

Work Task E16: Conservation Area Site Selection

FY09 Estimates	FY09 Actual	Cumulative Accomplishment Through FY09	FY10 Approved Estimate	FY11 Proposed Estimate	FY12 Proposed Estimate	FY13 Proposed Estimate
\$200,000	\$203,978.83	\$835,000.17	\$360,000	\$375,000	\$375,000	\$375,000

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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: CLRA1, WIFL1, BONY2, RASU2, WRBA2, WYBA2, CRCR2, YHCR2, LEBI1, BLRA1, YBCU1, ELOW1, GIFL1, GIWO1, VEFL1, BEVI1, YWAR1, SUTA1, FLSU1, MNSW2, CLMB2, PTBB2

Location: Reaches 1-7, Arizona, California, and Nevada

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 landowners 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. The cost of appraisal services is typically captured in the E16 budget.

As new sites are evaluated and prioritized, each new site will be presented to the Steering Committee either through the site selection process or, if acquisition is required, through a Land and Water Resolution or Program Decision Document. 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. Backwaters proposed for management of native fish are reviewed under E15.

FY09 Accomplishments: FY09 accomplishments focused on securing properties for both the desert tortoise and flat-tailed horned lizard (FTHL). Three federal appraisals were conducted to establish fair market value for privately held lands occupied by desert tortoises within the Chuckwalla Bench ACEC. The appraisals were conducted with the permission of the landowners who had previously expressed interest in selling their parcels. In total, 260 acres of land were appraised. Desert Tortoise (E29) has been established as a new start in FY10 and will track future accomplishments.

Both the Anza-Borrego Desert State Park and Dos Palmas Preserve were identified as having the potential to fulfill the conservation measure for the FTHL. The Dos Palmas Preserve has privately held lands occupied by FTHL; however, it was unknown if FTHL were present on privately held lands within the Anza-Borrego Desert State Park.

A FTHL survey was conducted at the Anza-Borrego Desert State Park located in Borrego Springs, California. The state park was identified because the Park's non-profit foundation maintains many large tracts of land available for acquisition and permanent protection. Trained FTHL monitors from the BOR, BLM, and California Parks participated in a three-day presence/absence survey. The survey showed an inconclusive presence of FTHLs. In light of the survey, the recommendation was made to focus efforts within the Dos Palmas Preserve.

FY10 Activities: FY10 activities are focused on securing properties to satisfy the FTHL conservation measure, development of draft habitat goals by reach and state, and evaluation of backwaters created from existing dry ground.

With the passing by the Steering Committee of Program Decision Document 10-001: Land Approval in October 2009, Reclamation is directed to evaluate unprotected properties within the Salt Creek ACEC of the Dos Palmas Preserve for inclusion into the program for the protection of FTHL. Secured properties would be donated to the BLM and managed as FTHL habitat. All FTHL acquisition costs prior to FY11 will be captured under this work task. Costs include preliminary site visits for lands and realty personnel, discussions with the BLM, working with landowners, and costs of appraisals. Beginning in FY11, Flat-tailed Horned Lizard (E30) will track expenditures to secure properties and turn over management to the BLM

In January 2010 the LCR MSCP held a technical two-day workshop in Boulder City, Nevada to review the draft land cover type creation goals by reach and state presented at the October 2009 Steering Committee meeting in Laughlin. All LCR MSCP stakeholders were invited to attend and participate in the meeting, which will help refine the creation

goals. As a result of the workshop, working with our partners the LCR MSCP will be actively talking with potential landowners to secure additional lands, primarily in California, to meet the goals of the program.

At least one backwater, which would be created on existing ground at existing or potential conservation areas, may be identified and evaluated in California during this interim period. This effort is being initiated to bring a backwater, created from dry ground, to parity with existing backwaters identified under E15.

Proposed FY11 Activities: FY11 activities will focus on the identification and evaluation of potential conservation areas, primarily in California. Specific activities include:

1. Completion of the site-selection process for sites identified under the 2008 RFP. Steps 2-6 of the *Draft Final Guidelines for the Screening and Evaluation of Potential Conservation Areas* will be conducted if the sites meet the goals identified in the workshop held in FY10.
2. As a follow-up to the workshop to define the draft habitat goals by reach and state, it is anticipated that landowners will be contacted to define their willingness to participate in the LCR MSCP and identify specific areas for evaluation. Areas acceptable to both the landowner and the LCR MSCP would be evaluated using the site-selection guidelines.

Pertinent Reports: *Draft Guidelines for the Screening and Evaluation of Potential Conservation Areas*, and *October 2008 Trip Reports* are posted on the LCR MSCP Web site.