Lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation Program

Balancing Resource Use and Conservation

Imperial Ponds Conservation Area

The Imperial Ponds Conservation Area is a partnership between the Lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation Program (LCR MSCP) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The conservation area was established to create a mosaic of habitats within Arizona on the Imperial National Wildlife Refuge, which is located near Yuma, Arizona.

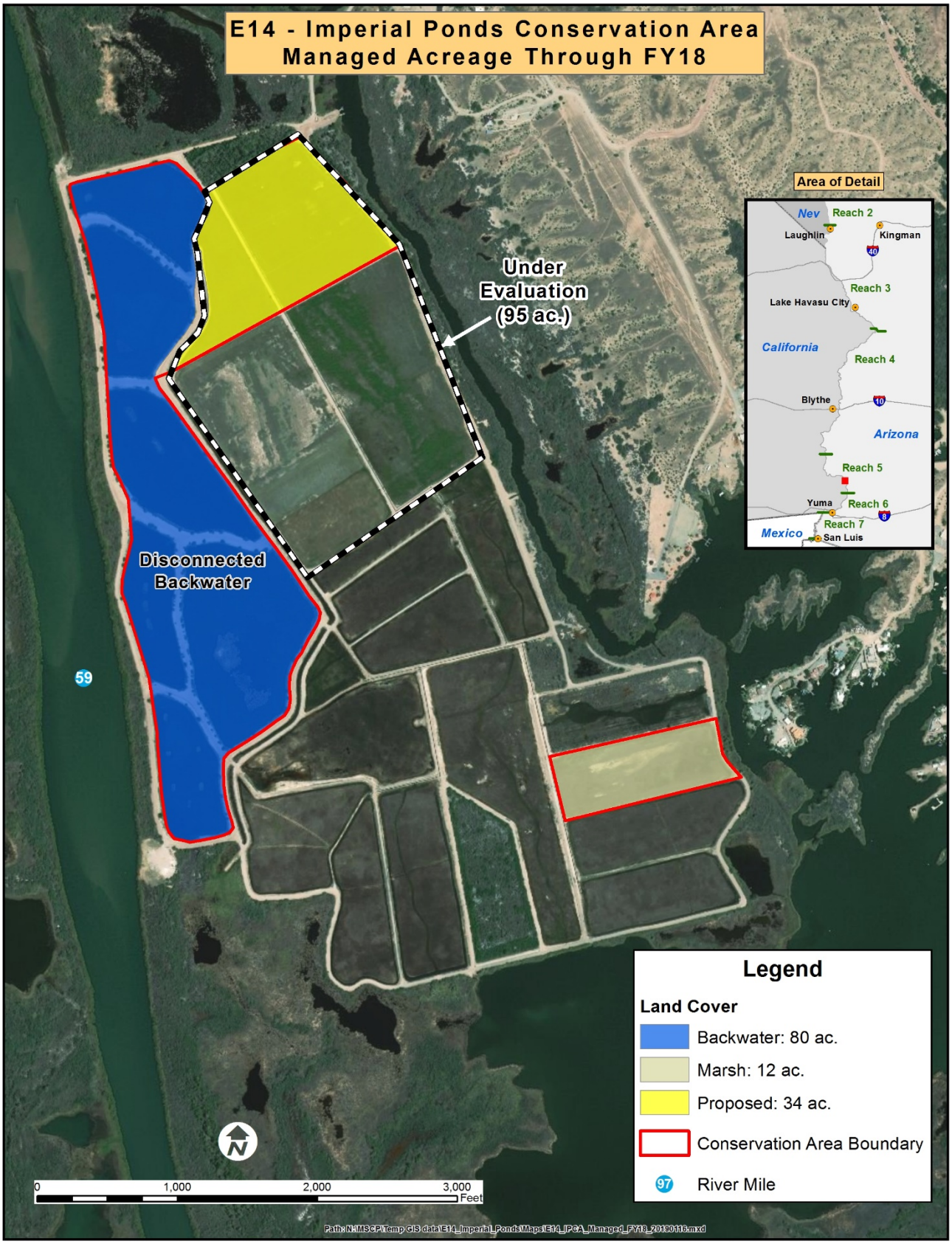
Disconnected backwaters have been created for native fishes on a portion of the conservation area, while a marsh has been created and managed for secretive marsh birds listed in the LCR MSCP Habitat Conservation Plan. An additional area, tentatively scheduled for cottonwood-willow planting, is being evaluated prior to restoration.

Disconnected Backwaters. Six backwaters provide a total of 80 acres of habitat for endangered razorback sucker and bonytail fish species. The backwaters are independently managed and provide a diversity of depths and habitat features. The backwaters have a water delivery system that is supplied from groundwater wells. Each pond receives approximately 8.50 acre-feet per month, except during July through September, when the water volume increases to 17 acre-feet per month. To create the backwaters, approximately 600,000 cubic yards of material was excavated. Native fishes were reintroduced in 2016–17 following backwater renovations, and established populations are currently monitored through annual surveys.

Field 18 Marsh. A 12-acre marsh was created in the southeast corner of the Imperial National Wildlife Refuge. This field was cleared during the winter of 2007–08 and was converted into a bulrush-dominated marsh managed for secretive marsh bird species. The marsh has been managed for marsh birds since 2008, and Yuma clapper rails, western least bitterns, and California black rails have been detected.

Potential Fields for Cottonwood-Willow Planting. Groundwater wells were installed around the fields to reduce existing soil salinity, and a groundwater monitoring network was established to gather information to support decisions on future potential restoration of the area. Management of salts is essential to the long-term viability of any restoration conducted on these fields.

For more information and documentation about this activity, visit the LCR MSCP Web site at: www.lcrmscp.gov.



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