

Work Task E5: Cibola Valley Conservation Area

FY12 Estimate	FY12 Actual Obligations	Cumulative Expenditures Through FY12	FY13 Approved Estimate	FY14 Proposed Estimate	FY15 Proposed Estimate	FY16 Proposed Estimate
\$650,000	\$361,277.27	\$10,082,755.73	\$650,000	\$550,000	\$700,000	\$800,000

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Start Date: FY05

Expected Duration: FY55

Long-term Goal: Habitat creation.

Conservation Measures: WIFL1, WRBA2, WYBA3, YBCU1, ELOW1, GIFL1, GIWO1, VEFL1, BEVI1, YWAR1, SUTA1, MNSW2, CLMB2, PTBB2.

Location: Reach 4, AGFD, river miles 99-104, Arizona.

Purpose: Create and manage a mosaic of native land cover types for LCR MSCP covered species.

Connections with Other Work Tasks (past and future): Vegetation and species monitoring are being addressed under F1-F4, and F6.

Project Description: In 2007, Reclamation secured 1,309 acres of land serviced by the Cibola Valley Irrigation and Drainage District and established the Cibola Valley Conservation Area (CVCA). The Arizona Game and Fish Department (AGFD) acquired the CVCA in September 2007 through a multi-organizational agreement involving the AGFD, Reclamation, the Mohave County Water Authority, The Conservation Fund, and the Hopi Tribe. Through these agreements, AGFD acquired CVCA fee title and water entitlements and agreed to manage the site.

Cibola Valley Conservation Area is located in southwestern La Paz County, Arizona, about 15 miles south of Blythe, California. The valley encompasses the land inside an engineered bend of the lower Colorado River and a remnant oxbow on the west side of the river (Palo Verde Oxbow). Six phases have been restored with native vegetation and the remainder is farmed for cotton and alfalfa. The area is bordered to the south by Cibola NWR and on the east by unimproved land under the jurisdiction of the Bureau of Land Management. The river forms the north and west boundaries, except for the Palo Verde Oxbow, from river miles 98.8 to 104.9.

Agricultural areas have irrigation systems in place that are conducive for water management of riparian species. Checks, which are small borders placed within a given

field, allow for flooding of only a portion of a field. This provides additional flexibility to create and maintain saturated soil areas for covered species.

Previous Activities: Through FY11, over 650 acres of cottonwood-willow, honey mesquite, and buffer-stabilized ground have been established in phases 1-6 and are being managed for LCR MSCP covered species. Phase 4 actually consists of two locations; one site (58 acres) is located north of Phase 3. The other site consisting of 187 acres is located west of Phases 1 and 2. Approximately 80 acres of this site was planted with a mix of native seeds and irrigated in an effort to eliminate blowing dust and stabilize the ground. This seed mixture consisted of quailbush, needle grama, curly mesquite grass, desert bluebells, and desert Indian wheat. A sprinkler system was rented for four months to provide irrigation water for initial plant germination.

FY12 Accomplishments:

Maintenance/Restoration/Management. No restoration activities were scheduled for FY12. Maintenance and irrigation activities were performed throughout the site.

All fields continued to be flood irrigated. Field crews continued to control small patches of morning-glory, volunteer cotton, and saltcedar as necessary, with hand tools, throughout all the phases. This method of using crews proved to be an effective method of controlling invasive plants as they germinate. The crews remove invasive plants from the fields in the late spring or early summer.

Vegetation growing near concrete-lined canals was mechanically cleared several times to keep the tree roots from damaging or blocking the irrigation canals. Limited chemical spraying is also used to control plants and invasives from growing along the concrete lined canals.

Pole cutting in the nursery was undertaken during the winter months by the LCR MSCP and the Quechan Tribe. Collection of poles from a LCR MSCP Conservation Area by other entities involved in restoration of the lower Colorado River requires submitting a written request and receiving approval from the LCR MSCP.

The Cibola Valley Irrigation District hosts monthly meetings with its water users. The LCR MSCP is represented at each meeting. All topics are discussed ranging from irrigation issues, to maintenance, to upcoming events and activities.

Monitoring. Vegetation monitoring plots were surveyed at full intensity at the following sites: CVCA1 (19 plots), CVCA2 (19 plots), and CVCA3 (13 plots). The remaining sites were monitored at a reduced effort including, CVCA4E (6 plots), CVCA4W (11 plots), CVCA5 (13 plots), and CVCA6 (15 plots).

Three yellow-billed cuckoo nests were found at CVCA between July and August 2012. Of these, one nest fledged three young. All three fledglings from CVCA were banded with USFWS numbered bands and color bands.

Resident or breeding southwestern willow flycatchers were not found at CVCA during 2012. Eight migrating flycatchers were detected on 23 May, 19 on June 6, and one on June 13.

General bird surveys were conducted at CVCA from 15 April to 15 June 2011. Covered species detected were four pairs of yellow warblers and two pairs of summer tanagers.

CVCA was mist-netted for bats once per month during the summer season from May-September during 2012. Seven western yellow bats and four western red bats were captured in mist nets.

Colorado River cotton rats were located at CVCA phases 1 and 2 during 2012.

MacNeill's sootywings continued to be nearly absent at CVCA during 2012. Restoration plots containing the butterfly's host plant, *Atriplex lentiformis*, were sampled monthly during April to August. On each date, a random transect across the entire plot was walked, and checks within phases were sampled separately for a total of 45 transects. A total of six sootywings were counted during 2012.

FY13 Activities:

Maintenance/Restoration/Management. Maintenance of Phases 1-7 is continuing. No additional restoration planting is scheduled until at least FY16. The intent of this planting delay is to determine if additional irrigation water might become available. However, normal irrigation and maintenance activities will continue.

Monitoring. Vegetation monitoring during FY13 will be the same as during 2012. All other monitoring will continue as in FY12.

Proposed FY14 Activities:

Maintenance/Restoration/Management. Maintenance and management of land cover types established in phases 1-7 will continue. Restoration of additional Phases is not scheduled until at least FY16. Water for irrigation of the trees and to simulate historical river flooding is provided by Cibola Valley Irrigation District. A local farmer is utilized to divert and irrigate the various Phases based on site conditions and species planted. The farmer provides local knowledge of weather and farming practices, which are applied to the maintenance of the Conservation Area. The farmer and his employees are an on-site presence and provide early recognition of issues or concerns. The farmer is also responsible for assessing the water needs of the trees, and in coordination with the district and the LCR MSCP, orders and delivers the water.

Maintenance activities include grading access roads, maintaining field borders, irrigation canals, invasive plant control including hand removal and application of herbicides, and physically opening and closing irrigation gates of established land cover types. Annual costs associated with operating within the district; such as water tax, water tolls, electrical

power utility bills, and assessments for district operation are included in the annual maintenance costs.

Monitoring. Species, vegetation, microclimate, and abiotic monitoring conducted in FY13 will be continued in FY14.

Pertinent Reports: The *2012 Cibola Valley 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.