

# Lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation Program

## An Introduction to the Conservation Plan

Prepared by Christopher S. Harris,  
Colorado River Board of California  
Updated by Lesley Fitzpatrick, USFWS



# Purpose

---

- Provide an overview of the content of the Lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation Program Conservation Plan
- Discuss the costs of the program
- Review the schedule for completion
- Answer questions



California Black Rail

# Colorado River Basin





# LCR Multi-Species Conservation Program

Planning Area:

Functionally,  
Lake Mead to  
SIB (historic  
floodplain)





# Introduction

---

- History of Program development
- ESA coverage under sections 7 & 10
- Provides avoidance, minimization, and mitigation measures
- Benefits for both human and wildlife populations dependent on the LCR

# LCR MSCP Participants

- **Broad cross-section of interests representing:**
  - Department of the Interior (USBR, USFWS, BLM, NPS, and BIA)
  - Department of Energy (Western Area Power Administration)
  - Native American Tribes (6 tribes along the river)
  - State Agencies in Arizona, California, and Nevada (Water, Power, and Game & Fish)
  - Colorado River Water and Power providers in the three states
  - Environmental organizations
  - County, City, and general public representatives

# LCR MSCP Goals & Objectives

---

- Conserve habitat and work toward recovery of listed species
- Attempt to reduce the likelihood of additional species listings
- Accommodate current water diversions and power production and optimize opportunities for future water and power resources development

# Goals & Objectives (cont.)

---

- Provide a 50-year coordinated and comprehensive species-conservation and habitat-management prescription for the Lower Colorado River planning area
- Provide the basis for incidental take authorizations pursuant to the Federal Endangered Species Act under section 7 & section 10 for 26 covered species



# Covered Actions

- The delivery, diversion, and return flow of up to 7.5 MAF/year, plus any surpluses or unused apportionment, as the Secretary of Interior may determine;
- The future transfers and changes in points-of-diversion of up to 1.574 MAF/year;
- Additional conversion of riparian habitat to agricultural land on Indian reservations;
- Operation and maintenance of existing facilities and associated activities, both flow and non-flow-related, all of which have been identified and approved by the MSCP Steering Committee and analyzed in the Conservation Plan; and
- Implementation of the Conservation Plan.

# Conservation Plan

---

- Data driven and Science-based
- If data were not available, “worst-case” assumptions were made
- Effects of “covered activities” on “covered species” analyzed in detail
- Conservation Plan mitigates impacts and contributes to the recovery of listed species – exceeds ESA standards

# Conservation Plan (cont.)

---

- Conservation opportunity areas are intended to establish partnerships with private, Tribal, State, and Federal landowners and managers to acquire and restore habitats
- Conservation measures are scheduled to be in place prior to adverse consequences of the covered actions occurring
- Reduce the risks and consequences of wildfire within the planning area

# Elements of the Conservation Plan

---

- Creation and restoration of native wetland, riparian, and aquatic habitats
- Implementation of measures to maintain and enhance existing habitats
- Native fish population enhancement
- Implementation of species-specific conservation measures
- Implementation of avoidance and minimization measures
- Implementation of long-term monitoring & research activities
- Implementation of adaptive management

# Habitat Creation

| Land Cover Type   | Acres Affected | Acres To Be Created |
|-------------------|----------------|---------------------|
| Cottonwood-Willow | 2,141          | 5,940               |
| Mesquite          | 590            | 1,320               |
| Marsh             | 284            | 512                 |
| Backwaters        | 444            | 360                 |
| <b>TOTALS</b>     | <b>3,459</b>   | <b>8,132</b>        |



# Conservation Area Site Design

---

- Habitat will be created in patches of optimal sizes
- Designed to create an “integrated mosaic,” to approximate historical vegetation conditions
- Habitat restoration may involve conversion of agricultural lands to native riparian and marsh habitats
- As necessary, incorporate buffer areas
- Minimize construction of new infrastructure

# Riparian Habitat Restoration

---





# Marsh Restoration





# Backwater Restoration



# Maintenance of Existing Habitat

---

- \$25,000,000 Fund – Up front in process, used to fund actions to avoid impacts to existing habitats within the planning area
- Available to Land Managers with consent of USFWS, Reclamation, and State participants





# Native Fish Proposal

| SPECIES             | ACTIVITY                                |
|---------------------|---|
| Razorback<br>Sucker | 660,000 fish<br>Over 50-year period     |
| Bonytail            | 620,000 fish<br>Over 50-year period     |
| Humpback Chub       | \$10,000/year to GCDAMP<br>For 50 years |
| Flannelmouth Sucker | \$80,000/5 years                        |



# Avoidance & Minimization Measures

---

- Habitat creation/restoration would avoid removing existing habitat
- Impacts at Topock Marsh minimized by controlling water surface elevations
- Vegetation management would avoid avian breeding seasons
- Use of herbicides, pesticides, and fertilizers would be minimized, and buffers used as appropriate

# Monitoring & Research Elements

---

- **M&R Elements include:**
  - **System Monitoring**
  - **Species Monitoring & Research**
  - **Restoration Technology Research**
  - **Post-development Monitoring**
  - **Development and management of a comprehensive database**

# Adaptive Management

---

- Adaptive Management Elements include:
  - Measure effectiveness of Conservation Measures
  - As need arises, propose alternative Conservation Measures
  - Address changed or unforeseen circumstances
  - Consistency with relevant existing and future USFWS Recovery Plans



# Implementation Costs

---

- Proposed habitat restoration on a 30-year build-out schedule
- Habitat maintenance, monitoring, research, and adaptive management costs are included over 50-year period
- Estimated costs in 2003 dollars is \$620 million
- Funding for program: 50% Federal and 50% from State partners as described in Implementing Agreement (IA)

# Proposed Governance Structure

---

- Governance described in Funding and Management Agreement (FMA)
- USBR-LC to provide staff and management of annual LCR MSCP implementation
- “Steering Committee” comprised of stakeholders will assist USBR in developing annual work plans, budgets, monitoring and research, and in utilizing adaptive management

# Recent Activities

---

- Documents distributed to public on June 18, 2004
- Comments received by August 18, 2004
- Cost-share agreements signed in September 2004
- Final Documents distributed on December 17, 2004

# Completion Schedule

---

- Joint Record of Decision will be signed on April 4, 2005
- Federal agencies and State permit applicants will sign the IA and FMA and provide the signed documents to USFWS
- USFWS will issue the section 10(a)(1)(B) permit shortly after the receipt of the final signed IA and FMA.

# Conclusion

---

- The LCR MSCP is a unique program that required all participants to work closely together to achieve the needs of both people and wildlife. This cooperative atmosphere enabled the development of a comprehensive Conservation Plan and provided 50-year certainty for deliveries of water and power from the LCR to Arizona, California, and Nevada.
- Implementation of the Conservation Plan will continue this important relationship to ensure the benefits of the Conservation Plan are realized.





[www.lcrmscp.org](http://www.lcrmscp.org)