

## Work Task E25: Big Bend Conservation Area

FY12 Estimates	FY12 Actual Obligations	Cumulative Expenditures Through FY12	FY13 Approved Estimate	FY14 Proposed Estimate	FY15 Proposed Estimate	FY16 Proposed Estimate
\$30,000	\$16,826.97	\$1,100,514.66	\$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 Southern Nevada Water Authority (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.

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, formerly 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 provides protection to the backwater and allow for future restoration activities as warranted.

**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. Also in FY10, NDOW received approval from the Nevada Wildlife Commission to install two buoys, which have been placed at the entrance of the backwater.

#### **FY12 Accomplishments:**

**Maintenance/Restoration/Management.** Selective clearing of non-native vegetation, to reduce the risk of fire, was conducted using youth conservation crews funded with non-cost share dollars. Once cleared, non-native material was chipped and spread onto the trail system. Mulch allowed for dust control and road stabilization for work trucks entering the site.

The irrigation well onsite failed in August 2012 and required repair. Both the SNWA and Reclamation contributed to the rehabilitation of the irrigation system. A temporary irrigation system repair was completed and it is forecasted to be used for the next two years. 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 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.

Small mammal trapping was conducted in the spring and fall of 2012. Two cotton rats were captured in spring of 2012 and three cotton rats were captured in the fall of 2012.

All fisheries surveys for 2012 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.

### **FY13 Activities:**

**Maintenance/Restoration/Management.** The project will continue to host youth conservation crews funded with non-cost share dollars. The site provides a good venue for youth to conduct habitat maintenance and is consistent with the goals and objectives of the conservation area. LCR MSCP staff will be available for coordination meetings, site visits, meetings with adjacent land owners and similar meetings when required.

During heavy rain storms, debris and moving water enter the parking lot causing erosion damage. Improvements to the parking lot and drainage area of the site will be conducted in the spring. Cooperatively, Reclamation and SNWA have cleaned up a four-car garage used for dry storage and also serves as a meeting area. Paint, weatherization and removal of debris will be conducted.

**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. Small mammal trapping was conducted in January 2013 with two Colorado River cotton rats captured. Trapping will also take place during the fall of 2013.

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 FY14 Activities:**

**Maintenance/Restoration/Management.** The project may continue to host youth conservation crews funded with non-cost share dollars. The site provides a good venue for youth to conduct habitat maintenance and is consistent with the goals and objectives of the conservation area. 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:** The *2012 Big Bend Conservation Area Annual Report*, which summarizes any planting conducted, site management, results of monitoring, and any recommendations for future adaptive management will be posted after integration of data collected throughout the calendar year.