

Work Task E35: Mohave Valley Conservation Area

FY16 Estimate	FY16 Actual Obligations	Cumulative Expenditures Through FY16	FY17 Approved Estimate	FY18 Proposed Estimate	FY19 Proposed Estimate	FY20 Proposed Estimate
\$1,250,000	\$158,178.28	\$561,810.94	\$5,500,000	\$3,500,000	\$1,750,000	\$160,000

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Start Date: FY15

Expected Duration: FY55

Long-Term Goal: Habitat creation

Conservation Measures: BONY2, FLSU1, and RASU2

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

Purpose: To create and manage a mosaic of land cover types to provide habitat for LCR MSCP covered species

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: 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 Mohave Valley Conservation Area 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. 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 Commission (landowner) and the county (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 (Reclamation) completed environmental compliance, including coordination with the Commission to ensure California Environmental Quality Act permitting requirements were met.

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. These data, in conjunction with 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. A geotechnical survey was conducted in June 2014.

Riparian bird surveys were conducted in existing habitat in April and May 2015. No LCR MSCP species were detected.

FY16 Accomplishments: The design for the Mohave Valley Conservation Area was completed in December 2015. A lease was negotiated, and Reclamation was identified as the lessee of the entire 149-acre property to allow for construction and the placement of fill material. After construction is completed, the lease will be amended by the Commission to reflect that Reclamation will be leasing only the footprint of the restored backwater and adjacent habitat, which is approximately 90 acres. Approvals from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the California Water Board were received in early 2016.

Originally, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) was to enter into a lease with the Commission and, subsequently, Reclamation would enter into an agreement with CDFW. However, a decision was made between CDFW

and the Commission to allow Reclamation to sign the lease directly with the Commission, which delayed the signing of the lease and the start of construction to 2017. As a result, obligations were less than the approved budget in FY16.

Monitoring: No wildlife or fisheries monitoring was conducted.

FY17 Activities: The Commission approved the project, and a modification to the lease agreement was approved during the October 2016 Commission meeting. The Storm Water Pollution Protection Plan was submitted in December 2016 and is active through construction. Construction activities will begin in January 2017 and are estimated to continue through spring 2019. Obligations in FY17 account for the labor, land-based equipment, and materials costs, but they are anticipated to be less than approved due to the start date being pushed back to January 2017. Land-based excavation will be completed in FY17 once groundwater is reached. The dredge will complete the wet excavation portion of the project. Dredge mobilization costs are included in FY17.

Monitoring: Compliance monitoring will be conducted as needed during construction. Post-development monitoring 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 FY18 Activities: Construction activities will continue through FY18. Dredging operations are expected to begin. Plants will be ordered in spring for planting in March 2019.

Monitoring: Compliance monitoring will be conducted as needed during construction. Post-development monitoring 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 has been completed.

Pertinent Reports: The Restoration Development and Monitoring Plan will be posted on the LCR MSCP Web site upon completion.