

Work Task E29: Desert Tortoise

FY08 Estimates	FY08 Actual	Cumulative Accomplishment Through FY08	FY09 Approved Estimate	FY10 Proposed Estimate	FY11 Proposed Estimate	FY12 Proposed Estimate
\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$195,000	\$50,000	\$50,000

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Start Date: FY09

Expected Duration: FY2012

Long-term Goal: Acquisition and protection of unprotected occupied habitat.

Conservation Measures: DET01

Location: The Chuckwalla Bench Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) is located in Riverside County, CA between the Chuckwalla Mountains and the Chocolate Mountains.

Purpose: Acquire and transfer to the Bureau of Land Management, 230 acres of unprotected occupied desert tortoise habitat for permanent protection of the species' habitat.

Connections with Other Work Tasks (past and future): The Chuckwalla Bench ACEC was identified in the FY07 RFP issued under Work Task E16 Conservation Area Site Selection.

Project Description: The LCR MSCP contains a specific conservation measure: DET01-Aquire and protect 230 acres of existing unprotected occupied habitat, (LCR MSCP Habitat Conservation Plan, 2004).

In response to the Programs FY07 Request for Projects, the Coachella Valley Mountains Conservancy (the Conservancy) proposed the acquisition of 230 acres of desert tortoise habitat within the Chuckwalla Bench ACEC, which is managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). In 2007, the BLM's California Desert District Office was contacted to determine the transfer of ownership process. Several administrative procedures (i.e. letter writing, documentation and solicitor review) will occur prior to the time of purchases. It is anticipated that private parcels acquired by the Program will be transferred to the BLM after purchase.

Previous Activities: In 2007, the LCR MSCP solicited potential habitat areas for acquisition from Steering Committee Members. Coachella Valley Water District in conjunction with the Conservancy proposed the acquisition of private in-holdings within the Chuckwalla Bench ACEC. Funding for coordination meetings and administrative costs were previously charged to "Work Task: E16 Conservation Area Site Selection."

With the help of the Conservancy individual land owners within the ACEC were identified using county records and tax assessor information. Twelve individual land owners with a combined 1,400 acres located within five section acres were identified. Private parcels for potential acquisition range in size from 40 acres to 120 acres.

FY08 Accomplishments: This is a new start in FY09.

FY09 Activities: At the October 2008 Steering Committee a Land and Water Resolution was presented and approved. Rather than delay the appraisal process, \$50,000 has been transferred from E16 to initiate the process in FY09. Private in-holding land owners have been contacted by the LCR MSCP and the Conservancy. With the land owners' permission a federal appraisal will be conducted to establish fair market value. Due to the increase in appraisal costs, additional funding, not described in the land and water resolution, has been budgeted to capture the overhead and contract administration costs. Commencing in FY09 all desert tortoise acquisition costs will be captured under Work Task E29 Desert Tortoise for transparency to stakeholders and accurate accounting.

Proposed FY10 Activities: Activities during FY10 will include the continuation of acquiring targeted parcels and transferring them to the BLM. Work will continue until the target of 230 acres of desert tortoise habitat are acquired and transferred.

Pertinent Reports: N/A.