

Work Task E5: Cibola Valley Conservation Area

FY13 Estimate	FY13 Actual Obligations	Cumulative Expenditures Through FY13	FY14 Approved Estimate	FY15 Proposed Estimate	FY16 Proposed Estimate	FY17 Proposed Estimate
\$650,000	\$330,356.42	\$10,417,024.55	\$550,000	\$700,000	\$800,000	\$900,000

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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 FY12, 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 quail bush, 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.

FY13 Accomplishments:

Maintenance/Restoration/Management. No restoration activities were scheduled for FY13. Normal scheduled 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. Expenditures were less than anticipated, as minor maintenance was deferred to transfer funding to the Laguna Division Conservation Area.

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).

Yellow-billed cuckoo surveys were conducted between late June and early August. In phases 1, 2, and 3 there were a total of five possible breeding territories, one probable breeding territory, and one confirmed breeding territory. Resident or breeding southwestern willow flycatchers were not found at CVCA during 2013. Fifteen migrating flycatchers were detected on 1 June, four on 14-16 June, and one on 22 June.

General bird surveys were conducted at CVCA from 15 April to 15 June 2013. No confirmed breeding pairs of covered species were detected. Two yellow warblers, that may have been migratory, were detected.

Western red bats were captured and radio-tagged as part of a LCR MSCP research project. Via radio-tracking, a roosting cluster of six to seven individuals was discovered at CVCA. This cluster was present at the site for two weeks in late July and August. This is the first roosting cluster of western red bats to be found on the LCR. CVCA was mist netted once per month from May to September during 2013. Five western yellow bats and ten western red bats were captured

Colorado River cotton rats were located at CVCA phases 1 and 2 during 2013.

Surveys were conducted for MacNeil's sootywings from June to September of 2013. Six sootywings were detected at CVCA in 2013.

FY14 Activities:

Maintenance/Restoration/Management. Maintenance and regular irrigation of Phases 1-6 will continue. The Restoration Development and Monitoring Plan for the planting of Phase 7 (72 acres) is being drafted. Honey mesquite trees will be purchased in FY14 and planting should occur in spring of FY15. Expenditures were less than anticipated and minor maintenance deferred, to transfer funding to the Laguna Division Conservation Area.

Monitoring. Vegetation monitoring during FY14 will be conducted starting in September 2014.

Proposed FY15 Activities:

Maintenance/Restoration/Management. Maintenance, irrigation, and management of land cover types established in phases 1-7 will continue. The Restoration Development and Monitoring Plan for the planting of Phase 8 (111 acres) will be drafted. Trees will be purchased in FY15 and planting should occur in spring of FY16.

Monitoring. Species and vegetation will be continued in FY15.

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.