

Work Task E16: Conservation Area Site Selection

FY07 Estimates	FY07 Actual	Cumulative Accomplishment Through FY07	FY08 Approved Estimate	FY09 Proposed Estimate	FY10 Proposed Estimate	FY11 Proposed Estimate
\$50,000	\$102,883	\$396,027	\$200,000	\$200,000	\$200,000	\$200,000

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Start Date: FY05

Expected Duration: FY30

Long-term Goal: Request, identify, prioritize, visit, and recommend potential conservation areas to the Steering Committee for development under the habitat creation requirements of the LCR MSCP.

Conservation Measures: None.

Location: Reaches 1-7, AZ, CA, and NV.

Purpose: Finalize and implement the *Draft Guidelines for the Screening and Evaluation of Potential Conservation Areas*, which provides Reclamation with a consistent and transparent method for requesting, screening, evaluating, and recommending the suitability of lands that are made available to the program for use as conservation areas.

Connections with Other Work Tasks (past and future): The process developed under this work task will guide the selection of future conservation area sites to be developed under Section E work tasks.

Project Description: Guidelines have been developed to describe the process for working with interested parties to identify sites for screening and evaluation as potential conservation areas for creating and maintaining habitat over the term of the LCR MSCP.

Reclamation will work with land owners to secure an interest in land and water resources sufficient to create and maintain LCR MSCP habitats. It is anticipated that willing landowners will enter into some form of long-term commitment that secures resources for the 50-year term of the LCR MSCP.

When developing a financial value for subject lands and water, Reclamation must administer a Federal appraisal using the Department of Interior's designated appraisal services office. Currently Reclamation initiates appraisals with the ASD-National Business Center, which coordinates the scope of work and selection of an appraiser in the local geographical vicinity of the subject property. The cost of appraisal services is captured in Work Task E16.

As new sites are evaluated and prioritized, each new site will be presented to the Steering Committee either through the annual work plan process or, if acquisition is required, through a Land and Water Resolution. This approval allows Reclamation to move forward with the new site and prepare specific restoration development and monitoring plans guiding implementation of the conservation area.

FY07 Accomplishments: In November of 2006, the screening criteria were applied to four locations along the LCR. The first area was identified in response to a recent fire on Cibola NWR and targeted honey mesquite land cover type. The second area was also on Cibola NWR and targeted cottonwood-willow land cover type as an expansion of activities already funded by the LCR MSCP. The third area was an existing backwater and adjacent lands near Laughlin, Nevada. The final area included active agricultural lands being assessed by the Metropolitan Water District in the Palo Verde Irrigation District, and if secured, would target cottonwood-willow, honey mesquite, and marsh land cover types. Site-specific information can be found in the trip report, which is posted on the LCR MSCP Web site. As discussed in the FY06 accomplishments, obligations for a modification to the draft guidelines were not incurred until FY07, and therefore were higher than anticipated.

FY08 Activities: In January 2008, Reclamation announced the first Request for Projects (RFP). This RFP specifically targets the creation and development of honey mesquite within California and the acquisition of 230 acres of Desert Tortoise and 230 acres of Flat-tailed Horned Lizard habitat. In following years, subsequent RFPs will be solicited and geared towards the additional habitat creation cover types.

Applicants will be evaluated on their relevance based on Step 1 of the *Draft Final Guidelines for the Screening and Evaluation of Potential Conservation Areas* and specific RFP criteria. After initial ranking, site visits and trip reports will be developed documenting resources available and restoration potential at the site. Trip reports and site evaluations will be posted on the LCR MSCP Web site, and preliminary findings will be discussed at the Technical Work Group meeting in May.

Two appraisals have been initiated in FY08 and are anticipated to be completed prior to the end of the fiscal year. The first is estimating the cost for securing land and water for Work Task E21: Planet Ranch. The second appraisal is for Work Task E25: Big Bend Conservation Area. Once these values have been determined, the cost-benefit of the acquisition will be presented to the Steering Committee.

Proposed FY09 Activities: In accordance with the draft guidelines, site assessments will be conducted on projects identified in the FY08 RFPs.

Commencing in 2009, Reclamation is expected to announce the second round of RFPs. This solicitation will be geared towards meeting the four land cover type goals located throughout all reaches of the LCR MSCP planning area. Applicants will be evaluated on their relevance based on Step 1 of the *Draft Final Guidelines for the Screening and Evaluation of Potential Conservation Areas* and RFP criterion to be announced. After initial ranking, site visits and trip reports will be developed documenting resources available and restoration potential at the site. Trip reports and site rankings will be posted on the LCR MSCP Web site.

Pertinent Reports: *Draft Guidelines for the Screening and Evaluation of Potential Conservation Areas* and the *November 2006 Trip Reports* are posted on the LCR MSCP Web site.