

Work Task E16: Conservation Area Site Selection

| FY15 Estimate | FY15 Actual Obligations | Cumulative Expenditures Through FY15 | FY16 Approved Estimate | FY17 Proposed Estimate | FY18 Proposed Estimate | FY19 Proposed Estimate |
|---------------|-------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| \$500,000 | \$539,525.37 | \$2,954,318.83 | \$1,300,000 | \$700,000 | \$500,000 | \$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, CLNB2, and PTBB2

Location: Reaches 1–7, Arizona, California, and Nevada

Purpose: To identify, visit, evaluate, prioritize, 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 Conservation Area Development and Management (Section E) work tasks.

Project Description: The Bureau of Reclamation (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 a long-term commitment for the term of the program.

When developing a financial value for subject lands and water, Reclamation must administer a Federal appraisal using the U.S. Department of the Interior’s designated Appraisal Services Office. The cost of appraisal services is captured under the Work Task 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 that guide implementation of the conservation area.

In FY14, backwater site selection previously tracked under Work Task E15 (closed) was combined with this work task. This reflects the change in the process to select backwaters and allows integration of multiple land cover types on a conservation area in which the primary purpose is the creation of a backwater.

Previous Activities: Guidelines have been developed to describe the process of working with interested parties to identify sites for screening and evaluation as potential conservation areas. Through FY14, 11 conservation areas have been established.

FY15 Accomplishments: Coordination with resource agencies and attendance at planning meetings increased with the inclusion of Work Task E15 (closed). A workshop with representatives of the California parties was held to evaluate the status of establishing new conservation areas within the State of California.

Palo Verde Ecological Reserve-South (PVER-South): Two adjacent landowners expressed an interest in selling small, undeveloped parcels that would expand the footprint of PVER-South. A Federal appraisal was conducted for each property. For the first property, an agreement on the fair market value could not be reached, and negotiations have ended. The second property was sold to another party. No other actions or land and water resolutions are anticipated for these properties.

Parker Dam Camp: An investigation into alternate methods to collect drainage water from upstream reservoirs was conducted, and a summary report titled *30% Design Report – MSCP Native Fish Ponds Project* was completed. The report established design criteria for the creation of small ponds for native fishes, evaluated surface and groundwater information, evaluated and selected a screening method to minimize fish entrainment, and detailed a preliminary cost estimate to create a 6-acre pond. The cost per acre for construction of this pond was higher than for other created ponds due to its small size and limited availability of water, so pond construction could not be recommended for construction at this time. Parker Dam Camp was proposed as a conservation area managed as honey mesquite land cover type, with the caveat that a pond and a riparian component may be added at a future date. Parker Dam Camp is identified as Work Task E36 in FY16.

Three Fingers Lake: A light detection and ranging (LiDAR) survey, which provides topographic information, was completed; however, the data are not expected until the start of FY16.

Davis Lake: LiDAR information (topography) was collected and will be used to calculate earth-moving quantities to generate a restoration concept, if feasible, which would define the restoration effort.

Mohave Valley Conservation Area: This area was evaluated under Work Task E16 and is now being implemented as Work Task E35. It is the 12th conservation area, and when complete, it should provide 50 acres of backwater within the State of California.

Virgin River: The Virgin River lands owned by the Nevada Department of Wildlife on the Overton Wildlife Management Area have been identified for potential restoration. For safety reasons, the data loggers installed in FY13 are no longer monitored. Data collection may resume at a later date, but no data were collected during FY15.

FY16 Activities: Although coordination with resource agencies and attendance at planning meetings is expected to be similar to that of previous years, obligations will be significantly less. It is anticipated that the expenditures will be less than the approved budget due to the lack of backwater areas to be evaluated.

The following potential conservation areas, primarily in California, are being evaluated, and the findings will be brought back to the Steering Committee:

PVER-South: Negotiations for undeveloped lands adjacent to PVER-South have ended. A Restoration, Development, and Monitoring Plan will be drafted and discussed with the landowner (California Department of Fish and Wildlife). The plan, along with the drafting of an amendment to the existing Land Use Agreement, is anticipated in FY16.

Parker Dam Camp: A Restoration, Development, and Monitoring Plan will be drafted. The habitat would be creditable since, without intervention under the LCR MSCP, the lands would have been excessed and likely developed. The plan would identify the conservation area as riparian and honey mesquite and would also allow the testing of a water screening technique, a Coanda screen, to capture drainage from Gene Reservoir, which may be useful in backwaters at this or other conservation areas.

Three Fingers Lake: This lake was identified during a workshop with representatives of the California parties as having the potential to provide both backwater and marsh land cover types for the LCR MSCP. The lake is located on the Cibola National Wildlife Refuge within the State of California on lands owned by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Multiple options for creation of a conservation area will be discussed with stakeholders. It is anticipated that a

Restoration, Development, and Monitoring Plan will be drafted late in FY16 and submitted to the California Department of Fish and Wildlife for California Endangered Species Act approval.

Davis Lake: This lake was also identified during a workshop with representatives of California parties as having the potential for creation of a shallow marsh similar in size to Hart Mine Marsh. The remnant lake is located on the Cibola National Wildlife Refuge within the State of California on lands owned by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Backwaters and Marsh within Reach 4: Reach 4 has the highest potential for establishment of marsh and backwater in California based on the needs of the LCR MSCP. Increased efforts to identify these areas on lands withdrawn by Reclamation, typically between the bank line and levee, are ongoing.

Topock Marsh Inlet Canal: An opportunity may exist to create a connected backwater in Reach 3 using the former Topock Marsh Inlet Canal. However, prior to any technical investigations, land ownership needs to be verified, so a survey will be initiated in FY16.

FY17 Proposed Activities: Coordination with resource agencies will continue. Work Task E36 will be opened to track obligations for the Parker Dam Camp. The following potential sites are likely to be evaluated:

PVER-South: Obligations and expenditures will be tracked under Work Task E37.

Parker Dam Camp: Obligations and expenditures will be tracked under Work Task E36.

Three Fingers Lake: A decision for inclusion as a conservation area is expected by FY17. Inclusion into the LCR MSCP as a conservation area would require opening a new Section E work task.

Davis Lake: Based on the incorporation of LiDAR data and the generation of a restoration concept, Davis Lake may be recommended for inclusion as a marsh complex under the LCR MSCP.

Topock Marsh Inlet Canal: Pending the results of a cadastral survey, a restoration concept and preliminary cost estimate would be prepared.

Backwaters and Marsh within Reach 4: Reach 4 has the highest potential for establishment of marsh and backwater in California based on the needs of the LCR MSCP. Preliminary cost estimates for restoration on sites identified in FY16 are anticipated.

Pertinent Reports: N/A