

Work Task E15: Backwater Site Selection

FY11 Estimate	FY11 Actual Obligations	Cumulative Expenditures Through FY11	FY12 Approved Estimate	FY13 Proposed Estimate	FY14 Proposed Estimate	FY15 Proposed Estimate
\$20,000	\$17,255.29	\$1,282,479.86	\$20,000	\$550,000	\$100,000	\$100,000

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Start Date: FY06

Expected Duration: FY19

Long-term Goal: Habitat creation.

Conservation Measures: BONY2, RASU2, and FLSU1.

Location: Reaches 3-6; California, and Nevada, River Mile 22-276, Arizona, California, and Nevada.

Purpose: The backwater site selection process is used to evaluate and prioritize potential sites for backwater habitat creation for razorback sucker, bonytail, and flannelmouth sucker.

Connections with Other Work Tasks (past and future): E16 is used with this work task to identify projects other than existing backwaters for habitat creation.

Project Description: Backwater site selection consists of a five-step process to evaluate existing backwaters along the Colorado River within the LCR MSCP planning area, from reaches 3 to 6. This ultimately results in the conceptual-level planning efforts for a select number of sites, which would become available for the Program Manager to select for inclusion into the program. New backwaters, which may be constructed separate from the existing river channel (and its associated backwaters), are excluded from this effort, and would follow the general site-selection process (E16). Backwaters may be disconnected or connected with the main channel of the Lower Colorado River. Backwaters that are disconnected from the LCR channel are of considerably higher value to bonytail and razorback sucker than connected backwaters in the LCR, and are the preferred type of backwater to achieve LCR MSCP conservation goals for these species.

Previous Activities: The inventory of existing backwaters within Reaches 3-6 has been completed. Three backwaters are currently being managed under the LCR MSCP: 1) Beal Lake, 2) Big Bend Conservation Area, and 3) Imperial Ponds. Beal Lake was created under the 1997 Biological Opinion and does not count towards the 360 acres required under the LCR MSCP. Big Bend represents 15 acres of connected backwater within Reach 3 and Imperial Ponds represents 80 of disconnected backwater within Reach 5.

FY11 Accomplishments: Discussions were held with representatives from the USFWS, CDFG, AGFD, NDOW, and Reclamation to clarify the goals of the backwater creation conservation measures and allow the program to continue to select and implement additional backwaters. As discussed with our Steering Committee, the focus of the new backwaters is on development in California.

The key discussion items and decisions addressed both the type of backwater to be created (disconnected and connected) and the location of these backwaters (Reach and State). First, although disconnected backwaters are the preference for the program a mix of connected and disconnected is expected to provide benefit to native fishes and therefore is acceptable. Second, backwaters within Reach 3 should be open to river to allow flannelmouth suckers access to the slackwater. Based on these clarifications, a five-year backwater strategy is not longer necessary.

FY12 Activities: With all parties in agreement, that backwaters in Reach 3 should be open to the river, we have begun the evaluation of potential backwater sites within California. An opportunity to partner with the City of Needles to maintain an open backwater at Bureau Bay has arisen and is being evaluated. Design and implementation of a plan to maintain the connection to the river, which would include excavation of material, is being developed. The actual implementation would follow the normal Work Task process and is included as a new start in FY13 under Work Task E32: Bureau Bay. Five other potential areas, within Reach 3 and the state of California, are also being investigated.

Another potential backwater project within Reach 4, located on an area referred to as PVER-South, is being evaluated with CDFG and would consist of both connected and disconnected backwaters. The actual implementation would follow the normal work task process and be tracked under a new work task.

Evaluating and implementing secondary filtration at the Imperial Ponds is now being addressed under E14: Imperial Ponds Conservation Area since the application will be site specific. Additional activities identified in the strategy which will help guide the selection process, such as determine salinity, oxygen, and temperatures limitations of native fish are on-going, but funded through other work tasks.

Proposed FY13 Activities: The evaluation of potential disconnected backwaters within Reach 3 and in the state of California is expected to be completed. Upon completion, we will begin identification of potential connected backwaters within Reach 3, but located in Nevada or Arizona. Implementation of any actions at Bureau Bay would be addressed under Work Task E32.

Drilling of exploratory production wells at PVER-South is anticipated. The intent is to determine the quantity and quality of water that could be delivered to disconnected ponds within the site. At the conclusion of the well drilling, drafting of a Restoration, Development, and Monitoring Plan, and signing of a land use agreement, costs for implementation at PVER-South would be addressed under a new work task.

Pertinent Reports: N/A