

## Work Task E35: Mohave Valley Conservation Area

FY15 Estimate	FY15 Actual Obligations	Cumulative Expenditures Through FY15	FY16 Approved Estimate	FY17 Proposed Estimate	FY18 Proposed Estimate	FY19 Proposed Estimate
\$500,000	\$460,588.99	\$324,968.99	\$1,250,000	\$5,500,000	\$500,000	\$160,000

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**Start Date:** FY15

**Expected Duration:** FY55

**Long-Term Goal:** Habitat creation

**Conservation Measures:** BONY2, RASU2, and FLSU1

**Location:** Reach 3, River Miles 237–238, Park Moabi Regional Park, California

**Purpose:** The purpose of this work task is to create and manage a mosaic of land cover types to provide habitat for LCR MSCP covered species. Approximately 50 acres of backwater habitat for native fishes will be provided and will incorporate marsh, riparian, and mesquite cover types where appropriate.

**Connections with Other Work Tasks (Past and Future):** This project was identified under Work Task E16, and the design of the conservation area will also be conducted under that work task. Vegetation and species monitoring will be conducted under Work Tasks F1–F7.

**Project Description:** In the Mohave Valley Conservation Area (MVCA), a connected backwater will be created that diverts water off the main stem of the Colorado River just below River Mile 237. Diverted flows will run through an excavated channel, enter the existing Park Moabi backwater, and converge with the river 2 miles downstream from the new point of diversion. Excavating the channel will create approximately 50 acres of backwater habitat. The footprint of this conservation area is projected at approximately 90 acres, with native land cover types lining the banks and upland slopes of the backwater accounting for the additional 40 acres. Actual acreages by land cover type will be recalculated after construction and planting are complete.

The MVCA is located 13 miles south of Needles, California, along the Colorado River. The 149-acre property resides within the boundary of Park Moabi Regional Park. The land is owned by the California State Lands Commission (Commission) and leased to San Bernardino County (County). Prior to

approaching the Commission and County about the backwater project, the 149-acre parcel was used as an off-highway vehicle recreational area; however, once the backwater project was presented, the County was willing to divide the property to accommodate both uses.

The project's area of impact will involve the entire 149 acres (includes areas of fill) as well as lands at the top and bottom of the parcel to connect the backwater to the main stem of the Colorado River and the Park Moabi channel. Excavated material will be used throughout the site to create the desired contour elevations, but the majority of the excavated material will be used to create terrain within the county's off-highway vehicle area.

**Previous Activities:** The California State Lands Commission (the landowner) and San Bernardino County (the lessee) were approached about the project in 2012. Basic, conceptual ideas about the project were presented to the commission and the county, and discussions and lease agreement negotiations continued, but they could not move forward toward a final agreement without an official design proposal for the project.

The Bureau of Reclamation worked with the California State Lands Commission to ensure National Environmental Policy Act/California Environmental Quality Act permitting requirements are met. Both the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service were notified about the project.

A survey of the 149-acre parcel was conducted to establish new control points and develop elevation contours. Additionally, a temporary gauging station was installed directly across the river from the proposed inlet location so the river stage could be monitored. The data, in conjunction with the site elevation data, will be used to determine the volume of material that will need to be excavated to achieve the desired depth of the backwater.

The permits necessary to perform a geotechnical survey were acquired, and a survey was conducted in June 2014.

**FY15 Accomplishments:** Design review meetings were held by the project team at the completion of the 30-, 60-, and 90-percent designs. The design included a grading plan with cut and fill estimates, water control structure specifications, a backwater access point, and a three-dimensional model of the site. A hydraulic model was completed in order to determine water velocities and potential sediment transport.

Environmental compliance activities, which include a National Environmental Policy Act environmental assessment, a California Environmental Quality Act initial study, and 404 and 401 permitting, commenced in early 2015.

**Monitoring:** Riparian bird surveys were conducted at the MVCA from April 15 to June 15, 2015, using the LCR MSCP double sampling protocol to document covered species presence before restoration development. No LCR MSCP covered species were found on the plots. No fisheries monitoring will be conducted until the backwater had been completed.

**FY16 Activities:** The design for the MVCA was completed in December 2015. The California State Lands Commission approved the project, and the modification to the lease agreement, at the December commission meeting. Approvals from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the California Water Board were received in early 2016.

Construction activities will begin in September 2016 and are expected to last until early 2018. Obligations in FY16 will increase significantly due to the beginning of construction. The acceleration of obligations will allow for a seamless construction period. The acceleration of funds does not change the overall project costs, just the fiscal year in which funds are obligated, and will significantly decrease the budget in the future.

**Monitoring:** No wildlife monitoring will be conducted. It will begin after restoration is complete and the marsh and trees are mature enough to provide habitat. No fisheries monitoring will be conducted until the backwater had been completed.

**Proposed FY17 Activities:** Construction activities will continue through FY17. Plants will be ordered in spring for planting in March 2018.

**Monitoring:** No wildlife monitoring will be conducted. It will begin after restoration is complete and the marsh and trees are mature enough to provide habitat. No fisheries monitoring will be conducted until the backwater had been completed.

**Pertinent Reports:** N/A