Flat-Tailed Horned Lizard Habitat  
Lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation Program  
Program Decision Document 10-001(r): Land Approval**

**Steering Committee Motion**

The Steering Committee approves Reclamation securing 230 acres of existing unprotected occupied flat-tailed horned lizard (FTHL) habitat within (1) the Yuha Desert Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC), (2) the East Mesa ACEC, (3) the West Mesa ACEC, or (4) the Salt Creek ACEC for a total of \$276,000.

**Background:**

Program Decision Document 10-001, approved in October of 2009, permitted the review and acquisition of lands for the flat-tailed horned lizard within the Salt Creek ACEC. A review of parcel maps and discussions with FTHL biologists indicate the private lands within the Salt Creek ACEC suitable for FTHL consist of a narrow strip. Parcels within this area are small in size, typically 5-10 acres, and would require extensive appraisal, site assessment and title work to secure. Costs associated with acquiring multiple small parcels outweigh the benefit to the species and the LCR MSCP at this time. Therefore, we are revising this decision document to allow for acquisition in any of the four ACEC's specifically managed for FTHL. Our intent is to secure all 230 acres within one ACEC, however that may not be possible given the interest being generated by the search for renewable energy sources, specifically construction of solar plants in the desert southwest.

Reclamation has been working with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), El Centro Field Office to identify private lands occupied by FTHL within the Yuha Desert ACEC located within the greater El Centro Area. Using information from the Imperial County Assessor office, thirteen parcels, with acreages ranging from 70-319 acres have been identified and will be the first to receive letters of interest. If additional acreage is required to meet the minimum of 230 acres, land owners with the two remaining FTHL management areas in the greater El Centro area; East Mesa ACEC and West Mesa ACEC would be contacted.

**Benefits**

**Habitat Protected: 230 acres of flat-tailed horned lizard habitat**

- The LCR MSCP is required to protect 230 acres of unprotected FTHL habitat.
- The Yuha Desert, East Mesa, West Mesa, and Salt Creek ACEC's are existing management areas for FTHL.
- Most of the land within the Management Areas is public and managed by the BLM, El Centro Field Office.
- Reclamation will work to secure available parcels for ownership and future management by the BLM.

## **Cost Analysis**

- Based on comparable land sales within the three ACECs, the overall cost to secure unprotected occupied flat-tailed horned lizard habitat is \$795-\$1,200 per acre. The cost of acquiring 230 acres would range from \$182,850-\$276,000
- No additional management fees or habitat endowments are anticipated to secure the property into perpetuity.
- The LCR MSCP Program Documents did not include an estimate for securing flat-tailed horned lizard habitat.