

Draft Meeting Notes
LCR MSCP Steering Committee April 24, 2013
Sunset Station Hotel and Casino

Attending

Perri Benemelis	Vikki Dee Bradshaw	Linda Carbone	Chuck Cullom
Chris Dodge	Evelyn Erlandsen	Gregg Garnett	Chris Harris
Chris Hayes	Marcia Kennedy	Sonja Kokos	Bill Lamb
Zane Marshall	Terry Murphy	Judi Nielsen	Wade Noble
Steve Olson	David Palumbo	McClain Peterson	Sara Price
Larry Purcell	Laura Simonek	Ed Smith	Jim Stolberg
John Swett	Jason Thiriot	Warren Torvet	Tanya Trujillo
Ruth Valencia	Mark Van Vlack	Laura Vecerina	David Vigil
Doyle Wilson			

Attending Via Conference Call

Leslie Fitzpatrick	Jesus Gastelon	Maureen George	Steve Spangle
Dave Weedman			

1. ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

Introductions

The meeting convened at 9:30 a.m. by Chairperson Chris Harris. There were self-introductions of all attending.

Chair Harris said yesterday's Steering Committee tour was great. He gave an overview of the tour and thanked Brandon Senger and Jim Stolberg for their presentations.

Review of Agenda

The agenda was reviewed and approved.

Public Comments

No public comments were offered.

Approve October 24, 2012 Meeting Notes

The October 24, 2012 meeting notes were approved. (Moved by Ed Smith, seconded by Doyle Wilson and approved by consensus.)

Election of Chair and Vice-Chair

Chris Harris stated he was willing to serve an additional term as Chair and Perri Benemelis was willing to serve as Vice Chair of the Steering Committee. Chris Harris was elected as Chair and Perri Benemelis was elected as Vice-Chair. (Moved by Ed Smith, seconded by Chuck Cullom. Hearing no opposition, the motion was approved.)

2. YUMA EAST WETLANDS

Overview

John Swett provided an overview of the Yuma East Wetlands project and said that a resolution was before the Steering Committee to include the project in the LCR MSCP. The Yuma East Wetlands was constructed through a partnership with the Yuma Crossing National Heritage Area, City of Yuma, Quechan Tribe, and Arizona Game and Fish Commission. Funding for the construction of the project was with grants through the Arizona Protection Fund and the Bureau of Reclamation. The project right now consists of 350 acres, of which 183 acres are cottonwood-willow and 167 acres are marsh. At least 10 LCR MSCP covered species have been detected at the site.

John indicated that including this site in the LCR MSCP would be cost effective because the program would not have to provide compensation to any party for the use of land, water, or other resources on the site, nor reimburse any part of the \$11 million of prior restoration and development costs. John noted that all of the parties have approved the Land Use Agreement. Sara Price noted that the Land Use Agreement is a cooperative arrangement and is similar to the Land Use Agreements at the other conservation sites. It does contain a disputes resolution clause. Wade Noble indicated that the people in Yuma are familiar with the project and are solidly behind including it in the program.

Resolution 13-002

The Steering Committee supports incorporating the Yuma East Wetlands into the Lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation Program.

(Moved by Wade Noble, seconded by Chuck Cullom, and adopted by consensus).

3. WORK PLAN AND BUDGET

FY12 Accomplishments

Overview

John Swett provided an overview of the FY12 Accomplishments. He noted that the Steering Committee approved funding for FY12 of \$33,494,780 and actual obligations were \$31,357,384.98. Obligations were less than the approved amount due to the continued negotiations on the Yuma East Wetlands Land Use Agreement and the acquisition of Planet Ranch. John indicated that negotiations on Planet Ranch were still on-going. John also noted that both Theresa Olson, the Wildlife Group Manager, and Eric Volkman, the Fisheries Group Manager, had accepted new positions.

Restoration

Terry Murphy noted that nine conservation areas have been established and three stand-alone conservation measures have been completed since the start of program implementation. For FY12, 279 acres of land cover were established at 3 conservation areas (Palo Verde Ecological Reserve, Hunters Hole, and Beal Lake). To date, over 2,447 acres of cottonwood-willow, mesquite, marsh, and backwater land cover have been established. He noted that in FY13, 36 acres of mesquite land cover would be established at Palo Verde Ecological Reserve, 94 acres of cottonwood-willow at Cibola NWR Unit #1, and that marsh land cover would be planted in Reach 1 at the Laguna Division Conservation Area.

Research and Monitoring Wildlife

John Swett reviewed research and monitoring accomplishments for FY12. He noted that habitat model assessments were conducted for four covered species (YWAR, BEVI, SUTA, GIWO), a system wide survey protocol was developed for the elf owl, a soil amendment study was initiated at Beal Lake, and a roosting characteristics study was conducted for the western red and yellow bats. John indicated that system monitoring was conducted for the marsh birds, southwestern willow flycatcher, yellow-billed cuckoo, cotton rats, and the lowland leopard frog and Colorado River toad. Riparian bird monitoring was also conducted. He noted that between three and twelve covered species were found at six of the conservation areas.

Fisheries

John Swett also provided an overview of fisheries accomplishments. In FY12 25,003 razorback larvae were collected in Lake Mohave (14,809 by Reclamation staff). Work Task C31 documented that the genetic variation of the razorback population in the lake continues to be maintained. Over 27,105 razorback and 7,821 bonytail were stocked into the lower Colorado River. To date, 118,324 razorback have been stocked into reaches 3-5 and 55,893 bonytail have been stocked into reaches 2-5. Razorback population estimates were derived for Reach 2 (2,577) and Reach 3 (2,770). Fish monitoring continued with wild-born razorback larvae collected at 3 sites in Lake Mead. Ongoing and recent successful recruitment in Lake Mead is suspected.

Proposed FY14 Program

John Swett indicated that the preliminary inflation rate for FY14 was 1.276 which brings required contributions in FY14 to \$35,141,040. The total budget proposed for FY14 is \$35,142,064

Program and Financial Status

John Swett noted that a hand out showing financial accomplishments by work task for FY12 was included in the agenda packet. Also included is a table showing status of FY13 contributions and financial status of FY13 work tasks. John noted that Reclamation is still on a continuing resolution in FY13. The program was also impacted by the sequester and a number of contracts were put on hold. To help meet program requirements in FY13, funding for the Habitat Maintenance Fund will be just the required amount.

Draft FY2014 Work Plan and Budget Review Schedule

John noted that the work group meeting to review the Draft FY2014 Work Plan and Budget is scheduled for May 8 & 9 in Phoenix. Written comments should be sent to Laura Vecerina by May 7th. He noted that the final FY2014 Work Plan and Budget would be posted for review by June 19th.

4. PROJECT UPDATES

Terry Murphy provided an update on a number of projects that are currently in the site selection process. He noted that the following projects are still being evaluated for inclusion into the program: Planet Ranch, Mohave Valley Backwater, PVER South, Parker Dam Camp, Haughtelin Lake Wildlife Area, and sites on the Virgin and Gila Rivers.

Parker Dam Camp: The original concept for Parker Dam Camp had been to create a 36 acre disconnected backwater with some cottonwood-willow and mesquite. Water for the site was to come from groundwater wells. To determine the feasibility of the water supply, six borings were drilled. The well water is extremely salty, 2,060 mg/l & 14,300 mg/l; too salty for use in a backwater for native fish. The site is now being evaluated to determine the feasibility of developing riparian restoration at the site.

Mohave Valley Backwater: The Mohave Valley Backwater is a 146 acre parcel located adjacent to Park Moabi. It is being evaluated as a connected backwaters project. A design concept and report was developed in the fall of 2012. If constructed as designed, it would provide 50 acres of connected backwaters. The land is currently owned by the CA State Lands Commission and is leased to San Bernardino County. Initial discussions have indicated interest in further exploring the project.

Laguna Division Conservation Area: Construction on the Laguna Division Conservation Area continues. The remaining water control structure will be completed in Spring 2013. Testing of flows in Reach 1 is anticipated to occur in Summer 2013 to verify groundwater elevations in preparation of marsh planting in August 2013. Clearing and contouring of Reach 2 will begin in February 2014.

5. STEERING COMMITTEE SCHEDULE

Laura Vecerina announced that there would be a work group meeting in Phoenix May 8-9, 2013, a Steering Committee conference call on June 26, 2013, a work group meeting in September 2013, and a Steering Committee meeting on October 23, 2013.

6. GENERAL INFORMATION

John Swett noted that designation of critical habitat for the Southwestern willow flycatcher was final. The LCR MSCP program area was excluded from the designation so there will be no impact to the program. John discussed the petition for listing of the yellow-billed Cuckoo. Because the yellow-billed cuckoo is a covered species under the program, additional conservation actions are not required. Lesley Fitzpatrick noted the species is listed as a covered species on the Section 10 permit and all that may be required is a modification to the permit noting that the species is now listed. John also

discussed the 60 day notice that had been filed by the Center for Biological Diversity on the illegal release of the salt cedar beetle. The notice was sent to both the USDA and the USFWS. Reclamation and the LCR MSCP are mentioned, but are not the main focus of the compliant.

7. SUMMARY AND ACTION ITEMS

The Steering Committee took action on two items.

8. ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 12:21 p.m.