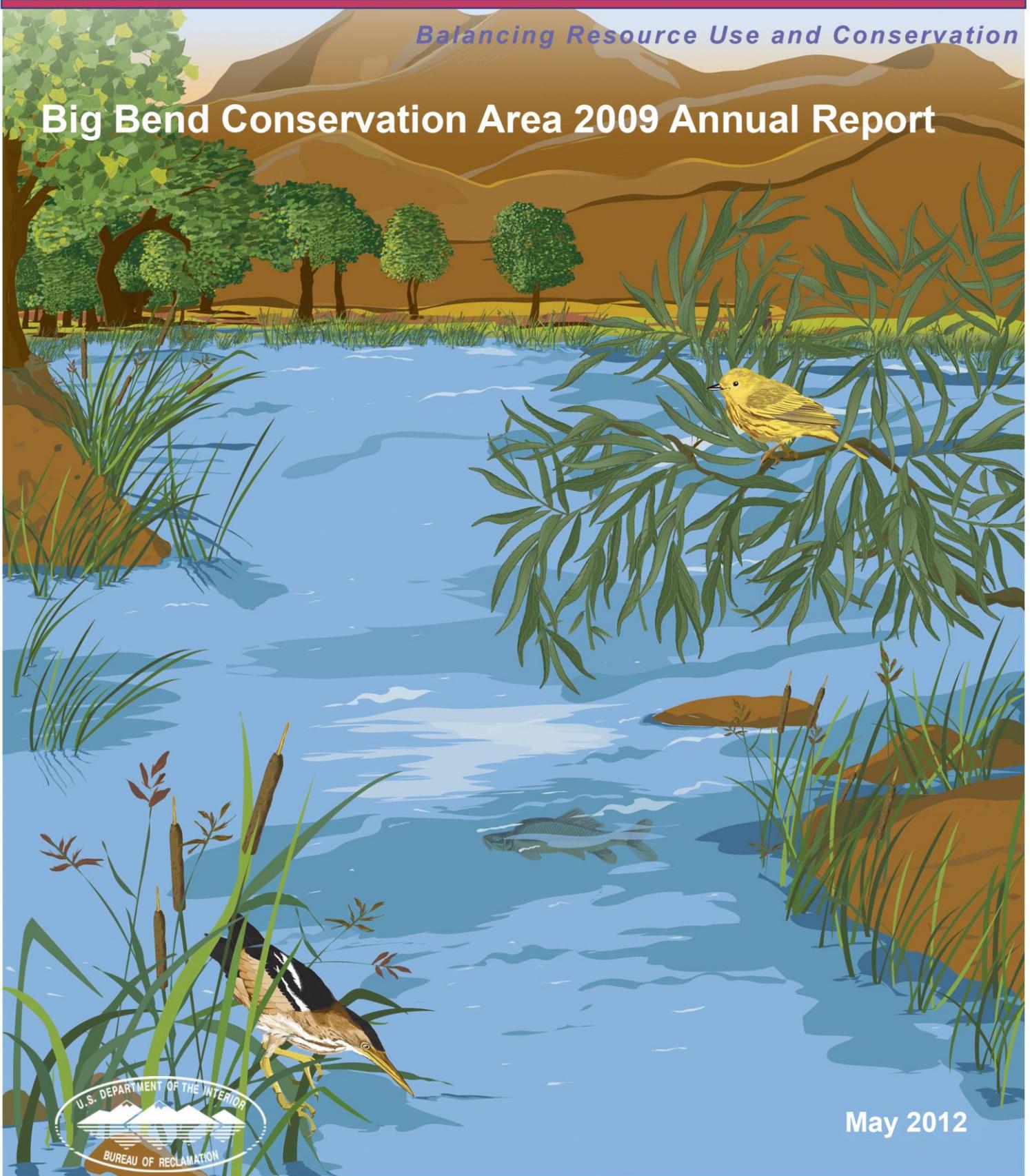




Lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation Program

Balancing Resource Use and Conservation

Big Bend Conservation Area 2009 Annual Report



May 2012

Lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation Program Steering Committee Members

Federal Participant Group

Bureau of Reclamation
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
National Park Service
Bureau of Land Management
Bureau of Indian Affairs
Western Area Power Administration

Arizona Participant Group

Arizona Department of Water Resources
Arizona Electric Power Cooperative, Inc.
Arizona Game and Fish Department
Arizona Power Authority
Central Arizona Water Conservation District
Cibola Valley Irrigation and Drainage District
City of Bullhead City
City of Lake Havasu City
City of Mesa
City of Somerton
City of Yuma
Electrical District No. 3, Pinal County, Arizona
Golden Shores Water Conservation District
Mohave County Water Authority
Mohave Valley Irrigation and Drainage District
Mohave Water Conservation District
North Gila Valley Irrigation and Drainage District
Town of Fredonia
Town of Thatcher
Town of Wickenburg
Salt River Project Agricultural Improvement and Power District
Unit "B" Irrigation and Drainage District
Wellton-Mohawk Irrigation and Drainage District
Yuma County Water Users' Association
Yuma Irrigation District
Yuma Mesa Irrigation and Drainage District

Other Interested Parties Participant Group

QuadState County Government Coalition
Desert Wildlife Unlimited

California Participant Group

California Department of Fish and Game
City of Needles
Coachella Valley Water District
Colorado River Board of California
Bard Water District
Imperial Irrigation District
Los Angeles Department of Water and Power
Palo Verde Irrigation District
San Diego County Water Authority
Southern California Edison Company
Southern California Public Power Authority
The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California

Nevada Participant Group

Colorado River Commission of Nevada
Nevada Department of Wildlife
Southern Nevada Water Authority
Colorado River Commission Power Users
Basic Water Company

Native American Participant Group

Hualapai Tribe
Colorado River Indian Tribes
Chemehuevi Indian Tribe

Conservation Participant Group

Ducks Unlimited
Lower Colorado River RC&D Area, Inc.
The Nature Conservancy



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Lower Colorado River
Multi-Species Conservation Program
Bureau of Reclamation
Lower Colorado Region
Boulder City, Nevada
<http://www.lcrmscp.gov>

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1.0 Background

The Bureau of Reclamation, State of Nevada, and the Southern Nevada Water Authority (SNWA) have worked in partnership since 2005 to secure the Boy Scout Camp property and protect the adjacent backwater for inclusion into the Lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation Program (LCR MSCP). The Boy Scout Camp property purchased by SNWA (15 acres of upland) and adjacent 15 acres of backwater within Reach 3 owned by the State of Nevada are collectively known as the Big Bend Conservation Area (BBCA).

The LCR MSCP requires a total of 360 acres of backwater be developed to support razorback sucker and bonytail. Of the 360 acres of backwater, 85 acres will be managed for the flannelmouth sucker in Reach 3 (Davis Dam to Parker Dam).

Flannelmouth suckers were reintroduced into the Colorado River below Davis Dam by Arizona Game and Fish Department in 1976 by transfer of fish captured at the confluence of the Colorado and Paria rivers at Lee's Ferry, Arizona. This stock has persisted for three decades and now represents the only known population of this native species in the Colorado River downstream of Grand Canyon.

Since 2007, all stakeholders involved have worked together to analyze both the backwater area and upland area as a potential LCR MSCP Conservation Area. Beginning in Fiscal Year 2009 (FY09), both the backwater and upland area combined are known as the BBCA.

2.0 Site Information

2.1 Purpose

This annual report provides information pertaining to the procurement and maintenance of the backwater area, and summarize monitoring reports/results that would influence the adaptive management process for the backwater area of the BBCA. The purpose of the BBCA is the protection of an existing backwater from development. Several life stages of all three LCR MSCP covered native fish species (flannelmouth sucker, razorback sucker, and bonytail) have been contacted in and around the backwater. Due to the limited number of available backwaters within Reach 3 and increasing urban development in the surrounding areas, securing this property for native fishes was consistent with the goals of the LCR MSCP.

The upland portion is being restored by SNWA to complement the BBCA. The area is not being managed as habitat for the LCR MSCP at this time and therefore is not described in this document.

2.2 Location/Description

The site is physically located in southern Nevada south of the town of Laughlin. Needles Highway and Hotel Casino Drive form the major nearby intersection. The BBCCA is located between river miles 265 and 266.

The property is a private inholding of the Big Bend of the Colorado River, Nevada State Park. Figures 1-3 describe the location of the BBCCA in more detail.

Figure 1: Big Bend River Location Map

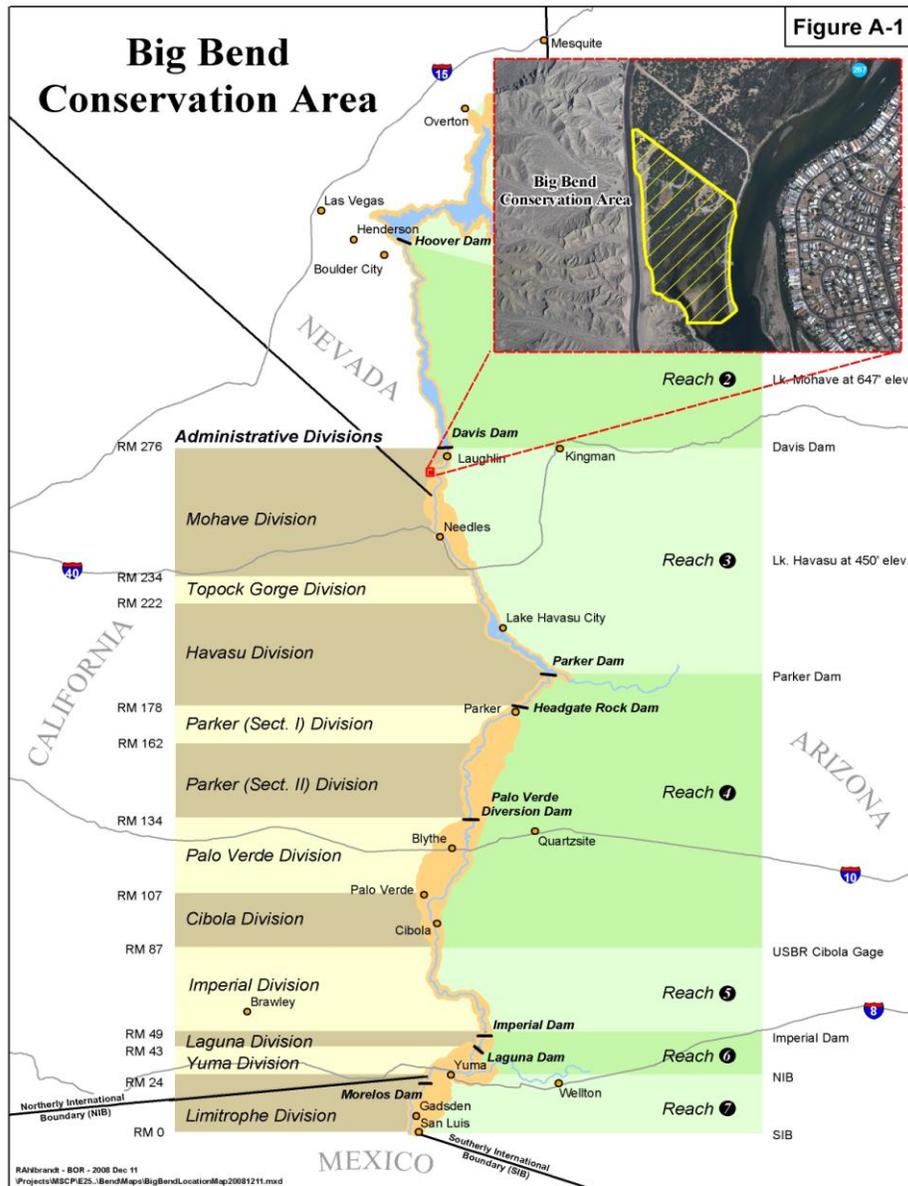


Figure 2: Big Bend State Park and BBCA Boundaries

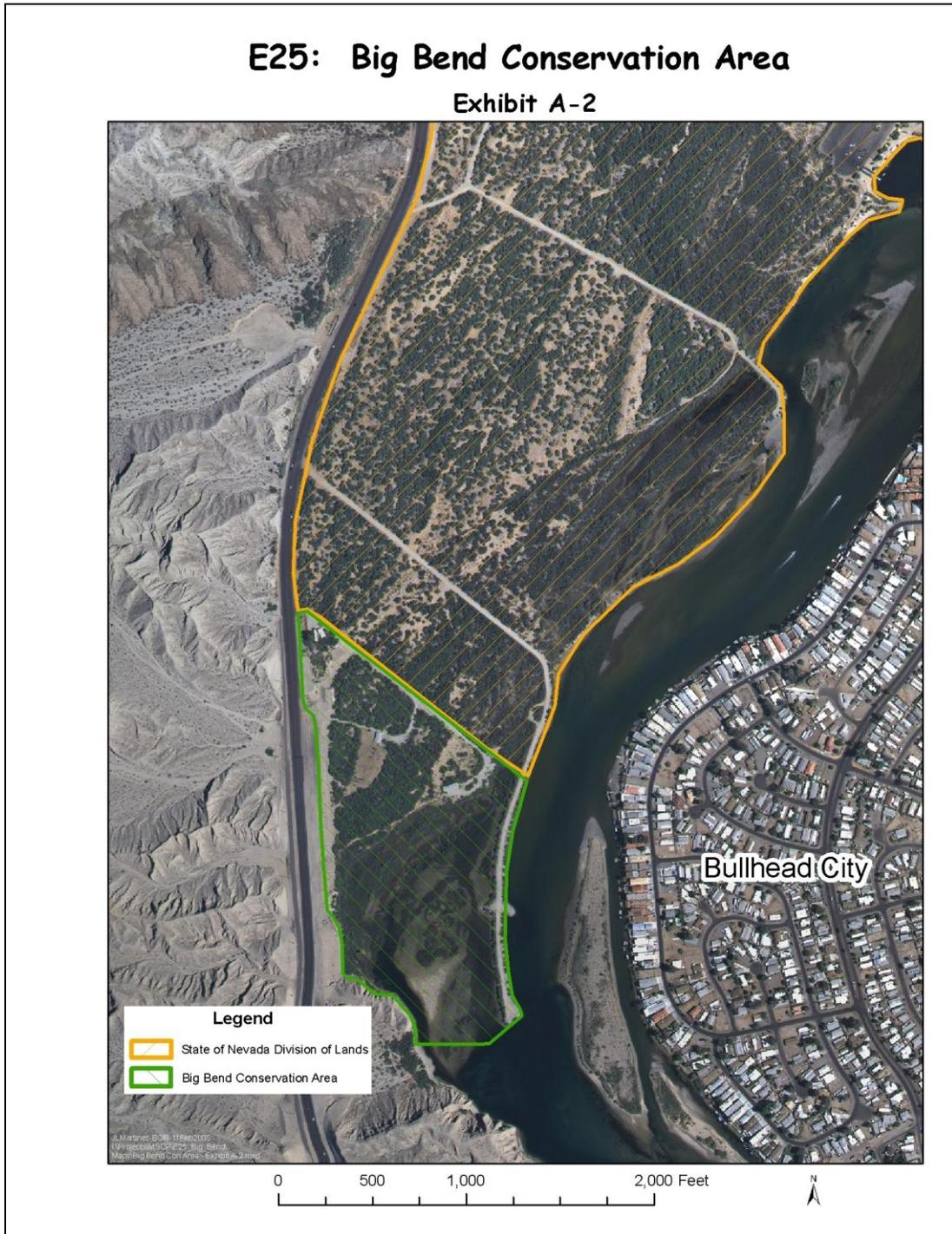
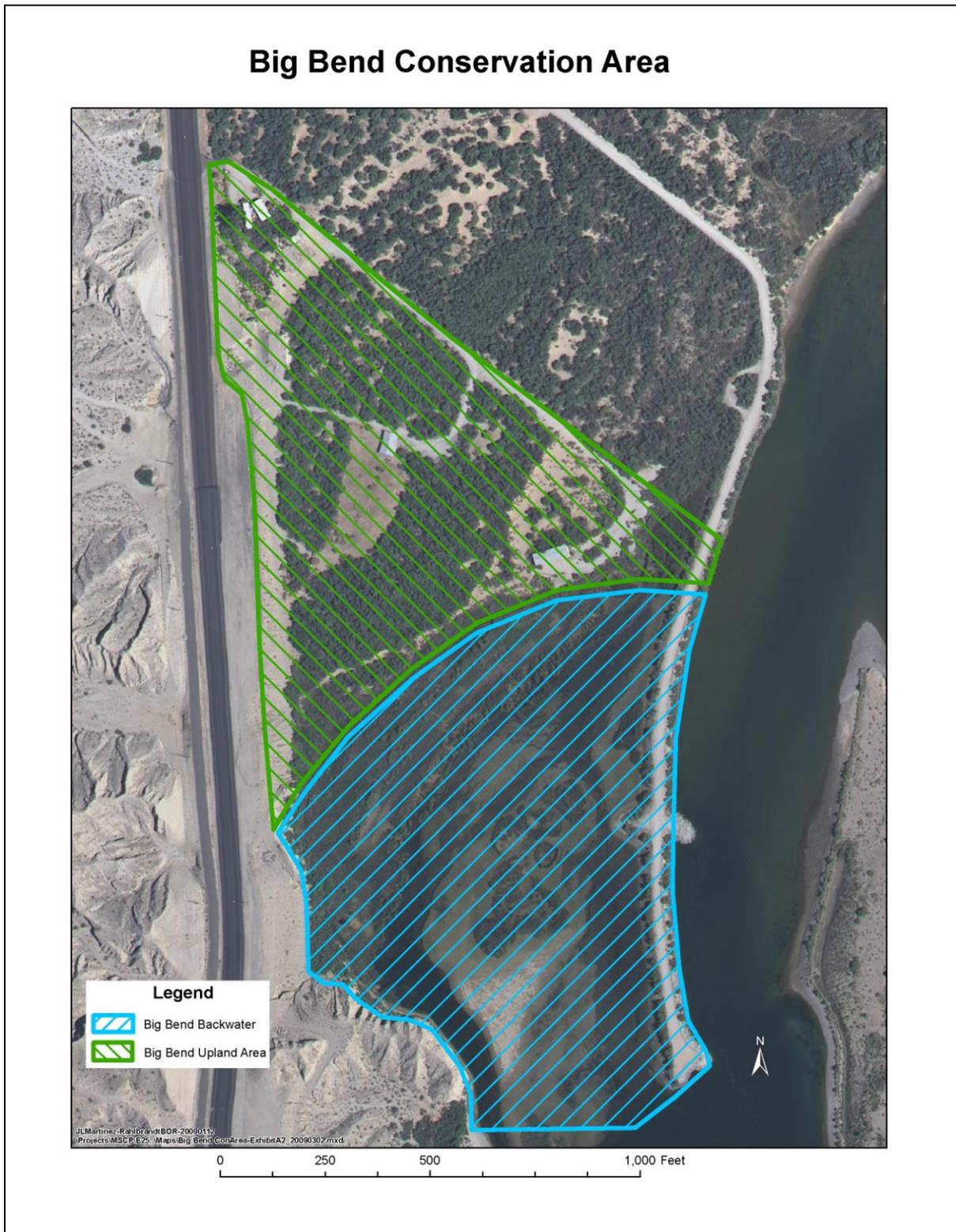


Figure 3: BBCA Backwater and Upland Boundaries



2.3 Land Ownership

In 1966 the land was federally withdrawn by the Department of the Interior and transferred to Clark County. In 1968 the land was sold to the Boy Scouts of America. The Boy Scouts of America used the property through the early 1990s. In September 2005, the SNWA purchased the 15 acres of upland adjacent to the backwater.

2.4 Water

The Boy Scout Camp property maintains two wells on the property and has a diversionary water entitlement of 10 acre feet.

Pursuant to Assignment No. 1 of Contract No. 9-07-30-W0011, dated 23 January 2007, SNWA was assigned the right to divert up to 10 acre-feet per year of Colorado River water for use on lands in Nevada.

2.5 Agreements

A Memorandum of Agreement was signed by LCR MSCP, SNWA, Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW), and Nevada Division of State Parks committing resources to the evaluation of the property as a LCR MSCP Conservation Area in 2007.

To establish the value of the land, a federal appraisal was conducted. The appraisal price for the upland area was set at \$872,000. The compensation will be split over two fiscal years beginning with FY10. The 10 acre-feet of water attached to the Boy Scout property acquired by SNWA was excluded from the federal appraisal. Compensation was approved by the LCR MSCP Steering Committee in October of 2008. A long-term lease agreement was signed in FY10.

3.0 2009 Site Activities

3.1 Site Monitoring

Monitoring of the backwater is on going. As of yet, there are no plans to implement any changes to the backwater area. Maintenance and adaptive management will be conducted as needed on a long-term basis during the 55-year project.

3.2 Marsh Bird Surveying

Using a standardized protocol from the National Marsh Bird Monitoring Program, surveys for the California black rail, least bittern, Virginia rail, and Yuma clapper rail were performed between 15 March and 31 May (USFWS 2003, Conway 2005, USFWS 2006). Three surveys were conducted during the appropriate time periods in 2009. Surveys began 30 minutes before sunrise and continued until marsh birds ceased calling, but never continued later than 10:00 a.m. Four survey stations were surveyed for each of the three surveys conducted on 27 March, 23 April, and 15 May. No LCR MSCP covered species were detected during the surveys. For

further methodology and results refer to (Kahl in press). Cattail (*Typha* spp.) and bulrush (*Scirpus* spp.) species were present at all four survey stations but no quantitative measurements were taken.

3.3 Fish Surveying

All fisheries surveys for 2009 were conducted as part of the ongoing flannelmouth sucker activities associated with Work Task C15: Flannelmouth Sucker Habitat Use, Preference and Recruitment Downstream of Davis Dam. Field activities in 2009 were focused on age-0 fish. Larval light trapping was conducted in April and May during the peak of the spawning period for flannelmouth in this area. A total of three 15-minute sampling events were completed, twice in April and once in May. This resulted in the collection of five larval flannelmouth suckers being captured in April; these fish were located near the rear of the backwater within a stand of bulrush and averaged 15.9 mm total length.

The focus on age-0 fish resulted in a limited number of trammel net sets. One night of trammel netting was conducted during April. Nets were set at locations that were dictated by water level or at locations which have historically produced native fish. Trammel nets were set in the afternoon and retrieved the following morning. A total of three nets were set and consisted of two 0.5-inch mesh by 75-foot nets and one 0.5-inch mesh by 150-foot net. No LCR MSCP covered species were contacted. Additional seining was conducted in June in an attempt to contact age-0 flannelmouth suckers. Two 10-meter seine passes were made within the backwater, but no LCR MSCP covered species were contacted. For further methodology and results refer to the C15 annual report, *Investigations in Flannelmouth Sucker Habitat Use, Preference and Recruitment Downstream of Davis Dam, in the Lower Colorado River October 2008—September 2009*.

4.0 Management

4.1 Wildfire Management

As guided by commitments in the Habitat Conservation Plan for the LCR MSCP, wildfire management practices on BBCA include:

- Reduce the risk of the loss of created habitats to wildfires by contributing to and integrating with local, state, and Federal agency fire management plans.
- Develop a fire management plan to contain wildfire and facilitate rapid response to suppress fire.
- Implement land management and habitat creation measures to support the reestablishment of native vegetation that is lost to wildfire.

The Fire Management and Law Enforcement Strategy for BBCA was developed and finalized in July of 2009. Wildfire suppression, prevention, patrol, and planning are conducted by the Bureau

of Land Management (Big Bend Conservation Area Fire Management and Law Enforcement Strategy 2009).

4.2 Public Use

The upland area consists of a low impact recreational hiking trail/wildlife viewing area, with interpretive signage at the gravel parking lot. Although the LCR MSCP does not have substantial involvement in the interpretive area, cooperation is necessary to ensure all activities conducted in the upland area are consistent with the programs goals and objectives.

Currently, the backwater area is open to jet skiers who often frequent the area. The NDOW is coordinating with the Nevada Wildlife Commission for the installation of a buoy at the entrance of the backwater. The buoy will restrict access to the backwater to only wakeless speed in order to decrease disturbance to the wildlife.

4.3 Law Enforcement

The SNWA is responsible for law enforcement at BBCA. The Bureau of Reclamation will work with SNWA to ensure these activities do not conflict with the LCR MSCP Habitat Conservation Plan.

4.4 Future Habitat Development

At this time there is no future habitat development planned for BBCA. However, BBCA is adjacent to and buffered by Big Bend State Park, which may provide an opportunity for restoration in the future.

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