Lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation Program

Balancing Resource Use and Conservation

Big Bend Conservation Area

The Big Bend Conservation Area is a partnership among the Lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation Program (LCR MSCP), the State of Nevada, and the Southern Nevada Water Authority (SNWA). The conservation area was established to protect a 15-acre backwater located along the Colorado River south of Laughlin, Nevada. In 2009, the SNWA acquired a 15-acre property, known as Boy Scout Camp, adjacent to an existing backwater to prevent commercial development. Subsequently, an agreement was entered into by the SNWA, the State of Nevada, and the Bureau of Reclamation to manage this backwater for native fish species under the LCR MSCP.

The Big Bend Conservation Area includes 15 acres of uplands purchased by the SNWA and 15 acres of backwater owned by the State of Nevada (see map). The conservation area is an in-holding within the State of Nevada's Big Bend State Recreation Area. The reach of the Colorado River between Davis Dam and Parker Dam is experiencing extensive urban development and has very few undeveloped backwaters. Management of the Big Bend Conservation Area by the LCR MSCP provides protection to this valuable, unspoiled backwater and allows for future habitat restoration activities that benefit native fish species, including bonytail, flannelmouth suckers, and razorback suckers.

Connected Backwater Flannelmouth suckers were reintroduced into the Colorado River below Davis Dam by the Arizona Game and Fish Department in 1976. This stock has endured for almost four decades and now represents the only known population of this native species in the Colorado River downstream from Grand Canyon. The Big Bend Conservation Area is located across the river from known flannelmouth sucker and razorback sucker spawning areas, and native fish monitoring efforts within the existing backwater have indicated the presence of bonytail, flannelmouth suckers, and razorback suckers.

Bathymetric surveys of the backwater indicate portions of the backwater have filled with sediment and are blocking access to the western portion of the backwater. The sediment plug appears to be caused by summer thunderstorms. Plans to remove the sediment plug and increase surface water flow throughout the backwater are scheduled for 2021. For more information and documentation about this activity, visit the LCR MSCP Web site at: www.lcrmscp.gov.

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