Lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation Program

An Introduction to the Conservation Plan

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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





Planning Area:

Functionally, Lake Mead to SIB (historic floodplain)

LCR Multi-Species Conservation Program



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-ofdiversion 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	Acres	Acres
Type	Affected	To Be
		Created
Cottonwood- Willow	2,141	5,940
Mesquite	590	1,320
Marsh	284	512
Backwaters	444	360
TOTALS	3,459	8,132

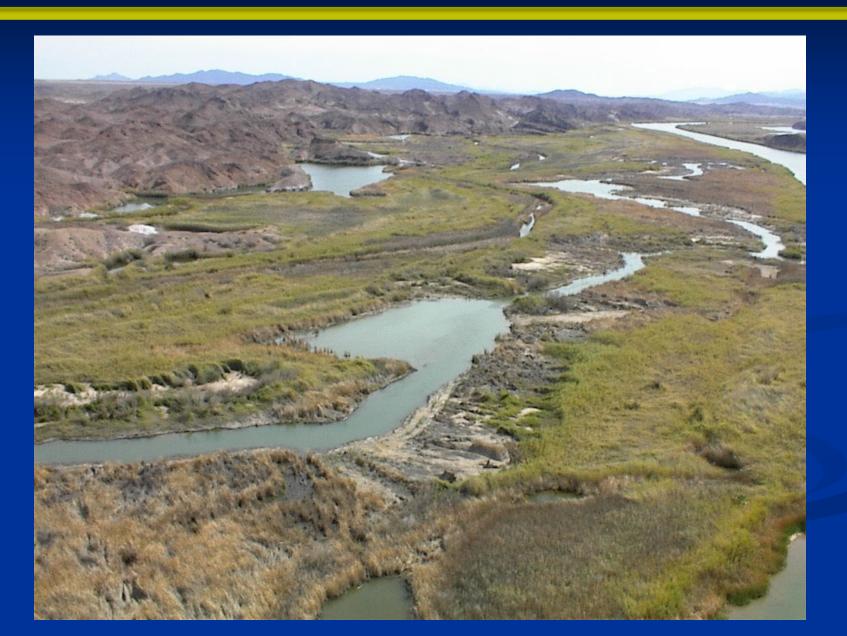
Conservation Area Site Design

- 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

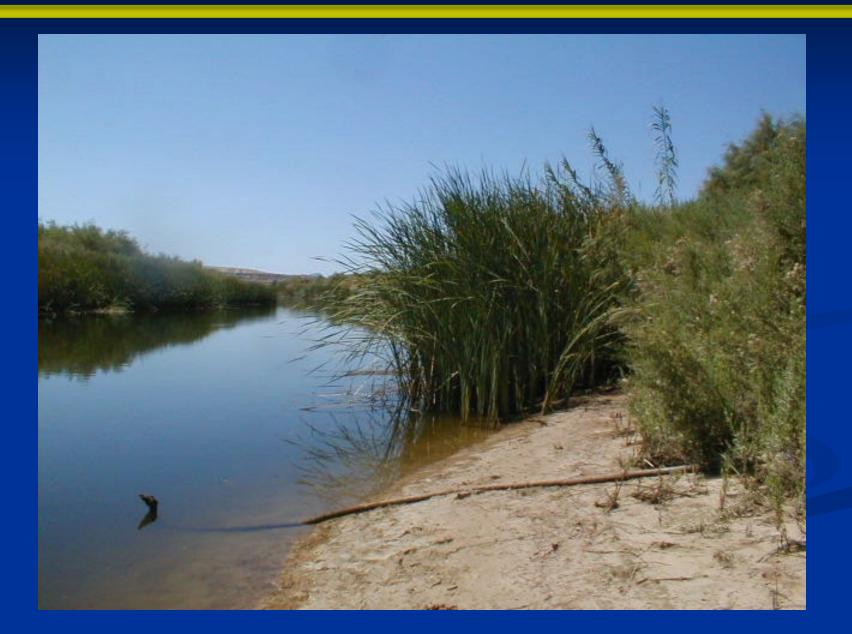
Riparian Habitat Restoration



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	660,000 fish	
Sucker	Over 50-year period	
Bonytail	620,000 fish	
	Over 50-year period	
Humpback Chub	Over 50-year period \$10,000/year to GCDAMP	
Humpback Chub		
Humpback Chub Flannelmouth Sucker	\$10,000/year to GCDAMP	



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 30year 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.



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