

Work Task E16: Conservation Area Site Selection

FY12 Estimate	FY12 Actual Obligations	Cumulative Expenditures Through FY12	FY13 Approved Estimate	FY14 Proposed Estimate	FY15 Proposed Estimate	FY16 Proposed Estimate
\$375,000	\$209,391.63	\$1,446,492.30	\$375,000	\$600,000	\$600,000	\$400,000

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Start Date: FY05

Expected Duration: FY25

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. Starting in FY14, Work Task E15: Backwater Site Selection will be closed and activities and expenditures will be included under E16.

Project Description: 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.

Previous Activities: 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.

Starting in FY14, Backwater Site Selection previously tracked under Work Task E15 will be tracked under E16. This change reflects the change in process to select backwaters and allows integration of multiple land cover types on a Conservation Area whose primary purpose is the creation of a backwater.

FY12 Accomplishments: We continued to attend and contribute at numerous meetings held with other resource agencies and tribal entities. We also conducted quarterly meetings with the USFWS representatives from all four federal refuges on the lower Colorado River both complex managers, and staff from both the Ecological Services Office and the Arizona Fisheries Research Office of the USFWS.

Pretty Water Conservation Area, previously identified as the Shark's Tooth Conservation Area and approved by the CDFW, was approved by the Steering Committee for development. A draft land use agreement was prepared and is expected to be signed early in FY13. After signing, initial project activities such as permitting will comment and tracked under Work Task E33: Pretty Water Conservation Area. Once complete, the Conservation Area is intended to establish over 500 acres of honey mesquite within the state of California.

Discussions with CDFW, USFWS, and Reclamation have centered on the development of PVER-South, of which the majority of lands are owned by CDFW. As discussed, the restoration would include both connected and disconnected backwater as well as cottonwood-willow and honey mesquite. 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 Water District-Haughtelin Lake Wildlife Area were developed. However, multiple issues such as land ownership, water rights, and long-term management need to be addressed.

FY13 Activities: Coordination with resource agencies and attendance at planning meetings is expected to be expanded with the inclusion of Work Task E15.

Discussion with Bard Water District on the Haughtelin Lake Wildlife Area is expected to continue. Additional opportunities for restoration on tributaries to the lower Colorado River are also being discussed. Specifically, the Nature Conservancy has prepared a review of restoration options for the lower Gila River. We are also actively involved in potential restoration opportunities on the Virgin River on lands owned by the NDOW and managed as the Overton Wildlife Management Area.

Proposed FY14 Activities: Coordination with resource agencies and attendance at planning meetings is expected to be similar to those in FY13. FY14 activities will be

expanded to address all Conservation Area selection and continue to focus on the identification and evaluation of potential conservation areas, primarily in California.

Development and construction of the Mohave Valley backwater, 52 acres of open water and emergent marsh, is tentatively scheduled pending successful negotiations with property owners and leasee's. The backwater is located in Reach 3 and therefore would be open to the main channel of the river. Although the focus is on creation of a backwater for native fish, integration of all four land cover types (open water, marsh, honey mesquite, and cottonwood-willow) is being proposed.

Pertinent Reports: N/A