

Work Task E29: Desert Tortoise

FY10 Estimates	FY10 Actual	Cumulative Accomplishment Through FY10	FY11 Approved Estimate	FY12 Proposed Estimate	FY13 Proposed Estimate	FY14 Proposed Estimate
\$195,000	\$173,512.57	\$173,512.57	\$50,000	\$0	\$0	\$0

Contact: Jed Blake, (702) 293-8165, jblake@usbr.gov

Start Date: FY10

Expected Duration: FY11

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, California, between the Chuckwalla Mountains and the Chocolate Mountains.

Purpose: Acquire 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 Conservation Area Site Selection (E16).

Project Description: The HCP requires the LCR MSCP to acquire and protect 230 acres of existing unprotected occupied habitat.

In response to the LCR MSCP's FY07 Request for Projects, the Coachella Valley Mountains Conservancy proposed the acquisition of 230 acres of desert tortoise habitat, currently owned by private landowners 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 purchase. Private parcels acquired by the LCR MSCP will be transferred to the BLM for permanent protection.

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.

With the help of the Conservancy, twelve individual landowners within the ACEC were identified using county records and tax assessor information. Three landowners granted the Program access to survey and appraise their parcels. The appraisals, totaling 260 acres, were conducted in FY09 through the Federal Appraisal Service Directorate.

FY10 Accomplishments: Desert tortoise surveys were conducted on six parcels totaling 240 ac in June and one 20 ac parcel in September. Desert tortoise sign and/or live desert tortoises were detected on all seven parcels. Two live desert tortoises outside their burrows were detected on land adjacent to the parcels. Two live desert tortoises were detected inside their burrows on land inside the parcels. Land in all seven parcels was classified as occupied desert tortoise habitat.

The first acquisition, 200 acres of occupied desert tortoise habitat from one landowner, was completed. Approximate price per acre was \$408. In September 2010 the BLM-California Desert District office sent a letter to Reclamation confirming the acceptance of the property, the recorded grant deed in BLM's name and reference to the LCR MSCP Conservation Measure DET01. The remaining two acquisitions are scheduled to take place in FY11.

FY11 Activities: The second acquisition, a 40 acre parcel, was completed in December 2010. The remaining 20 acre parcel is in escrow and when complete will fulfill the conservation measure goal. Once Reclamation receives confirmation from the BLM and all grant deeds are recorded, the LCR MSCP Program Manager will contact the USFWS. A formal letter will be sent documenting the occupied, but unprotected habitat acquired and recorded grant deeds held with the BLM. This will fully satisfy the LCR MSCP's commitments under DET01 and close this Work Task.

Proposed FY12 Activities: Closed in FY11.

Pertinent Reports: *Desert Tortoise Surveys in the Chuckwalla Desert Wildlife Management Area on Private Land Parcels Proposed for Acquisition* will be posted on the LCR MSCP website.