

I. Project Title: Colorado River Wildlife Management Area Easement and Weed Monitoring and Management

II. Principal Investigator(s):  
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III. Abstract:  
The Colorado River Wildlife Management Area easement program began in the late 1990's with the intent of acquiring flood easements on floodplains within the upper Colorado River system that would function as important habitat for the four Colorado River endangered fish species. The purpose of the easements is to allow floodplains to flood and function as naturally as possible. Easements were acquired through the 2000's and were turned over to the National Wildlife Refuge System for management by the Ouray National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge), which is part of the Lower Green River NWR Complex (Complex). The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service owns very little interest in many of these easements. This project requires annual inspections and partnerships with the landowners and their land, which requires annual funding of about \$50,000. When and where possible the Complex will try to enhance these properties through partnerships and additional project funds. These funds are used for administration and enforcement of the easements to ensure that the landowners are abiding by the easement language.

IV. Study Schedule: Annual, ongoing

V. Relationship to RIPRAP:  
-GREEN RIVER ACTION PLAN: MAINSTEM ACTIVITY II.  
RESTORE HABITAT  
II.A. Restore and manage flooded bottomland habitat.

-COLORADO RIVER ACTION PLAN: MAINSTEM ACTIVITY II.  
RESTORE HABITAT  
II.A. Restore and manage flooded bottomland habitat.

-COLORADO RIVER ACTION PLAN: GUNNISON RIVER ACTIVITY II.  
RESTORE HABITAT  
II.A. Restore and manage flooded bottomland habitat.

VI. Accomplishment of FY 2014 Tasks and Deliverables, Discussion of Initial Findings and Shortcomings:

The Refuge contacted landowners to prepare them for site inspections that took place in August 2014 and reiterated easement obligations. Landowners were given the opportunity to inform the Refuge of any potential issues within their easement. Easement sites were visited via ground transportation and on foot. We evaluated the easement areas and confirmed that there were no violations of easement conditions.

Administrative maps and descriptions of the easements were reviewed. There is still a need to produce more detailed maps to accurately document parcel locations and easement boundaries; this work will be initiated in FY 15.

The planned purchase of interpretive panels for the Grand Junction Pipe parcel was postponed because funding was not made available from the Bureau of Reclamation until late in the fiscal year. Two easement properties consumed the highest percentage of administrative and staff time (GJ Pipe and Lamb, as described below).

Most staff time in FY 2014 was spent reviewing the Restoration and Monitoring Plan (Plan) and monitoring the restoration project work associated with the Lamb easement as a result of a settlement agreement. The following brief summary of information was taken from the Plan:

Gasco Energy, Inc. (“Gasco”) agreed to conduct restoration and monitoring on the Lamb Trust parcel to address the alleged placement of fill on lands over which the United States Environmental Protection Agency (“EPA”) contends it has regulatory jurisdiction under the Clean Water Act, 33 U.S.C. §§ 1251-1387. Specific tasks included the following:

- Plug and abandon LT 12-23-9-19 well.
- Remove fill material from the LT 12-23-9-19 well pad and access road.
- Revegetate the LT 12-23-9-19 well pad and access road.
- Remove fill material from wetlands along the access road leading to well LT 24-14-9-19.
- Place a bottomless culvert at the same location to avoid and minimize wetland impacts.
- Initiate a monitoring plan for the well pad and access roads.

Most of the planned restoration work was accomplished in FY 2014 and revegetation/monitoring efforts conducted by Gasco and its contractors will continue for the next several years.

VII. Recommendations:

In FY 2015 it is recommended this project be fully funded in order to continue the easement management program at its current level, at a minimum. The Refuge does not have adequate funding or personnel to address additional potential floodplain enhancement projects. With additional funds the Refuge could hire a term position to expand the role of landowner contacts, initial scoping of projects, and project planning & implementation. The end result would be better relations with the landowners and enhanced conservation of important habitat for the four Colorado River endangered fish

species.

VIII. Project Status: This project is ongoing. Funding is required for all coordination and enforcement issues. There continues to be a need to monitor proposed energy development and construction activities to ensure easement terms are not violated. Because funds were received too late in FY 14 to be spent (see below), we have additional carryover funds for FY 15 and plan to conduct weed monitoring/control efforts on select properties. We also plan to work on other activities such as interpretive panels and improved mapping.

IX. FY 2014 Budget Status

- A. Funds Provided: Recovery Program funding: \$83,400 (\$50,000 funded in FY14 and \$33,400 was carried over from FY13 because of staffing shortages)
- B. Funds Expended: \$11,000 (On August 5, 2014, we were informed by the Recovery Program that the FY14 funds had not come through from Bureau of Reclamation, and we were requested to hold off spending any additional funds.)
- C. Difference: \$72,400
- D. Percent of the FY 2014 work completed, and projected costs to complete: Most core work completed, 13% funds expended (FY 14 funds [\$50,000] were not fund-targeted until mid-September, which was too late in the FY to spend).
- E. Recovery Program funds spent for publication charges: None

X. Status of Data Submission: N/A

XI. Signed: /s/ Dan Schaad  
Principal Investigator Date  
Signed by Dan Schaad 07/06/2015

APPENDIX: None