Pretty Water Conservation Area

2017 Annual Report

June 2019

Work conducted under LCR MSCP Work Task E33
## 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

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- 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
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- Southern California Edison Company
- Southern California Public Power Authority
- The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California

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- Arizona Game and Fish Department
- Arizona Power Authority
- Central Arizona Water Conservation District
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- City of Lake Havasu City
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- Mohave Water Conservation District
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- Town of Thatcher
- Town of Wickenburg
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- 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

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- Basic Water Company

#### Native American Participant Group
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- Colorado River Indian Tribes
- Chemehuevi Indian Tribe

#### Conservation Participant Group
- Ducks Unlimited
- Lower Colorado River RC&D Area, Inc.
- The Nature Conservancy

#### Other Interested Parties Participant Group
- QuadState Local Governments Authority
- Desert Wildlife Unlimited
Lower Colorado River
Multi-Species Conservation Program

Pretty Water Conservation Area

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Prepared by:
Jessie Stegmeier, Restoration Group
Beth Sabin, Wildlife Group

June 2019
# ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

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<tr>
<td>Cibola NWR</td>
<td>Cibola National Wildlife Refuge</td>
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<tr>
<td>FY</td>
<td>fiscal year</td>
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<td>HCP</td>
<td>Habitat Conservation Plan</td>
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<td>LCR MSCP</td>
<td>Lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation Program</td>
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<tr>
<td>lidar</td>
<td>light detection and ranging</td>
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<td>PWCA</td>
<td>Pretty Water Conservation Area</td>
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<td>Reclamation</td>
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this annual report is to summarize all activities that have occurred at the Pretty Water Conservation Area (PWCA) from October 1, 2016, through September 30, 2017, which is Federal fiscal year (FY) 2017, and projected activities for FY18. Water usage is presented for the calendar year, January 1 through December 31, 2017, consistent with the Colorado River Accounting and Water Use Report: Arizona, California, and Nevada, Calendar Year 2017 (Bureau of Reclamation [Reclamation] 2018).

1.1 Background

The Cibola National Wildlife Refuge (Cibola NWR) consists of about 16,600 acres of land located along approximately 12 miles of the lower Colorado River in Arizona and California. It was established in 1964 as a refuge and breeding ground for migratory birds and other wildlife. The Cibola NWR is divided into six management units designated as Unit 1, Unit 2, Unit 3, Unit 4, Unit 5, and Unit 6.

On July 17, 2006, lightning ignited a fire on the Cibola NWR and burned acreage in both Arizona and California. Approximately 4,600 acres of primarily saltcedar (*Tamarix* spp.) with some intermixed honey mesquite (*Prosopis glandulosa*) were burned. Restoration with honey mesquite of approximately 550 acres of this burned area, located on the Cibola NWR in the State of California, is the focus of this habitat restoration project. The site is referred to as the Pretty Water Conservation Area, named after the old Colorado River channel which borders the southern end of the site.

The Lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation Program (LCR MSCP) is providing resources to establish and maintain the PWCA. Those resources include the use of Colorado River water through the LCR MSCP Water Accounting Agreement and funding to create and manage the native vegetation. The refuge does not maintain any water rights within the State of California.

2.0 CONSERVATION AREA INFORMATION

2.1 Purpose

The PWCA was developed for terrestrial wildlife species. The intent is to create honey mesquite habitat type III that will be managed for vermilion flycatchers (*Pyrocephalus rubinus*) and other species covered under the LCR MSCP Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP). The creation of habitat includes both the establishment of native plants and the management of the vegetation and its structural type to meet performance standards.
2.2 Location

The PWCA consists of approximately 566 acres on the Cibola NWR, and it is located in Reach 4 between River Miles 95 and 97, near Palo Verde, California (figure 1).

Figure 1.—General location of the PWCA.
2.3 Landownership

The PWCA is located on Cibola NWR Unit 6, which is owned and managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS).

2.4 Water

The Cibola NWR does not hold an entitlement for the use of Colorado River water for use in California. However, temporary use of Colorado River water to establish honey mesquite trees was utilized through the LCR MSCP water agreement, which was signed in March 2010. The PWCA has not been irrigated since September 2015.

2.5 Agreements

A Land Use Agreement was signed in 2010 by Reclamation and the USFWS to secure land and water for the remainder of the 50-year LCR MSCP. In March 2013, Exhibit B was signed to include the PWCA in the partnership. The agreement outlines the rights and responsibilities of each partner in the project’s development and maintenance.

2.6 Public Use

The PWCA has seasonal controlled public access for recreational activities, including hunting regulated by the USFWS and Cibola NWR.

2.7 Law Enforcement

Law enforcement activities are performed primarily by the USFWS’s law enforcement officers, under the LCR MSCP’s site-specific Fire Management & Law Enforcement Strategy (LCR MSCP 2010). Additional local law enforcement assistance is available through the Arizona Game and Fish Department’s Kingmans Office, the Mohave County Sheriff’s Office, and the Bureau of Land Management’s Lake Havasu Field Office.

2.8 Wildfire Management

The USFWS will provide an appropriate management response to all wildfires that occur within the PWCA. The full range of suppression strategies is available
to managers provided that selected options do not compromise firefighter or public safety, are cost effective, consider the benefits of suppression and the values to be protected, and are consistent with resource objectives (LCR MSCP 2010).

### 3.0 HABITAT DEVELOPMENT

The honey mesquite land cover type is being managed for LCR MSCP covered species on the conservation area (figure 2).

#### 3.1 Planting

No additional planting is planned for the PWCA, as it is considered fully developed.

#### 3.2 Irrigation

No additional watering is necessary at this time.

#### 3.3 Site Management

PWCA site management and maintenance is minimal. Any additional road maintenance will be completed by Reclamation as needed.

The majority of maintenance activities focus on the management of non-native invasive species like salt cedar. The vegetation maintenance contractor is responsible for the regular removal of non-native species, mainly saltcedar, in the cleared areas. The contractor completed a monthly evaluation of the areas needing chemical or manual treatment and monitors areas that have already received treatments. Followup treatments were completed, and the contractor provided monthly progress reports to the LCR MSCP restoration project manager to conclude the contract in December 2017.

### 4.0 MONITORING

#### 4.1 Avian Monitoring

Avian monitoring in FY17 was conducted for riparian breeding birds.
Figure 2.—Managed acreage at the PWCA.
4.1.1 General Avian Surveys

Bird surveys were conducted to detect breeding LCR MSCP riparian bird species and other territorial riparian bird species. Surveys were conducted within areas of cottonwood-willow and mesquite land cover types that were of adequate growth to support breeding birds. General bird surveys resulted in the detection of 13 species (64 territories) of birds breeding within the surveyed plots. There were no LCR MSCP covered species detected at the PWCA in FY17 (SWCA Environmental Consultants 2018).

4.2 MacNeill’s Sootywing Skipper Monitoring

Surveys for MacNeill’s sootywing skippers (\textit{Pholisora gracielae} = \textit{Hesperopsis gracielae} [MacNeill]) were conducted in April 2017. MacNeill’s sootywing skippers and their eggs were detected (Hill 2017).

5.0 HABITAT CREATION AND CONSERVATION MEASURE ACCOMPLISHMENT

5.1 Vegetation Monitoring

Vegetation data were collected in FY17 using light detection and ranging (lidar). Lidar measures the vegetation structure throughout the canopy and provides the ability to identify structural diversity and successional growth stages. Conservation area vegetation will be evaluated on a periodic basis using lidar to ensure the habitat is meeting species’ requirements. A procedure to analyze and provide vegetation structure metrics will be developed, and the results will be presented in future reports.

5.2 Evaluation of the Pretty Water Conservation Area

The Final Habitat Creation Conservation Measure Accomplishment Tracking Process was finalized in October 2011 (LCR MSCP 2011). All areas within the PWCA were designed to benefit covered species at the landscape level.

To meet species habitat creation requirements, the HCP provides goals for habitat creation based on land cover types. These land cover types are described using the Anderson and Ohmart vegetation classification system (Anderson and Ohmart 1976, 1984a, 1984b).
6.0 ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

Adaptive management relies on the initial receipt of new information, the analysis of that information, and the incorporation of the new information into the design and/or direction of future project work (LCR MSCP 2007). The Adaptive Management Program’s role is to ensure habitat creation sites are biologically effective and fulfill the conservation measures outlined in the HCP for 27 covered species and if they potentially benefit 5 evaluation species. Post-development monitoring and species research results will be used to adaptively manage habitat creation sites after initial implementation. Once monitoring data are collected over a few years, and then analyzed for the PWCA, recommendations may be made through the adaptive management process for site improvements in the future.

There are no adaptive management recommendations for the PWCA at this time.
LITERATURE CITED


LCR MSCP (see Lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation Program).


Reclamation (see Bureau of Reclamation).