

Work Task E25: Big Bend Conservation Area

FY08 Estimates	FY08 Actual	Cumulative Accomplishment Through FY08	FY09 Approved Estimate	FY10 Proposed Estimate	FY11 Proposed Estimate	FY12 Proposed Estimate
\$0	\$0	\$0	\$80,000	\$500,000*	\$500,000*	\$75,000

*On April 22, 2009, the Steering Committee approved an in-kind credit for land of \$872,000 in lieu of payment to SNWA

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Start Date: FY09

Expected Duration: FY55

Long-term Goal: Habitat protection

Conservation Measures: BONY2, RASU2, and FLSU1.

Location: Reach 3, NV, River Mile 266.5.

Purpose: Protection of an existing backwater from development which would result in 15 acres of backwater credit.

Connections with Other Work Tasks (past and future): This project was identified under Work Task E16 Conservation Area Site Selection and documented in the *Screening and Evaluation of Potential Conservation Areas: November 2006 Trip Reports*. Marsh bird surveys are conducted under D1 while fish surveys are conducted under multiple Work Tasks in section C and D.

Project Description: The Boy Scout Camp purchased by the SNWA combined with the adjacent backwater managed by the State of Nevada has collectively been identified as the Big Bend Conservation Area. The conservation area includes approximately 15 acres of backwater within the Nevada portion of the Colorado River that will be protected, and approximately 15 acres of upland area adjacent to the backwater. The dry upland area is planned to be enhanced for education and outreach purposes by SNWA at no cost to the program and is being completed in concert with protection of the backwater. The properties are adjacent to and buffered by Big Bend State Park, which may also provide an opportunity for restoration in the future.

Past native fish monitoring efforts have indicated the presence of native fishes in and adjacent to the existing backwater. Successfully securing the site will result in 15 acres of backwater habitat credit that benefits flannelmouth sucker, razorback sucker, and bonytail in Reach 3 of the LCR MSCP planning area. Reach 3 maintains the only self-sustaining population of flannelmouth sucker and has very few undeveloped backwaters, which make protection of the existing backwater a priority for the LCR MSCP (see Conservation Measure FLSU1). The Colorado River and Reach 3 in particular are experiencing extensive urban development. The Big Bend Conservation Area, formally known as the Boy Scout Camp, maintains access to the river via the adjacent backwater and would make the area a likely candidate for development. Securing the

property for the LCR MSCP ensures the commitment of adjacent land owners, and controls future development in the surrounding areas. Long-term security of the property would also provide protection to the backwater and allow for future restoration activities.

A long-term lease with the option to renew has been drafted to compensate SNWA for the acquisition cost of the 15 acres of upland. The value was established by a federal appraisal was conducted which set the appraisal price and compensation at \$872,000. The compensation will be split equally over 2 fiscal years beginning in FY10. 10 ac-ft of water attached to the Boy Scout Camp property acquired by SNWA was excluded from the federal appraisal. Compensation was approved by the Steering Committee in October of 2008.

A land use agreement between Reclamation, NDOW, SNWA and Nevada Division of State Parks is being drafted. The land use agreement will document the roles and responsibility of each party pertaining to continual management of the Big Bend Conservation Area.

Previous Activities: N/A.

FY08 Accomplishments: This work plan was a new start for FY09.

FY09 Activities:

Maintenance/Restoration/Management. A land and water resolution was presented to and approved by the Steering Committee in October 2008. The program intends to secure the land and water resources through a long term lease agreement with SNWA.

A land use agreement between Reclamation, NDOW, SNWA and Nevada Division of State Parks is scheduled to be finalized in FY09. The land use agreement will document the roles and responsibility of each party pertaining to continual management of the Big Bend Conservation Area.

SNWA has assumed the responsibility of restoring the upland portion of Conservation Area at no cost to the program. Reclamation has reviewed the site improvement plans to ensure compatibility with LCR MSCP. A Restoration Development and Monitoring Plan will be drafted by Reclamation and posted to the LCR MSCP website for the backwater portion of the Conservation Area. The Plan will document the operations, maintenance, and monitoring activities associated with the backwater.

NDOW is coordinating with the Nevada Wildlife Commission for the installation of a buoy at the entrance of the backwater. The buoy will restrict access to the backwater to only wakeless speed in order to decrease disturbance to wildlife.

All land use agreement parties have indicated their support of creating a native habitat demonstration area throughout the upland area of the site. SNWA's intent is to draft a site improvement plan for the upland portion of the property in support of education and outreach activities. SNWA is currently removing salt cedar from the site in anticipating of future habitat creation efforts. SNWA anticipates establishment of native trees consisting of honey mesquite, cottonwood-willow and other upland drought tolerant species will be planted throughout the

property. The LCR MSCP supports SNWA's effort to establish native plants on the upland property and by providing review and comment on the site improvement plan will ensure compatibility with the goals of backwater protection

Several structures (i.e. laundry room, bathroom, septic tank and meeting area) were installed by the Boy Scouts many years ago. In order to develop the site into a native habitat area, SNWA has agreed to coordinate and fund the removal of the structures.

Monitoring. Presence/absence marsh bird surveys will be conducted in March, April and May under D1. Three survey points will be established in the marsh habitat, the Standardized North American Marsh Bird Monitoring Protocol will be used. At each survey point, a vegetation survey will be conducted once per year, during the same time as the marsh bird surveys are conducted (April-May). The general methodology will follow what is outlined under *habitat measurements* in the North American Marsh Bird Survey Protocol. Native fish surveys are conducted using existing C and D Work Tasks.

Proposed FY10 Activities:

Maintenance/Restoration/Management. The SNWA will be reimbursed for approximately ½ of the funding used to secure the Boy Scout Camp property. The balance will be reimbursed in FY11. Nevada Division of State Parks has been identified to provide on-site personnel in support of care and maintenance of the property. Site personnel will be utilized for regulation enforcement, on-site management, site security, and point of contact in the event of a wildland fire. The LCR MSCP will continue to support SNWA's effort to establish native plants on the upland property and ensure compatibility with the goals of backwater protection.

Monitoring. Presence/absence marsh bird surveys will be conducted in March, April and May in the marsh habitat at the three survey points (D1). At each survey point a vegetation survey will be conducted once per year, during the same time as the marsh bird surveys are conducted (April-May).

Pertinent Reports: The *November 2006 Trip Report* is posted on the LCR MSCP Web site.