



desert conservation
PROGRAM



implementation plan and budget
2015-2017

Clark County, Nevada



desert conservation PROGRAM

Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan 2015-2017 Implementation Plan and Budget Report

This report describes the process followed to develop the 2015-2017 Implementation Plan and Budget for the Clark County Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP) and the outcome of the budget deliberations.

There are several sections to this report including:

- I. Description of the budget process
- II. Description of the budget process clarification
- III. Description of the project concept development
- IV. Summary of discussions among the permittees
- V. Summary of discussions with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)
- VI. Summary of discussions with the Science Advisor
- VII. Summary of the public comment period and comments received
- VIII. Revisions to the published draft
- IX. Final Proposed 2015-2017 Implementation Plan And Budget

I. MSHCP Implementation Plan and Budget Process

The Clark County Desert Conservation Program (DCP) oversees mandated regional compliance with the federal Endangered Species Act through implementation of the Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP) and Section 10(a)(1)(B) Incidental Take Permit (Permit Number TE 034927-0). The USFWS provides regulatory oversight and monitors compliance.

Per section 2.8.3.3 of the MSHCP, Clark County is responsible for providing management and administration of the MSHCP, through a Plan Administrator. Per the MSHCP, the County Manager will appoint a Plan Administrator to implement the MSHCP on behalf of Clark County, the cities of Boulder City, Henderson, Mesquite, Las Vegas, North Las Vegas, and Nevada Department of Transportation (collectively "permittees"). The Planning Manager in the Clark County Department of Comprehensive Planning currently serves as the Plan Administrator and manages the DCP.

In general, the Plan Administrator is responsible for day-to-day operations, the preparation and implementation of a biennial Implementation Plan and Budget, compliance monitoring and reporting, and making recommendations to the Clark County Board of County Commissioners (BCC), which has final decision making authority over implementation of the MSHCP.

Funding to implement the permit conditions and conservation actions in the MSHCP is derived from the \$550 per acre mitigation fee (also referred to as Section 10 funding) collected by the permittees. This funding is enterprise funding and can only be used for the purposes of implementing the MSHCP. Additional funding is available from the sale of federal land in Clark County as authorized by the Southern Nevada Public Lands Management Act (SNPLMA). This funding is awarded on a competitive basis and is not guaranteed. Round 14 funding for projects was announced in November 2013. However, the Bureau of Land Management has postponed the opening of Round 15 nominations in order to extend the benefits of the SNPLMA funding program and to allow agencies to complete previously approved projects. Nominations for Round 15 are due in November 2014 with funding likely to be available no earlier than October 2015. The schedule for Round 16 nominations had not been announced at the time of this writing.

Guidance for the development of biennial implementation plans and budgets can be found in Section 2.1.12 of the MSHCP. Generally, it prescribes key provisions of the budget development process. These key provisions include:

- Adaptive Management Program (AMP) recommendations and calculating available funding
- Ensuring biennium proposals are developed
- Holding budget sessions
- Submittal of the Implementation Plan and Budget
- USFWS review of the Implementation Plan and Budget
- Biennial calendar, which outlines explicit steps, dates, and responsible parties

This section of the MSHCP has consistently been used as a guide for the Plan Administrator and the permittees, Implementing Agencies, and USFWS when developing a budget process. Since inception of the MSHCP, the prescriptive calendar and budget process outlined in Section 2.1.12 have served as general guidance to the parties along with recommendations from the AMP, advisory committees and a Program Management Analysis (Kirchoff 2005). Necessary adjustments have been made to arrive at implementation plans and budgets, all of which have been approved by the USFWS.

The Plan Administrator has identified the budget process as an area of the MSHCP requiring significant revision. The Plan Administrator has been working with the USFWS on a major amendment to the MSHCP. In the short-term, and in order to continue to mitigate for incidental take in good faith, the Plan Administrator proposed a budget process responsive to the key provisions outlined in the MSHCP for the 2013-2015 budget process. The same process is being used to develop the 2015-2017 Implementation Plan and Budget.

II. Budget Process Clarification

Among the MSHCP's guidance documents, the Implementing Agreement (IA) is the controlling document over the other documents. The IA states that through June 30, 2005, the Plan Administrator shall expend \$2.05 million per year. During the remaining term of the permit, the

Plan Administrator shall expend \$1.75 million per year including cost of living adjustments of no more than 4 percent per year. The minimum required expenditure over the entire 30-year permit is \$54,300,000 (February 1, 2001 through February 1, 2031).

Pursuant to the IA, if the Plan Administrator expends more than is required, the excess amount will be credited against future required expenditures. It is the Plan Administrator's position that all funds that have been allocated through the Implementation Plan and Budget process each biennium, and expended by the Plan Administrator for MSHCP projects, are to be included in the amount of required and excess expenditures.

By the end of the 2007-2009 biennium (June 30, 2009), the permittees had expended more than \$57 million and had met the MSHCP's minimum required expenditure. Therefore, in March 2010, the Plan Administrator sought to clarify the language in the MSHCP and IA with the following statement:

In the event the County's actual expenditures exceed the total minimum required expenditure over the 30-year term of the permit prior to the end of the permit term, the County must expend any remaining funds in cooperation with the FWS for the conservation of species and habitats.

This statement makes clear that the budget process outlined in the MSHCP and IA is not necessary when determining how to expend remaining mitigation funds once the minimum required expenditure has been met. Instead, the Plan Administrator, in cooperation with the USFWS, will determine the conservation measures to be funded and implemented. The Plan Administrator received formal concurrence from USFWS on this clarification on April 14, 2010.

Attachment A outlines the process and schedule agreed to by the permittees and USFWS and used to prepare the 2015-2017 Implementation Plan and Budget.

III. Project Concept Development

In coordination with the permittees and the USFWS, the Plan Administrator prepared budget principles to guide the development and selection of project concepts for the 2015-2017 biennium. The budget principles are available in Attachment B.

The Plan Administrator prepared project concepts and budgets taking into account guidance in the Incidental Take Permit and MSHCP, the budget clarification agreed to between the Plan Administrator and USFWS, current status of these efforts, needs anticipated during the 2015-2017 biennium, the budget principles developed by the permittees, and previous budgets and expenditures. The USFWS requested to submit project concepts in this budget process. The complete project concepts are available in Attachment C.

The Plan Administrator prepared the following permit condition or explicit MSHCP required project concepts (see Incidental Take Permit and Section 2.1.8.2 of the MSHCP):

- *Administration of the MSHCP*: includes the imposition and oversight of a \$550-per-acre development fee, implementation of an endowment fund, and implementation of conservation actions.

- *Boulder City Conservation Easement (BCCE) Management and Law Enforcement*: conduct activities as outlined in the easement agreement and BCCE management plan.
- *Information, Education, and Outreach*: includes the Mojave Max program, public and stakeholder outreach, and various media campaigns and publications.
- *Riparian Properties Baseline Management*: maintenance and management of riparian reserve units along the Muddy and Virgin rivers.
- *Wildlife Fencing*: installation of new desert tortoise exclusionary fencing, monitoring, maintenance, and repair of existing fences.
- *South Loop Trail Restoration for the Endangered Mount Charleston Blue Butterfly (Changed Circumstances: Submitted by USFWS)*: stabilize and treat the South Loop trail within the Carpenter 1 Fire burn area to enhance and protect habitat for the Mount Charleston blue butterfly.

The Plan Administrator prepared concepts for 7 projects that are listed as possible mitigation measures, but not a requirement of the permit or MSHCP, thus can be considered discretionary. Of these 7 projects 3 were submitted by the USFWS to the Plan Administrator for consideration. The list of discretionary project concepts is as follows:

- *Restoration in Riparian Reserve Units and Acquisition of Water Rights*: restore, create, and enhance riparian habitat for MSHCP covered species within the Muddy River and Virgin River reserve units.
- *Baseline Bird Surveys on Riparian Reserve Units*: establish a baseline record of bird species currently present on the riparian reserve units, which will allow DCP to track changes in populations and measure success of future restoration and management activities.
- *Range-wide Desert Tortoise Monitoring (Submitted by USFWS)*: generate yearly estimates of desert tortoise populations across Clark County and provide information that will address current delisting criteria.
- *Post-translocation Desert Tortoise Monitoring*: assess population trends in recipient sites after translocations of desert tortoise have occurred.
- *Relict Leopard Frog Conservation Planning and Implementation*: further develop the conservation strategy and implement conservation actions needed to ensure the persistence of the relict leopard frog.
- *Desert Tortoise Sterilization Clinics and Outreach (Submitted by USFWS)*: sterilize unwanted pet desert tortoises to decrease backyard breeding which would help to alleviate the number of unwanted pet tortoises turned in to the Desert Tortoise Conservation Center.
- *Spring Mountains Dark Blue Butterfly Taxonomic Status Evaluation Using Modern Genetic Analytical Techniques (Submitted by USFWS)*: use modern genetic techniques to evaluate genetic diversity of populations and the genetic isolation and taxonomic separation of the Spring Mountains dark blue butterfly as two subspecies.
- *Temporary Housing Facility for Displaced Desert Tortoises*: identify and secure a location to provide temporary housing for desert tortoises displaced by construction activities.

IV. Summary of Discussions among the Permittees

A draft of the budget principles and Implementation Plan and Budget process and schedule was provided to the permittees on March 24, 2014. The permittees met on May 1st, 2014 to discuss the budget principles and schedule. A draft of the project concepts and budget was provided to the permittees on July 31, 2014 for their review. The permittees were given until August 22, 2014 to provide further comment. No comments were received.

V. Summary of Discussions with the USFWS

A draft of the budget principles and Implementation Plan and Budget process and schedule was provided to the USFWS on March 24, 2014. USFWS and DCP staff met on April 28, 2014 to discuss the budget principles and process and schedule. Comments on the draft budget principles and process and schedule were due to the Plan Administrator on May 16, 2014. USFWS did not submit comments.

A draft of the project concepts and budget was provided to the USFWS on July 31, 2014 for their review. The Plan Administrator met with USFWS on August 12, 2014 to discuss the project concepts and budget. USFWS submitted a letter with formal comments on August 26, 2014. See Attachment D for a summary of USFWS comments and Plan Administrator response.

VI. Science Advisor Recommendations

A draft of the budget principles and Implementation Plan and Budget process and schedule was provided to the Science Advisor on March 24, 2014. The Science Advisor provided recommendations for discretionary funding on April 15, 2014. A draft of the project concepts and budget was provided to the Science Advisor on July 31, 2014 for their review. A report with their comments was received on August 11, 2014. See Attachment F for Plan Administrator response to Science Advisor comments.

VII. Public Comment Period and Response to Comments

The proposed budget and project concepts will be posted on Clark County's website (<http://www.clarkcountynv.gov/depts/dcp/Pages/default.aspx>) on September 17, 2014. A notice of this posting will also be sent to the DCP's Interested Parties list, which is an email distribution list of over 400 stakeholders and citizens. Comments should be submitted by 5:00 p.m. PST on October 1, 2014. A summary of public comments received and Plan Administrator response to public comments will be included in the final 2015-2017 Implementation Plan and Budget report and posted to the County website.

VIII. Proposed 2015-2017 Implementation Plan and Budget

Upon consideration of all the discussions and comments to date, the Plan Administrator proposed a 2015-2017 biennial budget of \$8,206,407. Proposed expenditures are detailed in Table 1 below. If unforeseen opportunities arise for additional conservation projects, the Plan Administrator may pursue funding approval for those projects with the Clark County Board of County Commission in coordination with the USFWS.

Table 1. Proposed 2015-2017 Biennial Budget

Project Title	Section 10 Funds Budget Amount	SNPLMA Funds Budget Amount
<i>Administrative Costs*</i>		
General Administration	\$ 1,570,020	\$ -
Staff Salaries and Benefits to Implement Conservation Projects**	\$ 2,789,805	\$ -
Subtotal	\$ 4,359,825	\$ -
<i>Required Projects (Baseline Activities)</i>		
Boulder City Conservation Easement Management and Law Enforcement	\$ 220,960	\$ -
Public Information, Education, and Outreach	\$ 306,753	\$ -
Riparian Properties Baseline Management	\$ 203,376	\$ -
Wildlife Fencing	\$ 426,197	
South Loop Trail Restoration for the Endangered Mount Charleston Blue Butterfly	\$ 20,000	\$ -
Subtotal	\$ 1,177,286	\$ -
<i>Discretionary Projects</i>		
Restoration in Riparian Reserve Units and Acquisition of Water Rights	\$ -	\$ 214,150
Baseline Bird Surveys on Riparian Reserve Units	\$ 52,867	\$ -
Desert Tortoise Monitoring	\$ 492,576	\$ 1,077,373
Post-translocation Desert Tortoise Monitoring	\$ 350,000	\$ -
Relict Leopard Frog Conservation Planning and Implementation	\$ 184,050	\$ -
Desert Tortoise Sterilization Clinics and Outreach	\$ 48,280	\$ -
Spring Mountains Dark Blue Butterfly Taxonomic Status Evaluation Using Modern Genetic Analytical Techniques	\$ -	\$ -
Temporary Holding Facility for Displaced Desert Tortoises	\$ 250,000	\$ -
Subtotal	\$ 1,377,773	\$ 1,291,523
TOTAL		\$ 8,206,407

**Administrative costs, including staff salaries and benefits, are not included in individual project concept budgets because administrative expenses are fixed to each biennium and do not roll over. Administrative costs that were budgeted for in previous biennia will become unavailable at the close of each biennium.*

***Provides staff funding to directly implement the discretionary and non-discretionary projects proposed for the 2015-2017 biennium as well as 39 existing conservation projects from previous biennia.*

Attachment A

Process and Schedule



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MULTIPLE SPECIES HABITAT CONSERVATION PLAN
2013-2015 Conservation Measures Funding
Process and Schedule

This process and schedule is based on clarification language in the Implementation Agreement dealing with what to do in the event the Permittees' excess expenditures exceed the total required expenditure for the stated term of the incidental take permit, as proposed by Clark County and formally agreed to by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) in writing.

- March/April /May 2014 - Clark County, in consultation with Permittees and USFWS, develops budget principles to guide development of budget and conservation measures.
 - DCP Sr. Team develops proposed budget principles
 - April 25, 2014 - Proposed budget principles sent to USFWS and Permittees
- May/June 2014 - Clark County, on behalf of Permittees, establishes final principles, meets with USFWS to review process and schedule, and prepares initial budget and conservation measure concepts for non-discretionary projects and discretionary projects, as warranted.
 - Permittee Executive Committee input on process and schedule
 - Meet with USFWS to discuss process, schedule, and USFWS's proposed discretionary concepts
 - DCP staff provides General Information Report and/or briefings to County Commission on process and schedule
 - May 16, 2014 - Comments on principles & proposed schedule due and revisions are made to principles & process based on comments received.
 - FWS draft proposed concepts due
- June/July 2014 - Clark County reviews comments and USFWS proposed concepts, discusses USFWS proposals if needed, finalizes budget and conservation measure concepts, and provides to Permittees, Science Advisor and USFWS for review and comment.
 - DCP staff develops final draft concepts and budget
 - Draft budget and concepts provided to Permittees, Science Advisor and USFWS
 - Executive Committee meeting/discussion to review and discuss
 - July 30, 2014 - All comments due to County

- August 2014- Clark County revises budget and conservation measure concepts in consultation with Permittees and USFWS, as appropriate, and posts budget and report for public comment.
 - Final budget and report posted for public comment period (14 days)
 - All public comments due

- September 2014 - October 2014 - Clark County responds to public comment, finalizes budget and report, and schedules item for Board of County Commission approval, and submits SNPLMA Round 14 nominations based on approved budget.
 - Draft BCC agenda item to DA
 - BCC date for Board of County Commissioners for adoption of final budget and report and direction to staff to submit it to USFWS and submit nominations to SNPMLA/BLM.
 - Finalize nominations packets for SNPLMA Round 15 to BLM based on the approved budget and conservation measures
 - 9/1/14 (anticipated deadline) Nomination guidelines posted by BLM
 - 10/15/14 Nomination packages and paperwork complete
 - 11/01/14 (anticipated deadline) Nomination submission deadline

- November 2014 - June 2015 - Clark County works with Science Advisor and other experts to determine detailed methods for implementing conservation measures and for any effects or effectiveness data collection and analysis, if needed.

- July 1, 2015 - 2015-2017 Implementation Plan and Budget goes into effect.

Underlined dates are set and are not flexible

Attachment B

Budget Principles



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MULTIPLE SPECIES HABITAT CONSERVATION PLAN
2013-2015 Conservation Measures Funding
Budget Principles

The following budget principles are to be used to guide and prioritize the development of project concepts, specifically those that are considered discretionary, not required, actions. Project concepts are expected be responsive to these principles.

1. Fulfills explicit permit conditions outlined in the current permit.
2. Focuses on mitigation and minimization actions that have a rational nexus to the level and impact of take that is occurring and those species impacted. From Fall 2011 until Spring 2013, approximately 2,153 acres of habitat was disturbed on private land. The majority of the habitat disturbed was comprised of Mojave desert scrub (2,039 acres), and the remaining disturbance was comprised of 60 acres of salt desert scrub, 45 acres of mesquite/acacia, and nine acres of desert riparian.
3. Provides for continued funding of ongoing and effective conservation measures.
4. Responds to the most recent Science Advisor recommendations.
5. Focuses on projects with measurable outcomes that are pertinent to the MSHCP.
6. Advances the amendment of the MSHCP and its conservation strategy.
7. Addresses the changed circumstance of the Carpenter 1 fire, a natural catastrophic event, which affected a substantial portion of the distribution of endemic populations of the Mt. Charleston blue butterfly in the Spring Mountain National Recreation Area.

Attachment C

Project Concepts

**Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP)
Desert Conservation Program (DCP)
Project Concept Summary Form: 2015-2017 Biennium**

Project Name:

Administration

Location of activities:

Clark County, Nevada

Project Goal:

The goal of the administration of the DCP is to implement the MSHCP in a manner that minimizes and mitigates the impacts of take to the maximum extent practicable and to ensure compliance with its associated Incidental Take Permit (TE 034927-0). Permit compliance ensures the continued, orderly economic development of land in Clark County free from individual project consultation and permitting by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Project Description and Anticipated Benefit:

Administration of the DCP encompasses all aspects of implementing the MSHCP and complying with the incidental take permit issued by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Administering the MSHCP is categorized into the following functional units: permit and plan compliance, finance/administration, adaptive management, and project/contract management.

The benefit of properly implementing the MSHCP and complying with the incidental take permit is regional and streamlined environmental permitting that results in a reliable, certain and predictable process for land development and other economic developments activities in Clark County. The effective administration of the program also spares individual, private property owners from the complicated and time consuming task of consulting with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on a project by project basis. Administration of the MSHCP has allowed the orderly economic development of over 88,400 acres and has saved the community an estimated \$340 million in environmental compliance costs.

Administrative costs can generally be categorized as follows: 1) County internal service charges, 2) DCP operational expenses, 3) Salaries and benefits - general administration and 4) Salaries and benefits - implement conservation projects.

County Internal Service Charges to the DCP

The DCP is a Division within the Department of Comprehensive Planning. As such, since 2008, the DCP has received internal service charges from Clark County related to the following items: vehicles, insurance, telephones, cell phones, printing and reproduction, postage, Department overhead, County overhead, enterprise resource planning and information technology support services. For the 2015-2017 biennium, these expenses amount to \$554,175. Since the first internal service assessments in 2008, the DCP has worked diligently to reduce these costs and gain efficiencies where possible. In addition, the County has implemented significant cost containments efforts during this time that have resulted in reduced expenses to the DCP program. The 2015-2017 internal service charges represent a 25 percent reduction from the 2013-2015 IPB.

DCP Operational Expenses

In addition, the DCP requires a budget for day-to-day operational expenses for items such as repairs and maintenance of facilities, repairs and maintenance of equipment, training and travel, paper shredding, office supplies, software, computers and supplies, and refunds. For the 2015-2017 biennium these necessary expenses amount to \$85,910.

Salaries and Benefits

Another goal of this project concept is to make certain the DCP has sufficient staff possessing the correct skill sets and experience to ensure the successful implementation of the DCP and achieve a sustained response to Recommendation No. 27 in the Clark County Desert Conservation Program Management Analysis published December 2005, prepared by Kirchoff and Associates, and adopted by the Board of County Commissioners. This independent analysis determined that the DCP was inadequately staffed for the scope, scale and complexity of the MSHCP, the County acquired additional staffing resources necessary to enhance its administration.

As such a staffing analysis and plan was completed in 2006 and is updated on a biennial basis to ensure a reliable total headcount of employees with sufficient skill sets and flexibility to implement the MSHCP. The ideal staffing estimate will avoid staffing needs exceeding staff availability or over staffing at any point and in any given role. Perceived staffing deficits and overages are first opportunities for resource-leveling and prioritization before taking action to supplement or decrease staffing levels.

Staffing estimates for this biennial budget were developed based on historical data retrieved from the Program's direct labor tracking database. Staff is required to track their labor to implementation of specific conservation projects or to the overall administration of the DCP in the direct labor tracking database. The DCP strives to achieve a 75 percent utilization rate of staff time to conservation projects and no more than 25 percent to overall administrative efforts such as required County training, Departmental efforts such as the safety or time and attendance committees, staff meetings, or employee leave.

The screenshot displays the 'DCP Labor Tracking & Reporting Application' web interface. The page features a navigation menu on the left with links for 'Edit Time', 'Enter Time', and 'General Reports'. The main content area is titled 'Enter Time' and contains a form with the following fields: 'Name' (Henson, Marco), 'Date' (6/1/2012), 'Project' (2011-WOOD-916A 2012 MM Web Enhance & Social Media Dev S10 11-13), and 'Hours'. There is a 'Submit' button and a 'Total:' label with an empty input field. The browser window shows the URL 'http://ccentapps09m/dcp/laborhours/default.aspx?tid=0' and the page is viewed on a 'Local intranet'.

Data were downloaded from the direct labor tracking database for each conservation project previously approved and being implemented, or proposed for implementation in this budget, from July 1, 2015 through June 30, 2017 to arrive at the estimated number of direct labor hours required to implement the program. A 25 percent multiplier is then applied to account for indirect

administrative time related to required County training, Department efforts, staff meetings and employee leave.

During the 2015-2017 biennium, the DCP requires approximately 25,000 hours total labor hours, or twelve (12) full-time equivalents (FTE), for general administration of the program, to implement the approximately thirty-nine (39) existing conservation projects approved in previous implementation plans and budgets, and to implement the five (5) required/non-discretionary conservation projects.

During the 2015-2017, the DCP requires an additional approximately 4,000 total labor hours, or two (2) FTEs, to implement the seven (7) recommended discretionary projects.

Therefore, for the 2015-2017 biennium, the DCP requires an estimated 29,000 total labor hours or 14 (FTEs) to implement the 51 existing and proposed conservation projects and carry out the general operational/administrative functions of the program.

The DCP is authorized for up to 18 FTEs, with 13 FTEs currently filled and 5 FTEs vacant.

Staff is proposing to staff the 2015-2017 IPB with the 13 FTEs currently filled.

This would leave 5 FTEs vacant and continue the program's vacancy savings of more than \$433,805 for the 2015-2017 biennium.

The 13 FTEs are currently categorized as follows: Nine (9) full-time, permanent positions; four (4) full-time, limited permanent positions. The four (4) limited, permanent positions are being proposed to be converted to full-time, permanent positions.

Staff is organized into the following operational units: permit and plan compliance, finance/administration, adaptive management, and project/contract management.

The Program maintains a position dedicated to ensure compliance with state and federal permits associated with state and federally-listed species. This area of work focuses on compliance tracking and reporting as outlined in the MSHCP. This position also manages efforts toward amending the MSHCP.

The finance and administrative work consists of overseeing the assessment, collection and reporting of mitigation fees collected by the permittees; overseeing the reporting of land disturbance and exempt acres; overseeing the budgeting, accounting, and accounts payable areas of operation; and coordinating Southern Nevada Public Lands Management Act assistance agreements and compliance therewith.

The Adaptive Management Program team provides the following:

- Oversight and project management of Science Advisor, peer reviews, and spatial and statistical analysis contracts;

- Maintenance and administration of the database containing MSHCP-generated and related spatial and aspatial data;
- Analysis of land use trends, habitat loss by ecosystem, species and habitat monitoring data, and implementation status;
- Production of periodic status reports on the Adaptive Management Program;
- Participation in regional GIS coordination teams and recovery implementation teams;
- Ensuring availability of MSHCP technical reports to partners and public as appropriate; and
- Acquisition of best available scientific and commercial data from DCP staff efforts, agencies, consultants and commercial sources to address the above analyses.

The project/contract management team is responsible for overseeing the procurement, contract and agreement management for the Program, and for providing project management and oversight for all projects, including but not limited to:

- Boulder City Conservation Easement management
- Wild desert tortoise assistance
- Fencing (for wildlife and habitat protection)
- Riparian property management
- Other property management (including water rights)
- Information, outreach and education

The project management team is also responsible for communication with related project stakeholders and for identifying, resolving or escalating important project-related issues, and managing the risks and contingencies related to all projects.

The District Attorney - Civil Division's Office provides a dedicated attorney to provide legal counsel to the DCP in the areas of open meeting law, contract and procurement law, real estate law, and compliance with Section 10 of the Endangered Species Act. Since the DCP receives dedicated and priority support, the DCP funds 50 percent of the salary and benefits for the position and these figures are included in the DCP's salaries and benefits budget.

For the 2015-2017 biennium, the total required salaries and benefits budget is \$3,719,740. It is important to note that only a portion, 25 percent or \$929,935, of this budget is allocated for general administrative activities and that 75 percent of this budget, or \$2,789,805, consists of the staff salaries and benefits dedicated to the direct implementation by DCP staff of 51 existing or proposed conservation projects.

Administrative Budget Amounts in Context

The total recommended Implementation Plan and Budget for 2015-2017 is \$8,206,407. County internal service charges, DCP operating expenses, and salaries and benefits for general administration of the program amounts to \$1,570,020, or 19.1 percent of the total \$8.2 million budget. It should be noted that a total 51 conservation projects totaling \$23,031,484 will be administered during the 2015-2017 IPB and that the administrative budget does not roll from biennium to biennium like other projects. When analyzed in this context, the general

administration budget of \$1,570,020 is 6.8 percent of the total funds being administered during the 2015-2017 IPB.

The remaining \$6,636,387 or 80.9 percent of the \$8,206,407 budget is comprised of the direct project costs of the proposed conservation projects (\$3,846,582) and the DCP staff salaries and benefits to implement the existing and proposed conservation projects (\$2,789,805).

Uses of funds for 2015-2017 Implementation Plan and Budget

Conservation Projects	\$6,636,387	80.9%
General Administration	\$1,570,020	19.1%
Total Recommended Budget	\$8,206,407	

Project Approach / Methods:

Administration of the Program will be done in accordance with the MSHCP, Incidental Take Permit and Clark County policy, procedure and practice. In the past, the DCP outsourced the majority of the work related to implementation of the MSHCP. Over the last three biennia, there has been a shift towards DCP staff taking a much more active role in performing the work necessary to comply with plan and permit requirements. The DCP will continue to use a combination of outsourcing and conducting work in-house to meet program requirements.

Because of the potential changes to programmatic requirements that may occur due to the MSHCP permit and plan amendment being pursued, the exact goal(s), description, benefits and approach/methods to this project may change to reflect new requirements or direction.

Estimated Project Cost:

\$1,570,020 (County Internal Service Costs, DCP Operational Costs, Salaries and Benefits for General Administration)

\$2,789,805 (Salaries and Benefits for Direct Implementation of Conservation Projects)

\$4,359,825 (see attached budget detail)

Specific 15-17 Budget Principles Addressed by this Concept (include specific Incidental Take Permit Condition(s) addressed):

Permit Condition H and Section 2.1.8.2 of the MSHCP, require the Permittees to carry out the minimization, mitigation, and monitoring measures specified in Section 2.8 of the MSHCP.

**Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP)
Desert Conservation Program (DCP)
Project Concept Summary Form: 2015-2017 Biennium**

Project Name:

Boulder City Conservation Easement (BCCE) Management and Law Enforcement

Location of activities:

Project activities will take place at the BCCE, in Boulder City, Nevada.

Project Goal:

The work conducted in this project will address elements of the Clark County Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP). Work will be conducted in accordance with the Conservation Easement Agreement, as amended in 2010, and the most updated version of the BCCE Management Plan.

The project goals are to:

- Increase the effectiveness of conservation actions within the BCCE.
- Protect and preserve the desert habitat for the benefit of MSHCP covered species and other native plants and animals.
- Manage the property and public use to meet conservation obligations and legal requirements
- Deter the incidents of illegal activities and prohibited uses that occur on the BCCE

Project Description and Anticipated Benefit:

This project provides for the baseline management of the BCCE including managing law enforcement activities, maintaining signage, and monitoring current conditions and any activities occurring on site. This requires regular and consistent visits to the BCCE.

The project activities may include, but are not necessarily limited to:

- Provide for and manage the law enforcement contract and any other property maintenance contracts taking place on the BCCE.
- Maintain all signage on the BCCE, monitor desert tortoise exclusion fencing, notify the Nevada Department of Transportation of needed repairs, and monitor for new damage to the BCCE.
- Review and analyze management actions for consistency with the BCCE Conservation Easement Agreement (as amended in 2010). Comment on and provide approval recommendations to the Plan Administrator on all applications for activities that may affect the BCCE. These may include rights-of-way (ROWs) projects, events, research and monitoring, and other activities allowable by written permission of the County. Coordinate application reviews with Boulder City and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and monitor permitted project activities and restoration required by Exhibit D of the BCCE Conservation Easement Agreement.
- Review and update the BCCE Management Plan to reflect current conditions and direction.

- Respond to Permittees questions regarding the BCCE and allowable activities.
- Coordinate with Boulder City, neighbors, and other easement holders (ROWs, BLM, etc.), as needed.

The anticipated benefit of this project is the protection and preservation of desert tortoise habitat as partial mitigation for the incidental take of desert tortoises and disturbance to desert tortoise habitat in Clark County.

Project Approach / Methods:

Staff and contractors will be used to perform the above functions using the best available data. Appropriately certified peace officer personnel will conduct law enforcement activities with possible assistance from other parties.

Estimated Project Cost:

\$220,960

Specific 15-17 Budget Principles Addressed by this Concept (include specific Incidental Take Permit Condition(s) addressed):

Principle #1 - Fulfills explicit permit conditions outlined in the current permit. This project fulfills permit condition P, which requires the management of the BCCE to protect and manage the desert tortoise and its habitat.

Principle #2 - Focuses on mitigation and minimization actions that have a rational nexus to the level and impact of take that is occurring and those species impacted. The BCCE consists of Mojave Desert Scrub habitat, in which ~ 1,577 acres of this type of habitat was disturbed from 2011 to 2013.

Principle #3 - Provides for continued funding of ongoing and effective conservation measures. This project provides for ongoing management of the BCCE by funding law enforcement and restoration activities.

Principle #5 - Focuses on projects with measurable outcomes that are pertinent to the MSHCP. This project is pertinent to the MSCHP because it is an explicit permit condition that result in measurable outcomes such as number of patrol hours, number of visitors encountered and number of warning and citations. This information can be compared across months and years to get a picture of activities on the BCCE.

**Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP)
Desert Conservation Program (DCP)
Project Concept Summary Form: 2015-2017 Biennium**

Project Name:

Public Information, Education, and Outreach

Location of activities:

Project activities will take place throughout Clark County, Nevada.

Project Goal:

This project will provide for education and information efforts to encourage respect, protection, and enjoyment of natural ecosystems in Clark County. The purpose of this project is to increase public understanding and awareness of the Desert Conservation Program (DCP) and its mission and to promote environmental awareness within the community.

Project Description and Anticipated Benefit:

This project will implement baseline outreach efforts, including the Mojave Max Education Program and additional conservation message advertising for the DCP. The Mojave Max Education Program will direct environmental messages to children through fun and engaging activities. Teaching children these messages has wide-reaching effects since they share the messages with their friends and families. Other efforts include development and printing of advertisements and materials encouraging people to respect, protect, and enjoy natural ecosystems in Clark County; proper use of the desert; improving public awareness of the value of Clark County's natural ecosystems; and understanding and supporting the purpose of the DCP and its mission.

Efforts during the 2015 -2017 biennium will include:

- Mojave Max Emergence Contest and Education Program. Provide funding for the Mojave Max Education Program and administration of the contract with Red Rock Canyon Interpretive Association for implementation of educational components and support of the emergence contest and winner's field trip. Support the emergence contest and education program through supplemental Mojave Max mascot appearances, printed materials, products, website administration, and advertising.
- Wild Desert Tortoise and Construction Worker Information and Education. Develop, produce, and distribute printed materials, products, and advertisements informing the public of what to do if they find a desert tortoise in the wild or on a construction site, and other related messaging.
- Additional Desert Conservation Program Support. Provide additional public information and education support as needed for other projects such as administration, desert tortoise monitoring, and reserve area management.
- Advertising. Develop and produce advertisements via radio, print, or television regarding responsible desert use and messages regarding "Stay on the Trail".
- Mojave Max High School Pilot Program. Provide funding for administration of a contract with Red Rock Canyon Interpretive Association to develop a pilot program to help High

School students learn and develop leadership skills by training them to present the Mojave Max educational classroom programs to elementary-level students across Clark County.

- Communications and Marketing. Hire a marketing consultant to assist in implementing recommendations presented in the MSHCP Reserve Branding and BCCE Interpretive Planning report (LGA Consultants, 2014). Hire a graphics designer that will develop templates to be used by staff for written materials, outreach materials, signage, presentations, websites, and social media sites. Under this task, the DCP will implement the use of a new tagline: "Streamlining development, protecting species, and preserving our future." The objective of this task is to develop a clear message and apply a brand strategically so that people will instantly identify the DCP on materials they come into contact with.

Project Approach / Methods:

Historically, Clark County has contracted with various agencies and companies to complete projects that fall within the Public Information and Education Program, as well as conducted some of the work with County staff. It is the County's intent to continue this process to successfully develop and implement this program. Educational efforts target specific interest groups, children, and the general public.

Because of the potential changes to programmatic requirements that may occur due to the Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan permit and plan amendment being pursued, the exact goal(s), description, benefits, and approach/methods to this project may change to reflect new requirements or direction.

Estimated Project Cost:

\$306,753

Specific 15-17 Budget Principles Addressed by this Concept (include specific Incidental Take Permit Condition(s) addressed):

This project addresses the following budget principles:

Principle #1 - Fulfills explicit permit conditions outlined in the current permit. This project fulfills permit conditions H and Section 2.8.3.4 of the MSHCP, which requires the Desert Conservation Program (DCP) to focus on appropriate methods to implement public outreach.

Principle #2 - Focuses on mitigation and minimization actions that have a rational nexus to the level and impact of take that is currently occurring and those species impacted. Activities such as construction and recreation are occurring. Providing program information and responsible use messages continues to be an important mitigation measure.

Principle #3 - Provides for continued funding of ongoing and effective conservation measures. This project provides for ongoing public information and education to inform the public of the terms of the Section 10(a) Permits; encourage respect, protection and enjoyment of natural ecosystems in Clark County.

Principle #5 - Focuses on projects with measurable outcomes that are pertinent to the MSHCP. This project measures number of students and teachers educated each year as well as number of people reached through outreach activities.

**Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP)
Desert Conservation Program (DCP)
Project Concept Summary Form: 2015-2017 Biennium**

Project Name:

Riparian Properties Baseline Management

Location of activities:

Activities will occur on the Clark County Muddy and Virgin River Reserve Units in the northeastern Mojave Desert, Clark County.

Project Goal:

To mitigate impacts to MSHCP Covered Species by providing ongoing monitoring, maintenance, and management of acquired riparian properties. This will ensure the properties' value for species covered by the MSHCP.

Project Description and Anticipated Benefit:

This project will protect the existing resources and values of riparian properties by providing for baseline management. This includes the continuance of existing monitoring and maintenance activities to manage properties as habitat for MSHCP Covered Species. Management of riparian properties will be consistent with the most current management plan for the riparian properties and activities may be conducted on existing properties, Clark County Muddy Reserve Units A-I (119 acres) and Virgin River Reserve Units 1 and 2 (175 acres), as well as properties that may be acquired through the conclusion of the biennium on June 30, 2017.

Under this project, the Desert Conservation Program (DCP) will continue to monitor, maintain, and manage the Muddy and Virgin River properties. Activities include, but are not necessarily limited to:

- Ongoing management of the properties. DCP staff will participate in monitoring of restoration sites, inspection and repair of property improvements (fences, roads, groundwater pump and associated canal and pond, irrigation system, municipal water hookup etc.), and maintaining access trails, and roads.
- Managing properties to control invasive plant species and noxious weeds and to support restoration projects. Field crews provided by contractors will be used to conduct plant inventories, targeted weed control, and fuel reduction measures including palm tree trimming, vegetation clearing, chipping and spreading mulch material, as needed.
- Managing properties to reduce threat of fire and maintain safe conditions. The DCP will continue to inspect and repair property improvements, maintain fire breaks, and establish new fire breaks when necessary.

Project Approach / Methods:

The DCP will continue to conduct maintenance and management activities for the Muddy and Virgin River properties through a combination of staff, consultants and/or field crews.

Estimated Project Cost:

\$203,376

Specific 15-17 Budget Principles Addressed by this Concept (include specific Incidental Take Permit Condition(s) addressed):

This project addresses the following budget principles:

Principle #2 - Focuses on mitigation and minimization actions that have a rational nexus to the level and impact of take that is occurring and those species impacted. During the last biennium 9 acres of riparian and 45 acres of mesquite acacia habitat were disturbed.

Principle #3 - Provides for continued funding of ongoing and effective conservation measures. This project provides for ongoing management of riparian habitat.

Principle #5 - Focuses on projects with measurable outcomes that are pertinent to the MSHCP. This project is pertinent to the MSCHP because DCP staff can create measurable outcomes such as number of site visits, type/extent of weeds removed, etc.

**Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP)
Desert Conservation Program (DCP)
Project Concept Summary Form: 2015-2017 Biennium**

Project Name:
Wildlife Fencing

Location of activities:
Activities will occur throughout Clark County, Nevada.

Project Goal:
This project will provide funding to install, maintain, and/or monitor fencing for the protection of wildlife and habitats throughout Clark County, Nevada. Under this project, fencing may be used to reduce unauthorized use and access to sensitive habitats, exclude trespass livestock and other nuisance wildlife from restoration areas, and protect wildlife from being struck by vehicles.

Project Description and Anticipated Benefit:
The installation, maintenance, and monitoring of desert tortoise exclusionary fencing is identified as a priority recovery action in the Revised Recovery Plan for the Mojave Population of the Desert Tortoise (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 2011). Fencing of roadways and construction projects prevents mortality of desert tortoise and other wildlife. Fencing may also be used to prevent trespass of livestock and unauthorized persons into sensitive habitats, such as restoration areas. This project will provide for fencing to protect desert tortoises and other species covered under the MSHCP, as well as for the protection of restoration areas and other sensitive habitats. Activities conducted under this project concept may include, but are not necessarily limited to:

- Fencing of the Boulder City Conservation Easement (BCCE) Energy Zone. The BCCE consists of 86,423 acres of land held in easement status by Clark County and managed by the Desert Conservation Program (DCP) as partial mitigation for take of Covered Species under the Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP). Within the BCCE, there are 3,064 acres excluded from conservation easement status and designated by Boulder City for energy development (Energy Zone). In addition to the Energy Zone, three electrical substations are located within the BCCE, to the north and west of the Energy Zone.

The Energy Zone is currently under active development and desert tortoises are known to occur in the area. The perimeters of completed facilities are fenced with standard chain-link fencing that is not buried and in some places a gap exists between the ground and the fence. The undeveloped areas and areas currently under development are not fenced, with initial ground-disturbing work often conducted prior to the installation of any fencing.

To provide for adequate protection of sensitive species utilizing the Energy Zone and surrounding areas, DCP will construct a desert tortoise exclusionary fence around the Energy Zone and associated access road. This project will also provide for the construction of up to 5 desert tortoise guards at Energy Zone access points. Fencing and tortoise guards will be constructed in accordance with the most recent U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service recommended specifications.

This project will also provide for an Authorized Desert Tortoise Biologist to monitor the installation of desert tortoise exclusionary fencing. The Authorized Biologist will be responsible for: a) inspecting the fence installation site and ensuring that desert tortoises are moved out of harm's way in accordance with current U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service protocols; b) providing site-specific environmental training to construction personnel, which will include instruction on measures to minimize harm to desert tortoises and other sensitive species; c) ensuring that fence construction conforms to U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service specifications for desert tortoise exclusionary fencing, and d) overseeing the desert tortoise clearance survey, which will be conducted to remove desert tortoises from within the Energy Zone once construction of the exclusionary fence is complete.

- Monitoring, Maintenance, and Repair of Existing Roadway Fencing. To date, over 300 miles of desert tortoise exclusionary fencing has been installed along roadways in Clark County as partial mitigation for take of Covered Species under the MSHCP. Weather events, vandalism, and wildlife damage over time has resulted in degradation of the fence. Under this project concept, field crews will be hired to conduct an assessment of over 300 miles of desert tortoise exclusionary fencing. Crews will walk along installed fencing, make minor repairs to fencing where needed, and note where major repairs are needed. Field crews may also collect additional data (such as culvert and/or wash locations and size). Data on culverts and washes may be used to complement a separate study on desert tortoise habitat connectivity.
- Installation of New Fencing. Under this project concept, additional fencing may be installed at the Muddy River and Virgin River Reserve Units and other sites as appropriate, to protect sensitive habitats and restoration sites from authorized use and trespass livestock. This project may provide for up to 2,500 linear feet of new fencing or fencing improvements.

Project Approach / Methods:

DCP will use construction contractors with previous experience in constructing wildlife fencing to construct fences. DCP also intends to use contractors to conduct inspections of over 300 miles of existing desert tortoise exclusionary fencing. Authorized Desert Tortoise Biologist(s) may consist of DCP staff and/or contractors with appropriate experience and qualifications.

Estimated Project Cost:

\$426,197.00

Specific 15-17 Budget Principles Addressed by this Concept (include specific Incidental Take Permit Condition(s) addressed):

This project addresses the following budget principles:

Principle #1 - Fulfills explicit permit conditions outlined in the current permit. Permit Condition N requires the permittees to retrofit, repair, and construct desert tortoise fencing along highways and roads within Clark County. This project concept fulfills Permit Condition N.

Principle #3 - Provides for continued funding of ongoing and effective conservation measures. Desert tortoise exclusionary fencing and other wildlife fencing is an established, effective

measure to reduce mortality of sensitive species and provide for the protection of sensitive habitats. This project would provide funding to increase the amount of wildlife fencing within DCP Reserve Units and provide for ongoing maintenance and repair of existing fencing throughout Clark County.

Principle #5 - Focuses on projects with measurable outcomes that are pertinent to the MSHCP. Measureable outcomes from this project will include number of miles of new fencing installed and number of miles of existing fencing inspected and repaired.

**Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP)
Desert Conservation Program (DCP)
Project Concept Summary Form: 2015-2017 Biennium**

NOTE: THIS CONCEPT WAS PREPARED AND SUBMITTED BY THE U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE.

Project Name:

South Loop Trail Restoration for the Endangered Mount Charleston blue butterfly

Location of activities:

The project area is located within IMA MSHCP Management Area and Mt. Charleston Wilderness. The land manager is the Spring Mountains National Recreation Area, Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest, United States Forest.

Project Goal:

Stabilize and treat the South Loop trail within the Carpenter 1 Fire burn perimeter area to enhance and protect Mount Charleston blue butterfly habitat.

Project Description and Anticipated Benefit:

The Carpenter 1 Fire in the Spring Mountains burned through the core habitat of the endangered Mount Charleston blue butterfly (*Plebejus shasta charlestonensis*). As a result of the fire, the South Loop trail has been damaged and obstructed within areas of Mount Charleston blue butterfly habitat. Direct and indirect adverse impacts to the butterflies and its habitat occurs as a result of concentrated precipitation or snow melt running off the trail, and people walking around tree fall obstructions. The goals of this project are to protect and provide for subsequent establishment of Mount Charleston blue butterfly habitat and reduce the risk of adverse effects to the butterfly from impacts related to conditions caused by the Carpenter 1 Fire. The objectives or strategies of this project to achieve its goals are to treat areas of the South Loop trail to clear obstructions and stabilize the trail prism to prevent adverse erosional processes so that Mount Charleston blue butterfly and its habitat are protected from natural and human disturbances. The anticipated benefits include: further inventory of Mount Charleston blue butterfly habitat after the Carpenter 1 Fire; protective measures for the butterfly and its habitat during project activities and subsequent use by recreational visitors; and subsequent restoration or recovery of areas affected by conditions created by the fire.

Project Approach / Methods:

The approach or methods which will be used for this project will include standard trail stabilization and improvement methods as well as methods, design criteria or conservation measures identified in consultation with the US Fish and Wildlife Service to avoid, minimize, or mitigate impacts to the Mount Charleston blue butterfly and its habitat. Work methods for consideration or anticipated to be required to achieve the project goals and objectives includes: manual sawing down trees, blasting hazard tree to provide safety to crews, water barring, tread repair.

Estimated Project Cost:

\$20,000

Specific 15-17 Budget Principles Addressed by this Concept (include specific Incidental Take Permit Condition(s) addressed):

This concept addresses Incidental Permit Conditions set forth under section H. of the permit (Budget Principle 1).

This concept provides for continued funding of ongoing and effective conservation measures (pp. 2-10 to 2-11 of the MSHCP) of the Mount Charleston blue butterfly including: inventory, protective measures, and restoration and enhancement measures (Budget Principle 3).

This project concept addresses the changed circumstances caused by the Carpenter 1 Fire which has affected a substantial portion of the distribution of endemic populations of the Mount Charleston blue butterfly in the Spring Mountains National Recreation Area (Budget Principle 7). The project concept has measureable outcomes which will produce a final project report of describing "on the ground" beneficial work to the Mount Charleston blue butterfly and its habitat which are pertinent to the MSHCP (Budget Principle 5).

**Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP)
Desert Conservation Program (DCP)
Project Concept Summary Form: 2015-2017 Biennium**

Project Name:

Restoration in Riparian Reserve Units and Acquisition of Water Rights

Location of activities:

Activities will occur on the Clark County Muddy Reserve Units H and I and Virgin River Reserve Units 1 and 2 in the northeastern Mojave Desert, Clark County.

Project Goal:

The goal of this project is to enhance the existing resources and values of the riparian reserve units by continuing the restoration of habitat and acquiring water rights necessary to conduct restoration activities. This project will provide for the restoration of riparian habitat to benefit MSHCP covered species, including, but not limited to: the southwestern willow flycatcher (*Empidonax traillii extimus*), blue grosbeak (*Passerina caerulea*), phainopepla (*Phainopepla nitens*), summer tanager (*Piranga rubra*), vermilion flycatcher (*Pyrocephalus rubinus*), and Arizona bell's vireo (*Vireo bellii arizonae*).

Project Description and Anticipated Benefit:

The restoration, creation, and enhancement of riparian habitats is necessary for the long-term survival of MSHCP Covered Species. Restoration efforts on the Muddy and Virgin River reserve units are ongoing and habitat has been enhanced through fuel reduction, removal of non-native species, and planting of native species. Currently, approximately 8 acres of the riparian habitat have been restored. This project would continue the work begun in previous biennia by conducting additional restoration efforts on the Muddy and Virgin River reserve units. Activities carried out under this project may be conducted on the following existing properties: Clark County Muddy Reserve Units H and I (40 acres) and Virgin River Reserve Units 1 and 2 (175 acres) as well as properties that may be acquired through the conclusion of the biennium on June 30, 2017.

Under this project, the Desert Conservation Program (DCP) will restore, create, and enhance habitat for riparian birds and other covered species. This will include developing and implementing restoration plans for priority restoration sites, and monitoring and adaptive management of restored habitats. Additionally, water rights acquisitions and/or water rights leases may be required to implement restoration activities.

Project Approach / Methods:

Restoration activities on the riparian reserve units will be consistent with the most current management plan for the riparian properties. DCP staff will identify and prioritize sites for restoration and develop restoration plans for priority restoration sites. Restoration plans will be implemented using a combination of DCP staff, and contractors as necessary. Activities conducted may include, but are not necessarily limited to: development of a planting plan design, tamarisk and other non-native species removal, and implementation of the planting plan design with plant propagation and acquisition. Additionally, this project will support ongoing control for non-native

species and adaptive management of restoration activities. As additional properties are acquired by Clark County, restoration planning will be conducted and implemented for new properties.

Estimated Project Cost:

\$214,150

Specific 15-17 Budget Principles Addressed by this Concept (include specific Incidental Take Permit Condition(s) addressed):

This project addresses the following budget principles:

Principle #1 - Fulfills explicit permit conditions outlined in the current permit. The development of restoration plans and the implementation of restoration activities on riparian properties fulfills explicit permit condition J.2, which requires that the DCP participate in development and/or revision of conservation management plans that identify management and monitoring actions needed for desert riparian habitats.

Principle #2 - Focuses on mitigation and minimization actions that have a rational nexus to the level and impact of take that is currently occurring and those species impacted. Restoration on the property focuses on mitigation actions that are commensurate with the level and impact of take that is currently occurring and those species impacted.

Principle #3 - Provides for continued funding of ongoing and effective conservation measures. This project is a continuation of restoration activities begun in the 2011-2013 biennium and contributes to ongoing restoration of the Muddy River and Virgin River Reserve Units.

Principle #4 - Responds to the most recent Science Advisor recommendations. Science Advisor Recommendations 3.1 and 3.2 recommend that the DCP focus on riparian habitat restoration along the Virgin and Muddy rivers. This project will directly support the goal of increasing habitat available for riparian bird species covered under the MSHCP. Science Advisor Recommendation 3.3 recommends that the DCP focuses on restoration and habitat creation of habitat for phainopepla on the Muddy River. Implementation of this project will also increase phainopepla habitat.

Principle #5 - Focuses on projects with measurable outcomes that are pertinent to the MSHCP. DCP staff can create measurable outcomes such as number of acres of restored habitat, number of water rights/leases acquired, site visits conducted, type/extent of weeds removed, and number of plants planted.

**Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP)
Desert Conservation Program (DCP)
Project Concept Summary Form: 2015-2017 Biennium**

Project Name:

Baseline Bird Surveys on Riparian Reserve Units

Location of activities:

Surveys will occur in the Clark County Virgin River and Muddy River Riparian Reserve Units including Muddy River Reserve Units A through I, Virgin River Reserve Units 1 and 2 plus the newly acquired 75 acres adjacent to Virgin River Reserve Unit 2.

Project Goal:

To establish a baseline record of bird species currently present on the riparian reserve units. The baseline record will allow the Desert Conservation Program (DCP) to track changes in bird populations on the riparian reserve units and may be used to measure the success of future restoration and management activities conducted on the reserve units.

Project Description and Anticipated Benefit:

Baseline bird surveys will be conducted for the purpose of providing better information on the status and conservation needs of riparian avian species utilizing habitat in the riparian reserve units. Baseline bird surveys will be conducted to estimate population sizes, habitat use patterns, species distributions, and densities. Surveys will be conducted on all or a subset of the riparian reserve units, as funding allows.

The baseline data will provide information for the prioritization of conservation and restoration efforts at each site and will inform the development of restoration goals, objectives, and monitoring criteria for each of the riparian reserve units. The results of the baseline bird surveys will also provide information on whether long-term monitoring and more intensive bird surveys are warranted in the future. It will also allow us to measure success of restoration over time by measuring an increase in abundance and/or species richness.

Project Approach / Methods:

A contractor will be sought to conduct baseline bird surveys at the Virgin River and Muddy River reserve units. The bird survey protocol will be developed by DCP staff in conjunction with the contractor and may consist of grid inventory, point-count surveys, strip transects, or other survey protocols as deemed appropriate for meeting the goals of the project. The bird surveys will also include vegetation assessments and will use existing imagery to characterize the habitat.

Estimated Project Cost:

\$52,867

Specific 15-17 Budget Principles Addressed by this Concept (include specific Incidental Take Permit Condition(s) addressed):

This project addresses the following budget principles:

Principle #2 - Focuses on mitigation and minimization actions that have a rational nexus to the level and impact of take that is occurring and those species impacted.

Principle #5 - Focuses on projects with measurable outcomes that are pertinent to the MSHCP.

**Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP)
Desert Conservation Program (DCP)
Project Concept Summary Form: 2015-2017 Biennium**

NOTE: THIS CONCEPT WAS PREPARED AND SUBMITTED BY THE U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE.

Project Name:

Desert Tortoise Monitoring

Location of activities:

This project will take place in tortoise habitat throughout Clark County and in adjacent areas with suitable habitat. The land in these areas is managed primarily by the BLM, National Park Service, and USFWS. Monitoring will occur on these Management Areas: BCCE, Gold Butte, Mormon Mesa, Piute-Eldorado Valley, and Coyote Springs.

Project Goal:

The goal for this project is to generate three yearly estimates of Mojave desert tortoise population density over a five year period. Estimates and population trends currently exist for a 10 year period, indicating population growth toward recovery in 5 of the 6 federal conservation areas, but delisting criteria require 25 years of increasing population trends.

Project Description and Anticipated Benefit:

This project would continue long-term monitoring of desert tortoise populations in critical habitat. This monitoring provides information to address delisting criteria of the Revised Recovery Plan for the Mojave Population of the Desert Tortoise (USFWS 2011) and is required in the Clark County MSHCP. The annual monitoring effort includes training and field data collection, quality control and database production, as well as analysis. We propose a first year of monitoring all areas because recent density estimates will be missing for at least 2 years, then shifting to monitoring a subset of the area in each of the 4 subsequent years.

DCP staff and contractors will:

- Hire field-ready surveyors;
- Provide field gear and vehicles;
- Create maps of survey locations;
- Collect and verify field data;
- Contracting for database development and final QA/QC

USFWS staff and cooperators will:

- Select and oversee sampling design;
- Provide project-specific training for field crews;
- Include trained surveyors on required desert tortoise handling permits;
- Oversee development of collection and final databases;
- Provide independent data review and quality control;

- Begin interim development of spatial and aspatial databases, formatting collection databases and adding elevation, photo, and datasheet material to the databases;
- Provide statistical and other analysis using distance sampling and other tools;
- Develop final reports.

Project Approach / Methods:

Staff, cooperators, and contractors will be used to perform the above functions using the best available scientific and commercial data.

Estimated Project Cost:

Year	Effort	Cost (40 tortoises per TCA)
2016	6 TCAs	\$492,575.55
2017	3 TCAs	\$271,766.30
2018	3 TCAs	\$251,509.21
2019	3 TCAs	\$323,153.05
2020	3 TCAs	\$230,944.85
Total		\$1,569,948.96

Specific 15-17 Budget Principles Addressed by this Concept (include specific Incidental Take Permit Condition(s) addressed):

Principle #1 - Fulfills explicit permit conditions outlined in the current permit. The desert tortoise, *Gopherus agassizii*, is a covered species. This project will enable the continued implementation of desert tortoise monitoring throughout the Clark County, Nevada portion of the species' range. The project is also relevant to species threats, specifically, Threat 102: unknown population trends. This project will collect data necessary for assessing population trends of the desert tortoise. In addition, data from this ongoing project have been and will continue to be necessary to validate desert tortoise habitat models developed by USGS cooperators. Models of climate change impacts by these same authors are currently in development using the last data from this monitoring project.

Principle #2 - Focuses on mitigation and minimization actions that have a rationale nexus to the level and impact of take that is occurring and those species impacted. Section 2.8 of the MSHCP describes the measures to minimize, mitigate, and monitor impacts to take. Monitoring is a required component of the MSHCP and its Adaptive Management Program (AMP), as described in Section 2.8 of the MSHCP, and further described in the AMP Memorandum of Agreement.

Principle #3 - Provides for continued funding of ongoing and effective conservation measures. This project will provide continuing information on population recovery of desert tortoises. Preliminary trends showing population growth in 5 of the 6 federal conservation areas is in review. Positive trends over a 25-year period are required for delisting.

Principle #5 - Focuses on projects with measurable outcomes that are pertinent to the MSHCP. This monitoring program was adopted by several land- and wildlife-management agencies in 2000 as the preferred method for describing population status of the Mojave desert tortoise. It is used

to measure the combined effectiveness of smaller recovery projects on large-scale desert tortoise recovery.

**Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP)
Desert Conservation Program (DCP)
Project Concept Summary Form: 2015-2017 Biennium**

Project Name:

Post-Translocation Desert Tortoise Monitoring

Location of activities:

This project will be located on the Boulder City Conservation Easement (BCCE) and/or Stump Springs in Clark County, Nevada.

Project Goal:

The goal of this project is to assess the success of translocation (i.e., survivorship and distribution of translocated and resident tortoises) of desert tortoise to one or two sites in Clark County. This project will also establish a population baseline to assess the success of augmentation (reproduction, population growth) in the future.

Project Description and Anticipated Benefit:

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Bureau of Land Management have proposed to conduct translocation of desert tortoises. Translocation of desert tortoises to Stump Springs and/or the Boulder City Conservation Easement (BCCE) is proposed to occur in either fall 2014 or spring 2015. This project would track the success of translocation by monitoring survival and dispersal of both resident and translocated tortoises.

The goal of translocation is to augment the existing populations to increase density to a level comparable to that seen in the surrounding area. Population augmentation in depleted areas is one of the strategic elements of the Revised Recovery Plan for the Mojave Population of the Desert Tortoise (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 2011). An increase in tortoises in these areas through augmentation may help to facilitate recovery over time and improve connectivity of the landscape.

Project Approach / Methods:

Projects will be approached in one of two ways. If the project occurs on the BCCE then the project will use line distance sampling on pre-determined plots to determine change in abundance over time.

If the project occurs at Stump Springs, then the project will either use line distance sampling or mark-recapture sampling to look more closely at survival and population size over time. Both methods have been used in the past with success and will be chosen based on the terrain, level of existing information, and cost. The project will be completed by a contractor with the appropriate training and permits to complete the task.

Estimated Project Cost:

\$350,000.00

Specific 15-17 Budget Principles Addressed by this Concept (include specific Incidental Take Permit Condition(s) addressed):

This project will address the following budget principles:

Principle #3 - Provides for continued funding of ongoing and effective conservation measures. Currently, Pre-translocation monitoring is planned to occur in the fall of 2014 on the BCCE and Stump Springs, and will be followed by translocation to one or both sites. This project would provide funding to continue monitoring of these sites after the translocation occurs.

Principle #5 - Focuses on projects with measurable outcomes that are pertinent to the MSHCP. This project would work toward the goal of the MSHCP to detect increases in population numbers as a result of population augmentation.

**Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP)
Desert Conservation Program (DCP)
Project Concept Summary Form: 2015-2017 Biennium**

Project Name:

Relict Leopard Frog Conservation Planning and Implementation

Location of activities:

Project activities will occur on public and Clark County-administered lands in Clark County, Nevada.

Project Goal:

This project proposes to further implement conservation actions and update the Conservation Agreement and Strategy to ensure the persistence of the Relict Leopard Frog (*Lithobates onca*), with the aim of avoiding the need for federal listing under the Endangered Species Act.

Project Description and Anticipated Benefit:

In 2002, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) was petitioned to list the Relict Leopard Frog under the Endangered Species Act. Listing was considered warranted but precluded – precluded to a fair extent because of initial conservation actions and development of a voluntary conservation agreement and strategy (CAS). The CAS was signed in 2005 by several state and federal agencies, and is administered by a voluntary Relict Leopard Frog Conservation Team (RLFCT 2005). However, the CAS is scheduled for renewal by the end of 2015, and in 2016 the status of the species is scheduled for formal review by the USFWS.

This project would continue successful efforts funded by the Desert Conservation Program over three biennia. The project will implement conservation actions identified in the CAS for two years, with the intent of extending over a third year through the acquisition of additional funding from state (Nevada or Arizona) or federal sources. Conservation actions will continue through the upcoming federal review of species status, and conservation planning will continue through the renewal of the CAS. The project also will provide time to assist the RLFCT in developing a strategy for transition to a sustainable, long-term management program.

Project Approach / Methods:

Methods implemented in this project are specified in the Relict Leopard Frog Protocol and Techniques Manual included in the CAS (RLFCT 2005). The protocols detail the various procedures used for headstarting, translocation, population monitoring, and site management, and also specifies documenting and reporting of conservation actions. The CAS is available online at: <http://www.fws.gov/nevada/es/documents/esa/rana%20onca%20CAS%20final.pdf>.

Goal 1: Provide conservation efforts towards the persistence of existing Relict Leopard Frog populations.

Objectives:

1. Monitor all sites containing Relict Leopard Frogs semiannually using visual encounter surveys (currently there are 17 sites).

2. Assess observations from visual encounter surveys at active experimental sites to evaluate the success of translocations.
3. Identify management actions to improve or mitigate habitat conditions at existing sites to promote persistence of populations, and implement actions to improve microsite conditions at important breeding pools or coordinate actions by field crews working for land managers.

Goal 2: Establish new populations of Relict Leopard Frogs in a diversity of habitats and localities.

Objectives:

1. Manage a headstarting program to raise late-stage tadpoles or small frogs from eggs collected in the wild for translocation to new sites or to augment existing sites.
2. Manage translocations or augmentations according to established protocols.
3. Assist efforts by land and resource managers to identify and assess potential sites for translocations, and assist with meeting compliance requirements for introductions.

Goal 3: Coordinate oversight of the Relict Leopard Frog Conservation Team (RLFCT), and facilitate reporting by the team.

Objectives:

1. Maintain written records (minutes) of the semiannual meetings of the RLFCT.
2. Function as the primary editor for RLFCT work plans and reports.
3. Facilitate evaluation and update of the conservation agreement and strategy (CAS) by the RLFCT.

This proposed project would need a qualified contractor with extensive expertise with the Relict Leopard Frog. The contractor shall have a clear understanding of the emerging management needs for this species, and have fostered effective and efficient collaborative relationships with regional, state, and federal entities necessary to successfully accomplish the goals and objectives identified in the CAS.

Estimated Project Cost:

\$184,050

Specific 15-17 Budget Principles Addressed by this Concept (include specific Incidental Take Permit Condition(s) addressed):

This project addresses the following budget principles:

Principle #3 - Provides for continued funding of ongoing and effective conservation measures. This project has been in place over three biennia and has shown major improvements to Relict Leopard Frog populations over that time.

Principle #5 - Focuses on projects with measurable outcomes that are pertinent to the MSHCP. The increase in Relict Leopard Frog distribution and abundance over the past several years is a direct

result of this program and the continuation of funding may help species listing under the Endangered Species Act.

**Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP)
Desert Conservation Program (DCP)
Project Concept Summary Form: 2015-2017 Biennium**

NOTE: THIS CONCEPT WAS PREPARED AND SUBMITTED BY THE U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE.

Project Name:

Desert Tortoise Sterilization Clinics and Outreach

Location of activities:

Clinics and outreach activities will be held primarily in the Greater Las Vegas area.

Project Goal:

The goal is to sterilize unwanted pet desert tortoises to decrease backyard breeding, which should help alleviate the number of unwanted pet tortoises turned in to the Desert Tortoise Conservation Center, reduce the likelihood of excess unwanted pet tortoises from being released into the wild, and allow more focus of limited funds on recovery of wild desert tortoise populations.

Project Description and Anticipated Benefit:

Up to two sterilization clinics per year for two years will be conducted within the months of between April and September. Veterinarians who are trained in the surgical procedure will be available to perform endoscopic sterilizations for adoption centers and for public custodians of desert tortoises either at a low cost or on a pro bono basis.

Public outreach activities, which may include information booths at fairs and specifically-targeted locations and public service announcements, will be provided prior to the sterilization clinics to notify the public that this service is available to them, and to educate the public on the proper care of captive desert tortoises.

The sterilization clinics will provide the public with an affordable means of controlling backyard breeding, and public outreach efforts will help educate the public and promote responsible captive tortoise care.

Project Approach / Methods:

The sterilization clinics will be held at a facility in the Las Vegas, Nevada vicinity equipped with the necessary equipment to perform the surgical procedures. A local veterinarian and a veterinarian technical assistant trained in the surgical procedure will be available to perform sterilizations for adoption centers and members of the public for up to four two-day clinics that will occur during the spring and/or the fall months. The vet tech will be responsible for coordinating the clinics and any outreach and public notification efforts prior to the clinics.

One veterinarian and one veterinarian technician / project coordinator will be funded for this project. The project will include the rental of an appropriate facility to hold the clinics, and rental of any equipment that may need to be used during the clinics.

An initial sterilization clinic will be held in August of 2014 to train local veterinarians to perform the sterilizations. It is anticipated that the results of that clinic will provide important information that will be used to inform the specific approach to be used in subsequent clinics.

Estimated Project Cost:

Estimated project costs are \$48,240.

Specific 15-17 Budget Principles Addressed by this Concept (include specific Incidental Take Permit Condition(s) addressed):

1. Fulfills explicit permit conditions outlined in the current permit.

Condition F: The authorization granted by this permit is subject to compliance with, and implementation of the Clark County Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP), and executed Implementing Agreement, both of which are hereby incorporated into the permit.

Condition H: The Permittees shall carry out the minimization, mitigation, and monitoring measures specified in section 2.8 of the MSHCP, and as otherwise stated under the IA. Unless specifically modified by the MSHCP, the minimization, mitigation, and monitoring stated in sections 3C and 3D of the Clark County Desert Conservation Plan (DCP) (Permit PRT 801045) are incorporated by reference and shall remain in effect as written unless later modified through the MSHCP, its adaptive management program, or the Implementation Plan and Budget process.

2. Focuses on mitigation and minimization actions that have a rationale nexus to the level and impact of take that is occurring and those species impacted.

The majority of the habitat disturbed was Mojave desert scrub, which is desert tortoise habitat.

5. Focuses on projects with measurable outcomes that are pertinent to the MSHCP.

This project should result in a measurable decrease in the number of unwanted captive desert tortoises in Clark County.

**Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP)
Desert Conservation Program (DCP)
Project Concept Summary Form: 2015-2017 Biennium**

NOTE: THIS CONCEPT WAS PREPARED AND SUBMITTED BY THE U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE.

Project Name:

Spring Mountains dark blue butterfly taxonomic status evaluation using modern genetic analytical techniques

Location of activities:

The range of the Spring Mountains dark blue butterflies spans across all categories of MSHCP Management Areas. Habitat for the subspecies is primarily on Forest Service managed land in the Spring Mountains National Recreation Area but also occurs within the Red Rock National Conservation Area and private lands in close proximity. There are no known surveys for Spring Mountains dark blue butterflies on private lands, however there are low elevation historic locations in close proximity to private land near Cold Creek, Lee Canyon, Kyle Canyon, Lovell Canyon, and Potosi Mountain.

Project Goal:

Use modern genetic techniques and evaluate genetic diversity of populations and the genetic isolation and taxonomic separation of the Spring Mountains dark blue butterfly as two subspecies using modern genetic techniques.

Project Description and Anticipated Benefit:

The Spring Mountains dark blue butterfly (*Euphilotes enoptes purpurea*) is a covered invertebrate species under the Clark County Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan. Austin (1998) determined that populations of *Euphilotes enoptes* in the Spring Mountains were more appropriately assigned to a distinct subspecies of *E. ancilla purpura*. Additionally populations of the Spring Mountains dark blue butterfly (*E. a. purpura*) were separated further into two distinct subspecies (Austin et al. 2008), *E. a. cryptica* based on observed differences in larval host plants (*Eriogonum umbellatum juniporinum* used by *E. a. purpura* larvae and *E. u. subaridum* used by *E. a. cryptica*) and adult emergence (late April-late June for *E. a. purpura* and mid-July- early September for *E. a. cryptica*). Hence the different subspecies are referred to as early and late forms of the Spring Mountains dark blue butterfly.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) was petitioned to list the early and late forms of Spring Mountains dark blue butterflies as endangered or threatened by WildEarth Guardians September 30, 2011. On August 7, 2012 the Service published a 90-day finding in which it was determined that the petition presented substantial scientific or commercial information indicating that listing these two subspecies may be warranted and that the Service will complete status reviews of both subspecies. In the same year Dr. Daniel Thompson of the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV) completed field work for a three year (2010-2012) autecological study of rare endemic butterflies in the Spring Mountains which included both Spring Mountain dark blue butterflies. Dr. Thompson collaborated with Dr. Kevin S. McKelvey with the USDA Forest Service,

Rocky Mountain Research Station to collect and perform genetic analyses of the Spring Mountains dark blue butterflies.

Analysis of mitochondrial DNA sequences from both subspecies is currently in progress to address the genetic separation of the taxonomic assignment at the subspecific level. In preliminary findings, individual population samples (within subspecies) have unique genetic markers (termed DNA haplotypes) suggesting populations are currently relatively isolated. In addition, although there is one common DNA marker in purpura, there is another common marker present in both subspecies, such that without further analysis of DNA it is not possible to determine if the putative subspecies are genetically distinct. Furthermore some recent results (April 2014) have begun to suggest a reevaluation of the populations of *Euphilotes* in the Spring Mountains as assigned to the species ancilla group is warranted. Based upon cooperative work using data from Dr. Matthew Forister of the University of Nevada, Reno, there is evidence that the mitochondrial DNA of *Euphilotes* in the Spring Mountains, although genetically distinct, actually clusters with a different species of *Euphilotes* (not *ancilla*) that is found in central and northern Nevada.

When funding is appropriated to perform 12-month status reviews of the Spring Mountains dark blue butterflies it will be imperative that the genetic diversity, isolation, and taxonomic status of the Spring Mountains dark blue butterflies is clearly understood using modern genetic systematic and taxonomic approaches so that threats to this entity can be appropriately evaluated and decisions of its status can be supported.

Project Approach / Methods:

Modern genetic techniques and analyses of DNA from both the mitochondria and nucleus of butterfly cells can be used to assess the taxonomic status of *Euphilotes* in the Spring Mountains. Funding is needed to perform these more complete genetic analyses to elucidate the taxonomic status of the putative subspecies and subsequent evaluation of threats and conservation status of *Euphilotes* in the Spring Mountains.

The estimated cost to provide phylogenetic taxonomic analyses of *Euphilotes* in the Spring Mountains for genetic analysis of multiple regions of DNA from both the mitochondria and nucleus of butterfly cells for existing and new population samples from the Spring Mountains and other regions of Nevada is provided below.

A report has been prepared for the work funded by SNPLMA (9-4: Spring Mountains Butterfly Life History and Autecology Studies, Phase II (FS36, FW36)) and completed to date is available upon request.

Estimated Project Cost:

\$38,000

Specific 15-17 Budget Principles Addressed by this Concept (include specific Incidental Take Permit Condition(s) addressed):

This concept addresses Incidental Permit Conditions set forth under section H. of the permit (Budget Principle 1).

- H. The Permittees shall carry out the minimization, mitigation, and monitoring measures specified in section 2.8 of the MSHCP, and as otherwise stated under the IA. Unless specifically modified by the MSHCP, the minimization, mitigation, and monitoring stated in sections 3C and 3D of the Clark County Desert Conservation Plan (DCP) (Permit PRT 801045) are incorporated by reference and shall remain in effect as written unless later modified through the MSHCP, its adaptive management program, or the Implementation Plan and Budget process.

This concept provides for continued funding of ongoing and effective conservation measures (pp. 2-10 to 2-11 of the MSHCP) of the Spring Mountains dark blue butterflies including: research, inventory, monitoring that subsequently affect other conservation measures including protective measures, restoration and enhancement measures, and land use policies and actions (Budget Principle 3)

This concept has measureable outcomes which will produce reports and subsequently peer reviewed publications with information as it relates to the Spring Mountains dark blue butterfly for review as a listable entity under the Endangered Species Act such that is directly pertinent to the current MSHCP (Budget Principle 5).

**Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP)
Desert Conservation Program (DCP)
Project Concept Summary Form: 2015-2017 Biennium**

Project Name:

Temporary Holding Facility for Displaced Desert Tortoises

Location of activities:

Project activities will occur in Clark County, Nevada. A specific site has not yet been identified.

Project Goal:

The purpose of this project is to provide for a temporary holding facility for desert tortoises displaced by construction and other activities covered by the Incidental Take Permit (TE034927-0).

Project Description and Anticipated Benefit:

The DCP is required to collect tortoises from construction sites in Clark County.

Construction personnel that encounter wild desert tortoises on construction sites are instructed to place the desert tortoise in a clean container and to call the Wild Desert Tortoise Assistance Line to schedule pick-up of the desert tortoise. The DCP oversees the Wild Desert Tortoise Assistance Line and is responsible for ensuring that wild desert tortoises encountered on active construction sites are removed and relocated to suitable sites. Prior to 2014, the Desert Tortoise Conservation Center (DTCC) provided temporary housing for desert tortoises removed from construction sites; however, the DTCC is scheduled to be closed in December 2014. Therefore, DCP needs to identify an alternate location for temporarily housing desert tortoises that are displaced from construction sites.

Funding under this project will be used to identify and secure a location to temporarily hold desert tortoises that have been displaced from construction sites. Tortoises that are removed from active construction sites will be placed into the temporary holding facility until a suitable site for translocation is identified or until climatic conditions allow for translocation to a pre-determined site. Project activities may include:

- Identify and secure a suitable location for temporary housing of desert tortoises
- Construction of up to 10 pens for adult tortoises (approximately 6 meters by 6 meters)
- Construction of up to 2 juvenile predator-proof pens (approximately 2 meters by 2 meters)
- Construction of fencing and gates to secure facility
- Health assessments conducted by a qualified personnel (required prior to translocation)

Project Approach / Methods:

DCP staff will identify a secure outdoor location where tortoises may be held temporarily. Construction contractors with previous experience in constructing wildlife fencing will be used to construct temporary holding enclosures.

Under this project, health assessments of displaced tortoises will be conducted by trained personnel experienced with reptile medicine. There is a minimum 30 day quarantine period for

most tortoises that are collected through the Wild Desert Tortoise Assistance Line, and at least one health assessment will be completed during that quarantine.

Estimated Project Cost:

\$250,000

Specific 15-17 Budget Principles Addressed by this Concept (include specific Incidental Take Permit Condition(s) addressed):

This project addresses the following budget principles:

Principle #1 - Fulfills explicit permit conditions outlined in the current permit. Permit condition M specifies that the Permittees shall continue the desert tortoise translocation program implemented under the Desert Conservation Plan. Identifying a temporary holding facility will permit the translocation program to continue.

Principle #2 - Focuses on mitigation and minimization actions that have a rational nexus to the level and impact of take that is occurring and those species impacted. This project focuses on providing temporary housing for displaced tortoises so that tortoises may be translocated to suitable sites. Activities covered under the MSHCP result in impacts to desert tortoises and their habitat. The continuation of the translocation program serves to mitigate for these impacts.

Principle #3 - Provides for continued funding of ongoing and effective conservation measures. This project would provide funding for temporary housing, thus allowing for the continuation of translocation. Translocation is a successful tool that supports population recovery efforts.

Attachment D

Summary of USFWS Comments

Project	Comment	Response
General	We support the projects proposed under both Baseline Activities and Discretionary Projects categories and appreciate the efforts of you and your staff to improve coordination with the Service on projects. Overall, we believe these projects should address the highest priority conservation needs for the covered species. We recommend fully funding all proposed projects, with the exception of the Spring Mountains Taxonomic Status Evaluation, which we may be able to support under an alternative funding source.	Thank you for your comment. The Spring Mountains Taxonomic Status Evaluation, while included in the list of proposed projects, has not been recommended for funding.
Administration	As we discussed during our meeting, it still appears that an unusually large amount of funding is being allocated to administration. We encourage you to continue to incorporate efficiencies into the administration of the conservation program, so more funding is available for on-the-ground conservation actions to improve habitat conditions and off-set impacts from development while ensuring the HCP's endowment remains well funded. Although you have categorized the entire Administration budget under Required Projects, we understand that this cost is for administration of both Required and Discretionary project categories as well as administering previously approved projects that are still being implemented. We recommend that the budget clearly identifies which projects (e.g., Required, Discretionary and previously approved) the Administration costs are covering. If Discretionary projects are not approved, costs associated with administration of those projects should be reduced in proportion to the reduction of project costs that are not approved.	Thank you for your comment. It should be noted that a large portion (64 percent) of the \$4.3 million administrative costs provides for salary (and associated benefits) for staff that are responsible for carrying out conservation projects. DCP staff are responsible for conducting many on-the-ground conservation actions as well as overseeing contracts that improve habitat conditions and off-set impacts from development. As stated in the project concept summary form, when accounting for all projects that will be managed during the 2015-2017 biennium, administrative costs only account for approximately 6.9 percent of the total funds that will be administered.
Monitoring Projects	Baseline bird surveys and desert tortoise range-wide monitoring projects are currently listed under the Discretionary Projects budget category. Monitoring is an essential component of habitat conservation plans as provided in our Five Point Policy, and as we discussed during our meeting, should be considered a Required Project in your budget. We understand designing an effective monitoring program is challenging for this particular HCP; however, we support your efforts to begin pre- and post- restoration surveys for birds, and desert tortoise range-wide and post-translocation monitoring. These monitoring efforts should provide the DCP with useful information on the success of your conservation program relative to these covered species.	Required projects are those that are explicitly stated as permit conditions in the Incidental Take Permit issued to Clark County Desert Conservation Program. Monitoring, including proposed baseline bird surveys and range-wide desert tortoise monitoring, are not stipulated as conditions of authorization in the Incidental Take Permit (TE 034927-0), and therefore, are considered discretionary. We agree that these monitoring efforts will provide valuable information on the success of conservation actions, which is why they have been proposed for funding for the upcoming biennium.

Project	Comment	Response
Desert Tortoise (Survey, Health Assessment, and Translocation) Training Program	As you mentioned during our August meeting, the County is coordinating with the Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW) and Southwest Partnership for Amphibian and Reptile Conservation (SWPARC) to develop a training program for conducting surveys and health assessments associated with translocating healthy desert tortoises displaced from urban development. Although not identified as a specific budget item, you stated during our August meeting that funding has been set aside to assist with the cost of developing this program. We appreciate and support your efforts to work with NDOW and SWPARC to develop this training, which is essential for managing the impacts from large-scale developments and ensuring healthy tortoises are safely and effectively translocated back into the wild.	Thank you for your comment. The DCP is currently coordinating your office, NDOW, and SWPARC to develop this training program and we have agreed to make some of our existing funds from previous biennia available for the development of this training program.
Temporary Holding Facility for Desert Tortoise Translocation Candidates	As we discussed during our August meeting, we agree that a secure temporary holding site for desert tortoise translocation candidates displaced as a result of the MSHCP's covered activities will be needed in lieu of using the Desert Tortoise Conservation Center, which is scheduled to be closed on December 31, 2014. Although not specifically identified as a budget item, it is our understanding funding has been set aside to cover the cost of temporarily holding displaced tortoises until they can be translocated back into the wild. We recommend that the County continues to set aside adequate funding in the future to ensure displaced tortoises are properly cared for until they can be translocated.	Thank you for your comment. We have added a new project concept to our proposed Implementation Plan and Budget. The purpose of the project will be to identify and secure a temporary holding facility for desert tortoises that are displaced by construction activities.
Support for Desert Tortoise Recovery Implementation Team (RIT) Projects	As you know, the Desert Tortoise Recovery Implementation Teams (RITs) are in the process of identifying potential projects to fund for desert tortoise recovery efforts. Although the proposed budget does not include projects specific to this planning effort, we support and recommend funding be provided to contribute to high priority recovery projects identified by the RIT for the Recovery Unit containing Clark County.	Thank you for your comment. DCP staff have coordinated with the Northeast Mojave RIT and informed them of the projects that are proposed for the 2015-2017 biennium. It is our understanding that many of our proposed projects align with high-priority recovery projects identified by the RIT, and therefore, complement the efforts of the Northeast Mojave RIT. DCP will continue to use this resource in the future to identify potential projects for funding under the MSHCP.

Attachment E

Summary of Science Advisor Comments

Project	Comment	Response
General	Number projects for ease in compiling and referencing. There may be value in numbering or separating the projects into non-discretionary and discretionary projects.	Comment noted. Changes have not been made to project concepts based on this feedback.
	The definitions of IMA, LIMA, MUMA, and UMA should be included in the introductory material of the IPB report with an explanation of the importance of identifying in which conservation management category the project is planned.	The management area categories have been removed from the project concepts.
	<p>Estimated Project terms; The Estimated Project Term of July 1, 2015 through June 30, 2017 should be stated in the introductory material of the 2015-2017 IPB report and deleted from the separate project concepts. The Administration project concept acknowledges (along with the Quarterly Administrator Update Report) that many millions of dollars of conservation projects are either ongoing, are proposed for or pending implementation, or are no longer planned to be implemented, and thus funds from previous biennia remain available to expend. It is therefore apparent that previously approved projects were not implemented or funds were not expended during the particular biennium (i.e., estimated project term) they were approved.</p> <p>Without the benefit of an explanation that some projects may extend more than 2 years or take more than 2 years to initiate and implement, or the inclusion of a breakdown of remaining funds available to expend (primarily from required projects), <u>setting a project term is misleading at best.</u></p>	The project term section has been removed from project concept summary forms.
	Include information or an explanation on how the project relates to each of the listed budget principles, as was done in the majority of the project concepts.	Thank you. Revisions to the project concepts were made based on this feedback.
	As in previous IPBs, it is difficult to comment on the estimated costs for projects because no information is provided on how the budget numbers were derived. The estimated costs can only be assessed from limited experience reviewing and designing similar projects. Most estimated costs seem reasonable, with a few having higher than expected costs (e.g., Post-Translocation Desert Tortoise Monitoring and the Relict Leopard Frog conservation efforts).	Thank you. The IPB is intended to provide a summary of work expected over the upcoming years and estimated costs for those activities. Budgets are developed based on best available information, past projects, and trend analysis. Explicit detail is not always available. Note that the IPB establishes a budget and that exact project costs are developed and negotiated at the time the project is enacted, per Clark County fiscal directives.

Project	Comment	Response
	<p>Several project concepts recommended in documents and emails earlier this year (Science Advisor's 2015-2017 Implementation Plan and Budget Recommendations, April 15, 2014; and a preliminary DCP assignment list in an email from Marci Henson on June 6, 2014) were not included in the final Project Concept Summary Forms. This includes acquisition of riparian habitat, the desert tortoise occupancy and covariate projects, connectivity of tortoise habitat in the BCCE, fire management on the BCCE, workshop to determine how much riparian restoration is enough, and the desert tortoise training program. An explanation should be provided on the reasons why funding is not being sought for these projects and others that may have been recommended by agency partners or permittees.</p>	<p>Thank you. In many of these cases it was determined by staff that enough money existed in previous biennium budgets to cover these projects so that new money would not need to be allocated. Others, such as the workshop to determine how much riparian restoration is enough, were projects staff decided were not needed at this time.</p>
	<p>The past 3 biennia included the fencing program, wild tortoise pick-up service, and the adaptive management program as separate concepts considered as non-discretionary (required) projects for administering the MSHCP. An explanation should be provided if these projects have been incorporated into other required projects, or if sufficient budgeted funds remain from previous biennia to fulfill the MSHCP obligations, or if there are other reasons why these projects are not addressed in the 2015-2017 IPB.</p>	<p>Thank you. Staff have reviewed the funds remaining from previous biennia and have looked at projected needs for the upcoming 2015-2017 biennium, and we have determined that the existing previously approved funds are adequate to cover the needs of these projects over the next biennium. Therefore, we have not proposed additional funding or included these project concepts in the draft 2015-2017 IPB.</p>
<p>Non-discretionary Projects-Administration</p>	<p>According to the Budget Process Clarification in the 2013-2015 IPB, the Implementing Agreement is the controlling document for administering the MSHCP, and should therefore be referenced in the project goal.</p>	<p>Thank you for your comment. We do not feel that it is necessary to include this reference into the administration project concept, as this language is already included in the 2015-2017 Budget Process and Schedule, which will be included as an attachment to the IPB report.</p>
	<p>Update the number of developed acres and compliance cost savings allowed by the MSHCP. The amounts listed are the same as used in the 2013-2015 IPB and it is assumed there has been some return on investment from expenditures of Section 10 fees from the last biennium.</p>	<p>Numbers have been updated.</p>

Project	Comment	Response
	<p>The projected hours are for the 12 staff to implement 39 projects approved in previous IPBs and 5 required projects. Is it reasonable to assume that all previously approved projects will be initiated during this biennium or are there actually 39 projects currently ongoing? The 2013-2015 IPB stated there were 10 projects previously approved and 7 recommended, which totals 17 projects. What are the additional 22 projects to arrive at 39 projects that will be or are being implemented?</p>	<p>Project concepts described in Implementation Planning and Budget reports are "master projects" and each may consist of several sub-projects. Together, these sub-projects achieve the overall goal of the master project. DCP staff are currently working on 39 projects that are expected to continue through at least part of the next biennium.</p>
	<p>The 2015-2017 project concepts should be clearly listed as to which ones are the 5 required projects and the 7 recommended projects.</p>	<p>Thank you for your comment. Reviewers may refer back to the budget summary sheet if they need to differentiate which projects are discretionary or non-discretionary. No changes have been made to the project concepts.</p>
	<p>The last two sentences of the first paragraph comparing the general administrative budget as a percent of the total budget of 51 conservation projects should be deleted. The projects approved in previous IPBs also included general administrative budgets for those IPBs, and thus the context is incorrect, or at least misleading. The context could be that expenditure or management of the general administrative budget may not have been efficient if that budget amount does not "roll over" from year to year as does the budget amount for projects that are ongoing or will be implemented during the 2015-2017 IPB.</p>	<p>As stated in the project concept, the administrative budget does not roll over from biennium to biennium. Thus the administrative costs that were budgeted in the 2013-2015 biennium were not tied to specific project concepts, but rather this was the amount estimated as necessary to staff the program and conduct work within the period from July 1, 2013 to June 30, 2015. While there are projects from previous biennia that will continue through all or a portion of the 2015-2017 biennium, there are no administrative funds that will be carried forward from previous biennia. This is the amount needed to maintain our current level of staffing and general overhead/administrative expenses for the 2-year biennium period.</p>
	<p>Clarify in the second paragraph if some DCP staff labor is included in the budget amount for conservations project (listed as \$3,170,385) and if so, include the approximate percent of project budgets is allotted for staff labor.</p>	<p>Thank you. Revisions to the project concept were made based on this feedback.</p>
	<p>Change "over the last two biennia" to "three biennia" to update this statement from the 2013-2015 IPB.</p>	<p>Thank you. Revisions to the project concept were made based on this feedback.</p>
<p>Non-discretionary Projects- Boulder City Conservation Easement</p>	<p>The work conducted under this project should be consistent with the updated BCCE Management Plan (February 2014, Version 3.0) and the goals should be those listed in the Management Plan.</p>	<p>Thank you. Revisions to the project concept were made based on this feedback.</p>
<p>Management and Law Enforcement</p>	<p>The approach should reflect the management goals, objectives, and actions as presented in the updated Management Plan (February 2014, Version 3.0). What is commercial data?</p>	<p>Thank you. Revisions to the project concept were made based on this feedback.</p>

Project	Comment	Response
	On principle #2 correct typo of "rationale" to "rational".	Thank you. Revisions to the project concept were made based on this feedback.
	What is the nexus between managing the BCCE and number of acres disturbed from 2011-2013? Was this the number of acres disturbed on the BCCE during that timeframe? Since the project goal is listed as "protect and preserve desert habitat", which of listed project activities would address the loss of these acres?	The BCCE was setup as mitigation for present and future loss of desert tortoise habitat within Clark County. Although no lands on the BCCE are disturbed it will continue to act as mitigation for loss of habitat in other areas within Clark County for the length of the permit. All project activities help to protect the BCCE from unauthorized use and development which protects the habitat and therefore helps to mitigate for loss elsewhere in Clark County.
Non-discretionary Projects- Public Information, Education, and Outreach	Under Project Description and Anticipated Benefit we recommend deleting "and long-term" since there has been no measures of effectiveness of this program to determine its long-term effects and we recommend deleting "and remember the messages throughout their lives" as that phrase is conjecture.	Thank you. Revisions to the project concept were made based on this feedback.
	The Wild Desert Tortoise and Construction Worker Information and Education was approved in the 2013-2015 IPB. Has that information been developed, and if so, what additional effort is needed this biennium?	Thank You. As stated in the concept this portion relates to printed material, products, and advertisements related to construction worker education. The video has been developed and is currently being showed to construction workers at large gatherings such as dust control classes.
	Recommend deleting Mojave Max Emergence Contest advertising since it was already listed under the Mojave Max Program.	Thank you. Revisions to the project concept were made based on this feedback.
	Recommend deleting the sentence under communications and marketing referencing the new tagline, unless it has been vetted by the permittees and accepted by the Board of County Commissioners.	The new tagline will not be deleted from the project concept. This tagline better reflects the goal of the program while also illustrating the benefit that the program provides to the public.
	Under budget principles correct typo of "13-15" to "15-17" and add budget principle #1. Recommend including the same explanations for each principle as were used in the 2013-2015 IPB.	Thank you. Revisions to the project concept were made based on this feedback.
Non-discretionary Projects- Riparian Properties Baseline Management	Include which conservation management category the riparian properties are located within. If the Muddy River properties were within the UMA category prior to acquisition, include a statement explaining that the category would no longer be relevant because of their reserve status.	Thank you. Revisions to the project concept were made based on this feedback.

Project	Comment	Response
	Under project description and anticipated benefits the description states that management would occur on properties that may be acquired; however, the effort to acquire the properties either through transfer from other County departments or by purchase from willing sellers is not listed in this project concept or others.	Currently there is money from previous biennium available for property acquisition and given the time involved in purchasing properties DCP staff did not feel they could spend all the current allotted money plus additional monies within the next biennium.
	Provide a brief explanation as to how this project meets or fulfills all the budget principles.	Thank you. Revisions to the project concept were made based on this feedback.
Non-discretionary Projects- South Loop Trail Restoration for the Endangered Mount Charleston Blue Butterfly	This project was prepared and submitted by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and was included in the budget list as a required (non-discretionary) project. Although budget principle #1 is listed, it is uncertain without further explanation why this project is considered non-discretionary.	While we also agree that this is not a permit condition, it is listed as non-discretionary due to the changed circumstance of the Carpenter 1 fire a natural catastrophic event. Although not specifically in the permit we are required to supply aid to threatened and endangered species in the face of changed circumstances such as a catastrophic event.
	The goal of the project and the ultimate and long-term intent, would be better worded as "to protect and restore habitat along the South Loop Trail for the Mount Charleston blue butterfly." The words stabilize and treat are related to management actions, not goals.	Comment noted. Changes have not been made to this project concept.
	In the project description make it clear that there are no actions for planting vegetation, reword the last phrase of the last sentence in this section as "and subsequent natural restoration and recovery of areas affected by the fire."	Comment noted. Changes have not been made to this project concept.
	An estimated project cost seems very reasonable. The estimated cost and the limited project scope, compared with the significance of the species, raise the question if there are any other conservation actions that could be funded to benefit the species.	Comment noted. Changes have not been made to this project concept.
Discretionary Projects- Restoration in Riparian Reserve Units and Acquisition of Water Rights	Since this is the continuation of restoration efforts, the goal should state the project continues restoration and enhancement of riparian habitat.	Thank you. Revisions to the project concept were made based on this feedback.
	Add a list of the MSHCP species that would benefit from riparian habitat restoration. It is assumed this would include the six MSHCP-covered species, southwestern willow flycatcher (<i>Empidonax traillii extimus</i>), blue grosbeak (<i>Passerina caerulea</i>), phainopepla (<i>Phainopepla nitens</i>), summer tanager (<i>Prianga rubra</i>), vermilion flycatcher (<i>Pyrocephalus rubinus</i>), and Arizona bell's vireo (<i>Vireo bellii arizonae</i>). If all of these species are not the focus of the riparian	Species added to project goal.

Project	Comment	Response
	habitat restoration, state why.	
	The last sentence in the second paragraph states that water rights acquisitions and/or water rights leases may be required to ensure the success of restoration activities. Are there plans to acquire additional water rights for these properties, or is it to address the existing rights and to complete the transfer them to Clark County?	This statement is to cover either possibility as they may occur over the biennium for current properties or future acquisitions.
	To strengthen the project concept, summarize the restoration that has already taken place (meters or linear feet of river reach or acres of riparian habitat) and what would be lost if the restoration efforts are not continued.	Thank you. Revisions to the project concept were made based on this feedback.
	Under budget Principles correct the typo from 13-15 to 15-17.	Thank you. Revisions to the project concept were made based on this feedback.
	Under Principle #3 in the second sentence, change to "and contributes to the ongoing restoration of the Muddy River reserve unit" to clearly differentiate between management (a non-discretionary action) and restoration (a discretionary action).	Thank you. Revisions to the project concept were made based on this feedback.
	Regarding principle #4 (refer to 2.0 General Observations) and change the reference to the recommended management actions in the Riparian Properties Management Plan (February 2014, Version 1.0) as the source of Science Advisor input.	The reference is correct and refers to the 2015-2017 IPB Science Advisor recommendations that were completed on April 15, 2014. This budget principle does not refer to the management plans.
Discretionary Projects- Baseline Bird Surveys on	In the first sentence, replace "A-I" with "A through I" to make it clear that there are 9 parcels in the reserve unit. Note what type of MSHCP management area (IMA, LIMA, MUMA, UMA) A through I reserve units are located within.	Thank you. Revisions to the project concepts were made based on this feedback. Comment noted. Description of management areas has been removed from all project concepts.

Project	Comment	Response
Riparian Reserve Units	List which bird species will be the focus of the baseline surveys. Will the surveys cover the six MSHCP-covered species? If all of the MSHCP species are not the focus of the riparian habitat restoration, state why (e.g., do not occur in the area, no longer a priority species, etc.).	As this is still in concept form we have not determined the monitoring techniques that will be used for this project and therefore do not know exactly which bird species will be the focus of the surveys. The list will be finalized at project development and may be based on changes to covered species resulting from the proposed MSHCP Amendment as well as coordination with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.
	The baseline data on bird species has to be rigorous enough to detect biologically meaningful changes in bird species richness and abundance. The Great Basin Bird Observatory should be consulted before initiating this project to determine the availability of useable data from their previous surveys and to guide the extent and design of the proposed surveys.	Comment noted. GBBO was consulted during the development of this project concept.
	Rewrite data collection section to be more specific and precise. Example; establish permanent point counts to assess bird species richness and abundance. Include in the data collection: species richness, species abundance, displays of nesting behavior (territorial behavior, nest collection, pairing), and occurrence of nests.	This level of detail has not been determined at this time and therefore, was not included in the project concept.
	We recommend mapping the vegetation at each of the sites. Vegetation is a variable that greatly influences the bird species richness and provides breeding habitat. This may require additional funding.	The cost estimate for this project concept did account for vegetation mapping. Language has been revised to reflect this.
	Surveys for southwestern willow flycatcher have been done along the Virgin River in recent years, so mention the use of this data. Will these surveys be continued in the future and, if so, is this proposal partially redundant with that work?	It is possible that this may fund work on Southwestern Willow Flycatchers (SWFL) but we do not plan on double surveying in one area. However, we may pay to expand SWFL surveys to all of our properties.
	Add a measure of restoration success to the list of what the baseline data will provide in the second paragraph under Project Description and Anticipated Benefits.	Thank you. Revisions to the project concept were made based on this feedback.
	The primary measure of restoration success should be restored habitat; there are many factors beyond habitat restoration that determine whether a specific species will use or nest in the habitat.	Comment noted. Changes have not been made to this project concept based on this feedback.
	Additional funding may be needed to add vegetation mapping to the project.	Vegetation mapping was considered when the cost estimate was developed. The language has been revised to reflect this.

Project	Comment	Response
Discretionary Projects- Desert Tortoise Monitoring	A better project name would be Long-term Desert Tortoise Monitoring	Comment noted. Changes have not been made to this project concept based on this feedback.
	In this section, what does “in adjacent areas with suitable habitat” mean? It is assumed that DCP funding is limited to the area designated in the MSHCP and is not available to fund project on areas outside Clark County.	In some instances the TCAs may cross some boundary lines but in order to get accurate estimates of the TCA and see trends over time all transects within the TCA will need to be monitored This project will monitor all TCAs that occur partially or wholly within Clark County.
	Under the list of actions that DCP staff and contractors will do, it says contracting for database development. Since this is part of the USFWS range-wide monitoring efforts, should a database already exist? This bullet: should also state “complete final QA/QC”.	Comment noted. Changes have not been made to this project concept based on this feedback.
	There appears to be overlap between the two lists of bullets for what the DCP staff and contractors will do with what the USFWS and contractors will do, such as database development.	Comment noted. Changes have not been made to this project concept based on this feedback.
	Since the USFWS is proposing to format collection databases, it seems it would be more appropriate for the contracting and the development of the database also be handled by USFWS instead of DCP if additional formatting is required.	Comment noted. Changes have not been made to this project concept based on this feedback.
	Since this project concept is a continuation of long-term monitoring/line distance sampling, it is assumed that a database should already be in place.	Comment noted. Changes have not been made to this project concept based on this feedback.
	Under project approach/methods What is commercial data?	Comment noted. Changes have not been made to this project concept based on this feedback.
	The cost estimates appear reasonable, but there is no information on how the amounts were derived.	The IPB is intended to provide a summary of work expected over the upcoming biennium and estimated costs for those activities. Budgets are developed based on best available information, experience with past projects, and trend analysis. Explicit detail is not always available at this stage of the planning process. Note that the IPB establishes a budget and that exact project costs are developed and negotiated at the time the project is enacted, per Clark County fiscal directives.
	Why do the costs for the 4 years of monitoring 3 Tortoise Conservation Areas (TCAs) differ, with 2019 being significantly more costly?	This has to do with which TCAs are being monitored in that year with some more difficult than others due to location and logistics.

Project	Comment	Response
	Why is the cost estimate for 2016, when 6 TCAs are monitored, less than double most of the 3 TCA monitoring year estimates?	Thank you. This can be attributed to logistics and startup costs for projects that would occur each year, which you would save by doing all TCAs in one year.
	Define the TCA acronym as tortoise conservation area.	Comment noted. Changes have not been made to this project concept based on this feedback.
	Under principle #1, state the explicit permit conditions that this project fulfills.	Comment noted. Changes have not been made to this project concept based on this feedback.
Discretionary Projects- Post-translocation Desert Tortoise Monitoring	The conservation management category of MUMA for the Stump Springs area should be of concern, unless the Bureau of Land Management's level of management is proposed to change through the pending Resource Management Plan update.	The Bureau of Land Management is currently revising the Las Vegas Resource Management Plan (RMP). Under the RMP revision process, Clark County DCP has proposed that Stump Springs be designated as an area of critical environmental concern (ACEC) as part of a revised conservation strategy proposed under a MSHCP Amendment.
	The DCP should not fund post-translocation monitoring if the recipient site does not meet the USFWS' translocation guidance that states recipient sites "are not subject to future impacts, or are a minimum of 10 km from areas expected to be developed".	The Bureau of Land Management released the Stump Springs translocation plan for public review and comment. If the Science Advisor has an opinion on the suitability of the selected site, then the public comment period would have been the appropriate time to submit such concerns. We suggest that the Science Advisor review the Determination of NEPA Adequacy decision record for a summary of the public comments and the BLM's responses. It is the DCP's assertion that we are proposing to fund monitoring activities for a project that has undergone all required regulatory reviews and approvals.
	Rewrite the project goal as "The goal of this project is to assess the success of translocation (survivorship and distribution of translocated and resident tortoises) of desert tortoise to one or two sites in Clark County, and to establish the baseline to assess the success of augmentation (reproduction, population growth) in the future."	Thank you. Revisions to the project concept were made based on this feedback.
	The difference between monitoring for translocation success versus augmentation success needs to be clarified in the project description.	Thank you. Revisions to the project concept were made based on this feedback.
	Delete the last sentence in the project description and anticipated benefit section.	Thank you. Revisions to the project concept were made based on this feedback.
	Mention the Desert Tortoise Pre- and Post- Translocation Monitoring Plan, written by the Science Advisor for DCP, as providing guidance for monitoring.	Comment noted. Changes have not been made to this project concept based on this feedback.

Project	Comment	Response
	Is a health assessments part of the monitoring? If so, mention it and outline how it will be done. Is a telemetry site going to be used? If so, add this to the approach.	As this is still in concept form we have not determined the monitoring techniques that will be used for this project and therefore cannot include this information into this concept.
Discretionary Projects- Relict Leopard Frog Conservation Planning and Implementation	The project description and approach do not clearly state a conservation planning component to this project. From the project concept a more appropriate name for the project would be Conserving Extant and Establishing New Populations of the Relict Leopard Frog.	Thank you for the comment.
	Rewrite the goal as “. . . to further implement the conservation actions and update the Conservation Agreement and Strategy.”	Thank you. Revisions to the project concept were made based on this feedback.
	In the second paragraph of project description and anticipated benefit, first sentence describe how the project has been successful (e.g., monitoring data, established x number of new populations, biological and ecological insights).	Comment noted. Changes have not been made to this project concept based on this feedback.
	Emphasize that funding this project will leverage additional funding from state and/or federal sources.	We do not believe that this funding will leverage funding from other agencies, but rather, will bridge the gap until funding for this project can become available based on changes to state regulations.
	The third paragraph of project description and anticipated benefit, better placed in Project Approach/Methods, is not needed since this is a continuation of work being done.	Thank you. Revisions to the project concept were made based on this feedback.
	Explain why funding is needed for the voluntary Relict Leopard Frog Conservation Team.	While the oversight group may be voluntary, day-to-day activities such as the head start program and monitoring are not. This money will go to pay the individuals involved in the day-to-day operations.
	The objectives under this goal of maintaining minutes and editing work plans and reports should be the responsibility of the participating agencies.	Comment noted. Changes have not been made to this project concept based on this feedback.
	Updating the Conservation Agreement and Strategy is an appropriate funding objective for the MSHCP.	Thank you for the comment.
	Explain why the project term is until December 2017 when a formal review of the species will be completed in 2016, and if listed, will provide another source of funding for this project.	Although it may be listed in 2016 no new funds would become available until 2017. Furthermore, the goal of this program is to prevent listing under the Endangered Species Act.
Label the included budget principle as #5. Add budget principle #3 to the list.	Thank you. Revisions to the project concepts were made based on this feedback.	
Discretionary Projects- Desert	Delete the first appearance of “unwanted” in the first sentence, as this project should be offered for all pet tortoises.	Comment noted. Changes have not been made to this project concept based on this feedback.

Project	Comment	Response
Tortoise Sterilization Clinics and Outreach	If the DTCC is scheduled to close by October 2014, should this refer to the Animal Foundation, which accepts pet tortoises?	Comment noted. Changes have not been made to this project concept based on this feedback.
	The description states that up to two clinics per year would be held between April and September. This project concept should receive sufficient funding to hold more clinics (recommend at least one clinic per month during the time period) and be free to all to encourage participation.	Comment noted. This is the maximum amount the DCP is willing to spend under this project concept at this time. If US Fish and Wildlife Service wishes to provide funding for additional clinics, then the DCP would support that.
	If a fee is imposed, who would be responsible for collecting the fee and what would the fees be used for if the veterinarians are providing free services?	Comment noted. Changes have not been made to this project concept based on this feedback.
	Consider increasing the funding to cover the veterinarian service if it is uncertain these services may not be accessible otherwise.	Comment noted. This is the maximum amount the DCP is willing to spend under this project concept at this time. If US Fish and Wildlife Service wishes to provide additional funding for veterinary services, then the DCP would support that.
	Because of DCP's experience in public information and advertising, the public outreach activities for should be handled by the DCP under the Public Information, Outreach, and Education program either by DCP staff or through funding to the Animal Foundation.	Comment noted. Changes have not been made to this project concept based on this feedback.
	The number and timeframe of the clinics listed does not match with the text in the Project Description. Clarify the number and duration of the clinics, and when the clinics would likely occur.	Comment noted. Changes have not been made to this project concept based on this feedback.
	Clarify whether the vet and vet tech would be paid, as the Project Description indicates the services may be provided pro bono.	Comment noted. Changes have not been made to this project concept based on this feedback.
	The budget spreadsheet was not provided for review to determine the amounts for public outreach, veterinarian services, and equipment rental.	Thank you. The IPB is intended to provide a summary of work expected over the upcoming years and estimated costs for those activities. Budgets are developed based on best available information, past projects, and trend analysis. Explicit detail is not always available. Note that the IPB establishes a budget and that exact project costs are developed and negotiated at the time the project is enacted, per Clark County fiscal directives.
	The budget should be of a sufficient amount to provide enough clinics to be convenient to pet tortoise owners and to encourage participation in the program.	Comment noted. Changes have not been made to this project concept based on this feedback.
The appropriateness of budget principles #1 and #2 applied to this project is questionable and recommend they be deleted.	Comment noted. Changes have not been made to this project concept based on this feedback.	

Project	Comment	Response
Discretionary Projects- Spring Mountains Dark Blue Butterfly	Reword project name to Genetic Evaluation of the Taxonomic Status of the Spring Mountains Dark Blue Butterfly Species Complex.	Comment noted. Changes have not been made to this project concept based on this feedback.
Taxonomic Status Evaluation	In the first paragraph, second sentence, rewrite as "assigned as a distinct subspecies of <i>E. ancilla</i> , as <i>E. ancilla purpura</i> ".	Comment noted. Changes have not been made to this project concept based on this feedback.
	In the third sentence, write out generic names to clearly differentiate between the two Es, the <i>Euphilotes</i> and <i>Eriogonum</i> species. Also italicize <i>E. a. purpura</i> in the same sentence.	Comment noted. Changes have not been made to this project concept based on this feedback.
	While the scientific importance of knowing the taxonomic status of these subspecies is acknowledged, its importance for conservation is not explained. If the two subspecies use the same habitat, then knowing their taxonomic status does little for conservation and the importance of funding this project to meet obligations of the MSHCP should be a very low priority. But if the two species use different habitat or use the same habitat differently (e.g., host plants, vegetation structure), then there is value in determining the difference and distribution of the two subspecies. This comment should be addressed in the Project Description.	Comment noted. Changes have not been made to this project concept based on this feedback.