

Work Task E16: Conservation Area Site Selection

FY11 Estimate	FY11 Actual Obligations	Cumulative Accomplishment Through FY11	FY12 Approved Estimate	FY13 Proposed Estimate	FY14 Proposed Estimate	FY15 Proposed Estimate
\$375,000	\$259,346.35	\$1,184,867.65	\$375,000	\$375,000	\$375,000	\$375,000

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Start Date: FY05

Expected Duration: FY30

Long-term Goal: Habitat creation.

Conservation Measures: CLRA1, WIFL1, BONY2, RASU2, WRBA2, WYBA2 CRCR2, YHCR2, LEBI1, BLRA1, YBCU1, ELOW1, GIFL1, GIWO1, VEFL1, BEVI1, YWAR1, SUTA1, FLSU1, MNSW2, CLMB2, PTBB2

Location: Reaches 1-7, Arizona, California, and Nevada

Purpose: Request, identify, prioritize, visit, and recommend potential conservation areas to the Steering Committee for development under the habitat creation requirements of the LCR MSCP.

Connections with Other Work Tasks (past and future): The process developed under this work task will guide the selection of future conservation area sites to be developed under Section E work tasks.

Project Description: Guidelines have been developed to describe the process for working with interested parties to identify sites for screening and evaluation as potential conservation areas for creating and maintaining habitat over the term of the LCR MSCP.

Reclamation will work with landowners to secure an interest in land and water resources sufficient to create and maintain LCR MSCP habitats. It is anticipated that willing landowners will enter into some form of long-term commitment that secures resources for the 50-year term of the LCR MSCP.

When developing a financial value for subject lands and water, Reclamation must administer a Federal appraisal using the Department of Interior's designated appraisal services office. The cost of appraisal services is typically captured in the E16 budget.

As new sites are evaluated and prioritized, each new site will be presented to the Steering Committee either through the site selection process or, if acquisition is required, through a Land and Water Resolution or Program Decision Document. This approval allows Reclamation to move forward with the new site and prepare specific restoration development and monitoring

plans guiding implementation of the conservation area. Backwaters proposed for management of native fish are reviewed under E15.

FY11 Accomplishments: FY11 activities were focused on building partnerships with resource agencies and identifying properties for future development. The need to develop lands within the state of California has been identified and is a priority of the program.

We continued to attend and contribute at numerous meetings held with other resources agencies and tribal entities. We also conduct quarterly meetings with USFWS representatives from all four federal refuges on the lower Colorado River, both complex managers, and staff from both the Ecological Services and the Arizona Fisheries Research Office of the USFWS.

Two development plans were drafted and sent to the California Department of Fish and Game for evaluation and approval. The first was the establishment of honey mesquite on lands adjacent to the Palo Verde Ecological Reserve and owned by the Palo Verde Irrigation District. This plan was entitled “Horse’s Head Conservation Area Development and Monitoring Plan.” Based on discussions with PVID, due to its small size the project will not be moving forward at this time. The second included the development of over 500 acres located on Cibola National Wildlife Refuge into primarily honey mesquite. This plan is titled *Shark’s Tooth Conservation Area Restoration, Development and Monitoring Plan*. The property, if developed, would satisfy over one-half of the program’s honey mesquite goal for the state of California.

A site visit to the Bard Irrigation District/Yuma Island area was conducted and concepts for potential habitat creation were identified.

FY12 Activities: Coordination with resource agencies and attendance at planning meetings is expected to be similar to those in FY11

The two development plans submitted in FY11, were not approved by the California Department of Fish and Game. Recent discussions with both CDFG and the USFWS appear to have resolved these issues. The development plan for the “Horses Head” is not being pursued at this time. The plan for honey mesquite on Cibola Refuge is being redrafted to address these concerns and will now be referred to as the “Sharks Tooth Conservation Area”. When approved this development of primarily honey mesquite at Cibola NWR is expected to provide over 500 acres of honey mesquite habitat.

Additional discussions with CDFG, USFWS, and Reclamation have centered on the development of PVER-South, of which the majority of lands are owned by CDFG. As discussed, the restoration would include both connected and disconnected backwater as well as cottonwood-willow and honey mesquite. Upon completion and comment on a development plan, drilling of groundwater wells as discussed in Work Task E15: Backwater Site Selection, and signing of a land use agreement for the property any development would be tracked under a new Work Task. Because development of marsh and backwater projects require the collection of significantly more site-specific data than projects targeting honey mesquite, their development plans will take longer to be drafted.

Restoration concepts for the Bard Irrigation District-Yuma Island area will be discussed with interested parties. However, development of any habitat would need to address multiple issues such as land ownership, water rights, and long-term management.

Proposed FY13 Activities: Coordination with resource agencies and attendance at planning meetings is expected to be similar to those in FY12. FY13 activities will focus on the identification and evaluation of potential conservation areas, primarily in California.

Pertinent Reports: N/A