

## Work Task E25: Big Bend Conservation Area

FY11 Estimates	FY11 Actual Obligations	Cumulative Expenditures Through FY11	FY12 Approved Estimate	FY13 Proposed Estimate	FY14 Proposed Estimate	FY15 Proposed Estimate
\$500,000	\$446,293.25	\$1,083,687.69	\$30,000	\$30,000	\$30,000	\$30,000

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**Start Date:** FY09

**Expected Duration:** FY55

**Long-term Goal:** Habitat protection

**Conservation Measures:** BONY2, RASU2, and FLSU1.

**Location:** Reach 3, NV, River Mile 266.5.

**Purpose:** Protection of an existing backwater from development which would result in 15 acres of backwater credit.

**Connections with Other Work Tasks (past and future):** Marsh bird surveys are conducted under D1 while fish surveys have been conducted under multiple Work Tasks in section C and F5.

**Project Description:** The Boy Scout Camp purchased by the SNWA combined with the adjacent backwater managed by the State of Nevada has collectively been identified as the Big Bend Conservation Area (BBCA). The conservation area includes approximately 15 acres of backwater within the Nevada portion of the Colorado River that will be protected, and approximately 15 acres of upland area adjacent to the backwater. The dry upland area is planned to be enhanced for education and outreach purposes by SNWA at minimal cost to the program and is being completed in concert with protection of the backwater. The properties are adjacent to and buffered by Big Bend State Park. This location may also provide an opportunity for restoration in the future.

Past native fish monitoring efforts have indicated the presence of native fishes in and adjacent to the existing backwater. Successfully securing the site will result in 15 acres of backwater habitat credit that benefits flannelmouth sucker, razorback sucker, and bonytail in Reach 3 of the LCR MSCP planning area. Reach 3 maintains the only self-sustaining population of flannelmouth sucker and has very few undeveloped backwaters, which make protection of the existing backwater a priority for the LCR MSCP. The Colorado River and Reach 3 in particular are experiencing extensive urban development. The BBCA, formally known as the Boy Scout Camp, maintains access to the river via the adjacent backwater and would make the area a likely candidate for development. Securing the property for the LCR MSCP ensures the commitment of

adjacent land owners, and controls future development in the surrounding areas. Long-term security of the property would also provide protection to the backwater and allow for future restoration activities.

**Previous Activities:** The land use agreement documents the roles and responsibility of each party pertaining to continual management of the BBCA.

In FY09, SNWA assumed the responsibility of restoring the upland portion of BBCA at minimal cost to the program. Reclamation reviewed and concurred with the site improvement plans to ensure compatibility with LCR MSCP. Saltcedar was removed from the upland site and roughly 800 mesquite trees were planted. The LCR MSCP provided the mesquite trees, development of the existing groundwater well, and procurement of a portion of the irrigation system in support of SNWA's upland restoration action.

In FY10 SNWA was reimbursed for approximately one half of the funding used to secure the Boy Scout Camp property through an in-kind contribution. SNWA continued their effort to establish native plants on the upland property and ensure compatibility with the goals of backwater protection with the support of the LCR MSCP.

In FY10, NDOW received approval from the Nevada Wildlife Commission to install two buoys at the entrance of the backwater.

#### **FY11 Accomplishments:**

**Maintenance/Restoration/Management.** The SNWA was reimbursed the remaining balance for approximately one half of the funding used to secure the Boy Scout Camp property through an in-kind contribution. Through coordination between NDOW and the LCR MSCP, permits for the buoy placements were completed in spring 2011 and the two buoys were installed in June 2011. The buoys provide a no-wake restriction in the backwater to decrease disturbance to wildlife. The LCR MSCP continued to support SNWA's effort to establish native plants on the upland property and ensure compatibility with the goals of backwater protection.

**Monitoring.** Marsh bird surveys were conducted during March, April and May utilizing the National Marsh Bird Monitoring Protocol. Four survey points were established within the boundaries of the conservation area. No LCR MSCP species were detected.

All fisheries surveys for 2011 were conducted during February through May as part of the ongoing flannelmouth sucker activities associated with work task C15. Two LCR MSCP covered species were contacted. Two razorback suckers (351 and 470 mm TL) were contacted during March and May sampling (one during each period), and a single sub-adult flannelmouth sucker (365 mm TL) was captured during the April survey.

#### **FY12 Activities:**

**Maintenance/Restoration/Management.** Selective clearing of non-native vegetation, to reduce the risk of fire, will be conducted using youth conservation crews funded by the Commissioner's

Office. The LCR MSCP will continue to support SNWA's effort to establish native plants on the upland property and ensure compatibility with the goals of backwater protection.

**Monitoring.** Marsh bird surveys will be conducted during March, April and May using the National Marsh Bird Monitoring Protocol at the four established survey points.

Fisheries surveys will be conducted. Electro-fishing, larval light trapping, and trammel nets will be accomplished monthly from February through May at locations which are dictated by water level or at locations which have historically produced native fish. Water quality profiles will be performed during each monitoring event and quarterly outside of the monitoring period.

**Proposed FY13 Activities:**

**Maintenance/Restoration/Management.** Selective clearing of non-native vegetation and general maintenance activities will be conducted using youth conservation crews funded by the Commissioner's Office. The LCR MSCP will continue to support SNWA's effort to establish native plants on the upland property and ensure compatibility with the goals of backwater protection.

**Monitoring.** Marsh bird surveys will be conducted during March, April and May using the National Marsh Bird Monitoring Protocol at the four established survey points.

Fisheries surveys will be conducted. Electro-fishing, larval light trapping, and trammel nets will be accomplished monthly from February through May at locations which are dictated by water level or at locations which have historically produced native fish. Water quality profiles will be performed during each monitoring event and quarterly outside of the monitoring period.

**Pertinent Reports:** *Big Bend Conservation Area Restoration Development and Monitoring Plan, and Site Improvement Plan* is posted to the website.