

Work Task E25: Big Bend Conservation Area

FY13 Estimates	FY13 Actual Obligations	Cumulative Expenditures Through FY13	FY14 Approved Estimate	FY15 Proposed Estimate	FY16 Proposed Estimate	FY17 Proposed Estimate
\$30,000	\$33,525.59	\$1,134,040.25	\$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 flannemouth sucker, razorback sucker, and bonytail in Reach 3 of the LCR MSCP planning area. Reach 3 maintains the only self-sustaining population of flannemouth 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, NDOW received approval from the Nevada Wildlife Commission to install two buoys, which have been placed at the entrance of the backwater.

Prior to FY13, all fisheries activities were restricted to February through May as part of ongoing flannelmouth sucker activities associated with work task C15. Two RASU and one FLSU were contacted in FY12.

FY13 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 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. Erosional damage to the parking lot from a summer rain storm was repaired and access to the backwater was maintained.

Monitoring. Marsh bird surveys were conducted during March and April. Surveys were conducted at four previously established points within the boundaries of the conservation area. No LCR MSCP species were detected.

Small mammal trapping was conducted in the fall and winter. Three Colorado River cotton rats were captured in the fall and one Colorado River cotton rat was captured in the winter in FY13.

Fish monitoring occurred 2 nights per month in December and February – May. Surveys employed a variety of techniques in an attempt to contact multiple species and life stages. Eleven RASU and one FLSU were contacted via netting and remote PIT scanning. Electro-fishing continued to be ineffective and will be discontinued in future years. Larval sampling captured several RASU in February and March; these are the first larval RASU contacted within this conservation area. Larval FLSU were contacted at rates similar to past years. A sonic telemetry study (conducted under C53) recorded continuous backwater use of this backwater by one FLSU; this fish was contacted repeatedly for 10 days. Water quality monitoring continues to indicate that this is not a

cause for concern, this is to be expected with such a substantial hydrological connection to the river.

FY14 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.

Monitoring. Marsh bird surveys will be conducted during March, April and May at the four established survey points. Small mammal trapping will be conducted in the fall and spring.

Fisheries monitoring will be conducted at a level similar and interval similar to FY13. Monitoring will include monthly survey trips during the RASU and FLSU spawning seasons. Trips will include larval light trapping, remote PIT scanning, and trammel netting. Water quality profiles will be performed during each monitoring event and quarterly outside of the monitoring period.

Proposed FY15 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 at the four established survey points. Small mammal trapping will be conducted in the fall and spring.

Fisheries monitoring will be conducted at a level and interval similar to previous years. Monitoring trips will include larval light trapping, remote PIT scanning, and trammel netting. 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.