

## Work Task E25: Big Bend Conservation Area

FY09 Estimates	FY09 Actual	Cumulative Accomplishment Through FY09	FY10 Approved Estimate	FY11 Proposed Estimate	FY12 Proposed Estimate	FY13 Proposed Estimate
\$80,000	\$137,722.25	\$137,722.25	\$500,000	\$500,000	\$80,000	\$80,000

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**Start Date:** FY09

**Expected Duration:** FY55

**Long-term Goal:** Habitat protection

**Conservation Measures:** BONY2, RASU2, and FLSU1

**Location:** Reach 3, Nevada, 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 Conservation Area Site Selection (E16) 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 sections C, D, and F.

**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 minimal 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

makes 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 landowners, 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 signed to reimburse SNWA for the acquisition cost of the 15 acres of upland. The value was established by a federal appraisal, which set the appraisal price and compensation at \$872,000. The compensation will be split equally over two fiscal years, beginning in FY10 as an in-kind contribution. Reimbursement was approved by the Steering Committee in October of 2008.

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

**Previous Activities:** N/A

**FY09 Accomplishments:**

**Maintenance/Restoration/Management.** A land resolution was presented approved by the Steering Committee in October 2008. The program intends to secure the land resources through a long-term lease agreement with SNWA. A land use agreement between Reclamation, NDOW, SNWA, and the Nevada Division of State Parks was finalized and the signature process was initiated. The land use agreement documents the roles and responsibility of each party pertaining to continual management of the Big Bend Conservation Area.

SNWA assumed the responsibility of restoring the upland portion of Conservation Area at minimal cost to the program. Reclamation reviewed and concurred with the site improvement plans to ensure compatibility with LCR MSCP. Saltcedar was removed from the upland site and roughly 800 mesquite trees were planted. The LCR MSCP provided the mesquite trees, development of the existing groundwater well, and procurement of a portion of the irrigation system in support of SNWA's upland restoration action, which is being accomplished as an outreach project. Administrative costs associated with NEPA compliance and contracting were also expended in FY09. These actions contributed to the higher than anticipated costs.

A Restoration Development and Monitoring Plan was drafted by Reclamation and posted to the LCR MSCP Web site for the backwater portion of the Conservation Area. The plan

documents the operations, maintenance, and monitoring activities associated with the backwater.

**Monitoring:** Marsh bird surveys were conducted during March, April, and May, utilizing the National Marsh Bird Monitoring Protocol. No LCR MSCP covered species were detected.

**FY10 Activities:** The SNWA will be reimbursed for approximately one half of the funding used to secure the Boy Scout Camp property. The balance will be reimbursed in FY11. 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. The land use agreement and lease to secure and manage the property for the life of the program have been signed by all parties.

The 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. A Cooperative Agreement will be submitted between the Nevada Division of State Parks and Reclamation for this purpose.

NDOW has coordinated with the Nevada Wildlife Commission for the installation of two buoys at the entrance of the backwater and the installation has been approved. The buoys will restrict access to the backwater to only wakeless speed in order to decrease disturbance to wildlife. Marsh bird surveys will be conducted in March, April, and May at previous established points.

**Proposed FY11 Activities:** The SNWA will be reimbursed the remaining balance, approximately one half of the funding, used to secure the Boy Scout Camp property. 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.

Installation of the buoys is anticipated for this year; the buoys will be installed during the winter when low water conditions are present. Marsh bird surveys will be conducted in March, April, and May at previous established points.

**Pertinent Reports:** *Big Bend Conservation Area Restoration Development and Monitoring Plan*, and the *Site Improvement Plan* are posted on the LCR MSCP Web site.