DESERT CONSERVATION PROGRAM

Quarterly Administrator Update

JANUARY 2016

desert conservation PROGRAM

OCT 2015—DEC 2015

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The Desert Conservation Program (DCP) manages Endangered Species Act compliance on behalf of Clark County and the cities of Boulder City, Henderson, Las Vegas, North Las Vegas, Mesquite and the Nevada Department of Transportation (NDOT) (collectively, the Permittees) through implementation of the Clark County Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP) and associated Section 10(a)(1)(B) incidental take permit. The MSHCP and permit allow private landowners to develop land in Clark County without the need for individual project-by-project consultations and negotiation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife (USFWS) to comply with the Endangered Species Act, providing a streamlined process for compliance. In exchange for this permit, the DCP implements actions to mitigate impacts from development. These actions include research, acquisition of sensitive habitats, habitat restoration, public information and education, the Wild Desert Tortoise Assistance Line and installation and maintenance of fencing along roadways to reduce tortoise mortality.

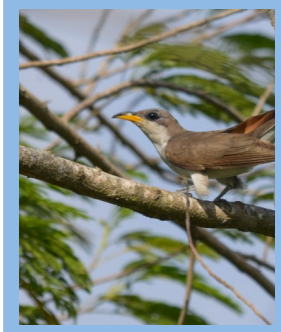
Boulder City Conservation Easement (BCCE)

The incidental take permit requires the establishment of a conservation easement in the Eldorado Valley to be managed and protected for the benefit of the desert tortoise (*Gopherus agassizzi*) as partial mitigation for the take of desert tortoise and its habitat. The BCCE was established between Clark County and Boulder City in July of 1995 to fulfill this requirement.

ACTIVITIES FOR THIS QUARTER

- Provided continuous oversight and project management for an interlocal agreement with Boulder City for Law Enforcement on the BCCE.
- Completed over 20 site visits to the BCCE to monitor use, disturbances, and related issues; to perform new signage installation, maintenance and upgrades; for restoration planning and monitoring; and in support of the Predation Study, including wildlife camera downloads and monitoring.
- Authorized a Reserve Disturbance Request submitted by Boulder Solar Power, LLC to construct a new gen-tie transmission line within the BCCE. This transmission line will deliver energy from a new solar facility north of the BCCE to the Nevada One Solar substation located in the Energy Zone.
- Met with law enforcement during two site visits to plan patrols to cover areas where unauthorized uses were detected.
- Completed a six-month monitoring study to determine a pattern of use for particular sites. The information will be used to set patrol routes.
- Continued mapping of roads on the BCCE and collaboration with other agencies to use the Database for Inventory Restoration Tracking (DIRT).
- Installed three interpretive panels to complete the gabion kiosk project. Began planning for additional gabion kiosk signage at other BCCE entry points.
- Continued to negotiate site-use license agreements with Energy Zone developers to construct Energy Zone fencing. Continued to develop construction bid documents for the project which is expected to be advertised during the next quarter.

A comprehensive list of BCCE management accomplishments for this quarter can be viewed on this webpage:
http://bitly.com/BCCE4thQtr2015



Riparian Reserve Units

The incidental take permit stipulates that take of covered avian species is conditioned upon the acquisition of private lands in desert riparian habitats along the Muddy and Virgin rivers and the Meadow Valley wash. To comply with this permit condition, the DCP has acquired properties with riparian habitat along the Virgin and Muddy rivers in Clark County. These properties serve to mitigate impacts to covered species and conserve habitats and important connectivity corridors.

ACTIVITIES FOR THIS QUARTER

Muddy River Reserve Unit

- Planning process for pilot restoration project is ongoing.
- Awarded new contract to National Park Service (NPS) to survey, treat, and control noxious weeds and invasive species.

Virgin River Reserve Unit

- Continued monthly photo-monitoring documentation of restored areas within Subunit 1.
- Staff is seeing some natural willow recruitment in restoration areas.
- Staff is writing a comprehensive restoration plan for the Virgin River Reserve Unit.

Property Acquisition

- Phase I of property boundary surveys has been completed by the County Surveyor's Office.
- Phase II of property boundary surveys will be going out for bid.

A comprehensive list of Riparian Reserve Units management accomplishments for this quarter can be viewed on this webpage:

http://bitly.com/Riparian_Reserve_Units

FACEBOOK Mojave Max | INSTAGRAM Mojave_Max | TWITTER @MojaveMax

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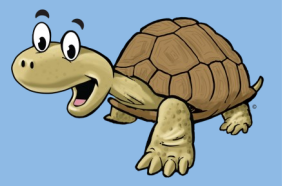


Public Information and Education

One of the requirements of the MSHCP is to provide public information and education and to complete outreach projects that support messages of the DCP.

ACTIVITIES FOR THIS QUARTER

Mojave Max Education Program

Continued contract with Red Rock Canyon Interpretive Association for education programs.

The Mojave Max team met to select the schools for the 2016 Mojave Max Assembly season.

Outreach Events

Festival at Downtown Summerlin	October 10-11, 2015
Fall Festival at Mt. Charleston	October 17, 2015

Wild Desert Tortoise Assistance

ACTIVITIES FOR THIS QUARTER

- Attended the Management Oversight Group meeting on December 8, 2015.
- Assisted with planning for the Desert Tortoise Health Assessment training class held on Nov 18, 2015.
- Staff participated in review of proposals and contractor selection for the Desert Tortoise Range-wide Monitoring project. This project will provide for field crews to conduct desert tortoise line distance sampling protocols within tortoise conservation areas in Clark County and adjacent areas. Data collected by this project is used by the USFWS to determine population trends and to determine whether recovery goals are being met. The Great Basin Institute was selected for this project and project kick-off will occur during the next quarter.

Desert Tortoise Fencing

There was no desert tortoise fencing installed during this reporting period.

Wild Desert Tortoise Assistance Line

The 1995 Desert Conservation Plan and the 2001 MSHCP require the DCP provide a hotline and pick up service to deal with wild desert tortoises which are displaced by development or appear to be in harm's way due to construction activity. The DCP operates the wild desert tortoise assistance line to meet this requirement.

The wild desert tortoise assistance line logged five calls during this reporting period and all five tortoises were picked up. Three of those tortoises were translocated to USFWS-approved sites; one tortoise was relocated to adjacent, undeveloped land; and one tortoise was taken to a holding facility and may be translocated pending health assessment results.

Attention all Construction Personnel

If you see a wild desert tortoise on a construction site, please call the Wild Desert Tortoise Assistance line at 702-593-9027. The tortoise will be picked up free of charge.

Construction Site Training

Please contact the DCP if you would like to schedule a desert tortoise training session for your construction staff. The DCP will explain what to do if you find a wild desert tortoise on your construction site and the training will be provided free of charge. Please contact the DCP at 702-455-3536 if you're interested.

Adaptive Management Program

As a requirement of the incidental take permit, the DCP is required to have an Adaptive Management Program (AMP) in order to gauge the effectiveness of existing conservation measures, propose alternative conservation measures as the need arises and to deal with changed or unforeseen circumstances.

- Staff participated in review of proposals for the selection of a Science Advisor Panel. This contract will provide the DCP with an independent Science Advisor Panel, consisting of 5 members with expertise in areas that complement the program. The Science Advisor Panel will be responsible for providing scientific expertise and advise to program staff, making budgetary recommendations, and reviewing major programmatic reports and work products. Terragraphics was selected to provide this service and contract negotiations were held on November 30, 2015. Project kick-off will occur during the next quarter.
- Staff continues work on a project to test the efficacy of occupancy sampling protocols to monitor desert tortoise populations within in the BCCE. Occupancy sampling assesses the proportion of habitat occupied by a species and may be more useful for detecting trends at smaller spatial and temporal scales than line distance sampling. To support this effort, we continue to look at vegetation through remote sensing and on-the-ground studies. A new contract to conduct a third year of vegetation surveys was initiated during this quarter. Staff also continues to work with remote-sensing contractors to develop models that will depict vegetative green-ups over time and to further refine shrub cover models for the BCCE. These data will be incorporated with the results of occupancy sampling to develop fine-scale predictive models of desert tortoise habitat.
- Staff completed an Adaptive Management course provided by the National Conservation Training Center.

Permit Amendment

The DCP continues to pursue a major amendment to the MSHCP and incidental take permit. This amendment would allow for additional take authorization in Clark County while providing long-term assurances to the Clark County community for continued economic growth.

ACTIVITIES FOR THIS QUARTER

- DCP staff continued to work with USFWS to develop an approach to analyzing the potential impacts of an increase in take authorization that would occur under a proposed amendment. Staff also continued to meet with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to review proposed changes to Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs) and associated management prescriptions as proposed in a revision to the *Las Vegas and Pahrump Field Offices Resource Management Plan*. Under this proposed plan revision, the DCP has nominated four ACECs – these ACECs would become part of the Reserve System under an amended MSHCP and would be cooperatively managed by the BLM and DCP.
- Staff negotiated a contract with Southwest Ecology, LLC to provide covered species analysis support. This contract will result in the development of up to 31 new species distribution models, review and assessment of 25 existing species distribution models, and development of species accounts for up to 56 species. Work under this contract will provide information necessary to support an analysis and revision of the covered species list and data necessary to conduct impact analyses Board of County Commissioner contract approval and contract kick-off are scheduled to occur next quarter.
- Continued to administer a contract with TerraSpectra Geomatics. The purpose of this contract is to refine data management activities within the DCP and to assess the feasibility of potential data-sharing applications and permit processing applications that could be implemented under an amended MSHCP. Final GIS management guidelines were submitted and staff is working on incorporating recommendations into project implementation processes. A final feasibility assessment will be submitted next quarter.
- Staff continued to meet with Nevada Division of Forestry to discuss development of a master permit for the take of state-listed plant species. This permit would provide the MSHCP Permittees with disturbance authorization from the State Forester Firewarden, in accordance with Nevada Revised Statutes, for state-listed plant species in Clark County.

External Agency Coordination and Assistance

In order to keep well informed on the current and future land use impacts to Clark County, the DCP will review and potentially provide comments on issues relevant to Clark County. As a public agency, the DCP also provides data as requested to interested parties.

ACTIVITIES FOR THIS QUARTER

- Provided Commissioner Kirkpatrick with maps of the BLM ACECs, Tule Springs Fossil Beds National Monument, and Las Vegas Valley disposal boundary.
- Provided Clark County Commissioners maps of Lee Meadows.
- Provided mapping and assistance to Clark County Code Enforcement.
- Provided species information to Clark County Comprehensive Planning.
- Provided tortoise habitat connectivity maps to Clark County management.
- Provided USFWS maps and GIS data of the MSHCP plan area.
- Provided USFWS maps of the BLM ACECs within Clark County.
- Provided Power Engineers GIS data and LiDAR (elevation) data for the BCCE.

Opuntia basilaris
(Credit: C. Floyd)

Out and About with the DCP

Virgin River Reserve Unit

Mojave Max

Mojave Max Assembly at Scherkenbach Elementary

Installation of kiosk at the Boulder City Conservation Easement

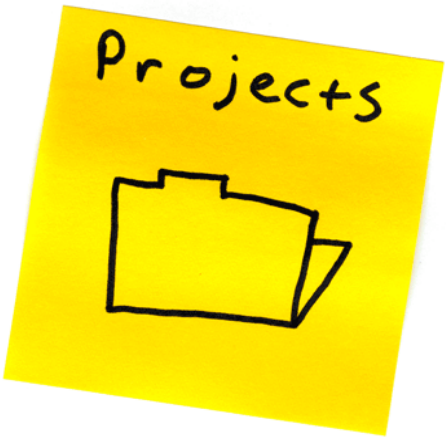
New, Ongoing, and Closed Projects

New projects started this quarter

- Hotline and Processing of Wild Desert Tortoises, 803E
- Desert Tortoise Monitoring Data Management, 1540B
- Desert Tortoise Telemetry on the BCCE (Years 2 & 3), 1545A
- Muddy River Weed Management, 1520B

Ongoing projects this quarter

- Mojave Max Mascot Appearances, 916Q
- Mojave Max Education Program, 1515A
- 15 Year Anniversary MSHCP Video & Booklet, 1500H
- 15 Year Anniversary MSHCP Event Planning, 1500J
- Hotline and Processing of Wild Desert Tortoises, 803E
- BCCE Law Enforcement, 1510A
- BCCE Weed Survey, 714K
- BCCE Site Rehabilitation & Cleanup, 910B
- Permit Amendment Legal Counsel, 1014B
- GIS Data Management and Needs Assessment, 901C
- BCCE DT Predation Study – Phase 2, 803D
- Fencing Installation & Maintenance, 804A
- Science Advisor for the Desert Conservation Program, 801D
- Desert Tortoise Habitat, 719Q
- Eldorado Desert Tortoise Monitoring (Years 1 & 2), 1451A
- Desert Tortoise Occupancy Sampling Crews II, 1012D
- Desert Tortoise Telemetry on the BCCE Year 1, 1450B



Ongoing projects this quarter Cont'd.

- Desert Tortoise Monitoring Data Management, 1540B
- Desert Tortoise Telemetry on the BCCE (Years 2 & 3), 1545A
- Water Rights Consulting, 805Q
- Muddy River Weed Management, 1520B

Projects closed this quarter

- BCCE Road Barriers Installation, 920D
- 2013-2015 Biennium Progress Report Editing & Printing, 1500G
- Vegetation Data for Desert Tortoise Covariate Monitoring Project, 811D
- Desert Tortoise Occupancy Sampling Crews, 1012B
- Desert Tortoise Pre-Translocation Surveys of Stump Springs, 803C
- LiDAR Data Processing – BCCE, 811G
- Predictive Modeling for four Clark County Bird Species, 901A
- Animated Mojave Max Video, 1430J
- Stay on the Trail PSA, 1430T
- Remote Sensing – 2013, 811A
- Mojave Max High School Pilot Program, 1430F
- Mojave Max Education Program, 1430A
- Muddy River Property Maintenance, 1445A
- Muddy River Weed Management, 915A
- BCCE Law Enforcement, 1420A
- DCP Statistical Consultant, 801H

Requests for proposals (RFPs) this quarter

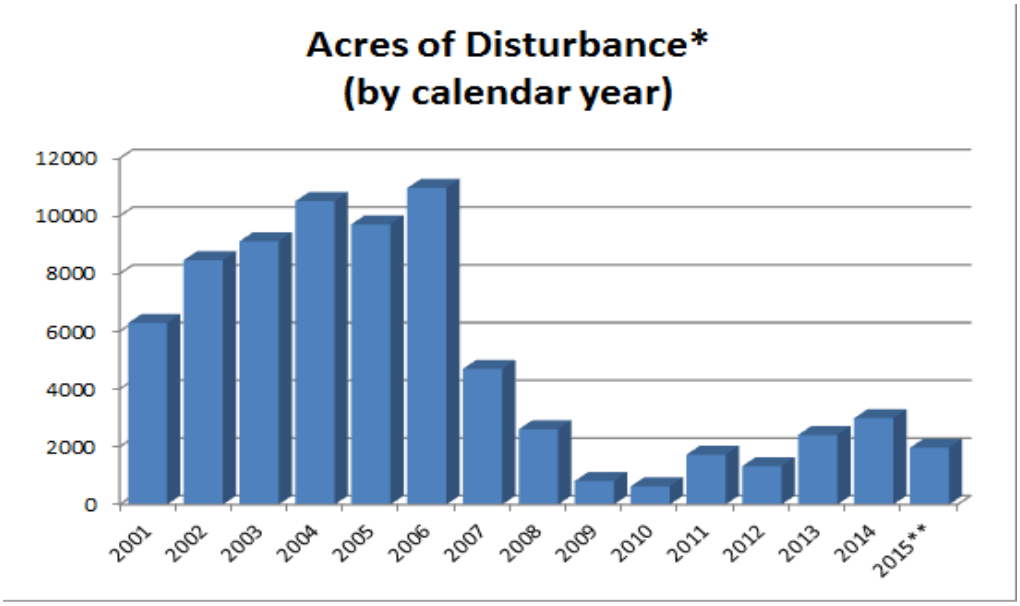
There were no RFPs advertised this quarter.

Administration and Finance

ACTIVITIES FOR THIS QUARTER

- Processed vendor payments for 54 invoices: 53 accepted (98%), 1 rejected (2%).
- Fiscal Year (FY) 16 budgets continue to be monitored regularly to ensure appropriate spending and reporting occur. Initiated process of developing FY16 estimates and FY17 budget. Continued coordination efforts with multiple internal departments to ensure a smooth transition from the Comprehensive Planning Department to the Air Quality Department.
- Continued process development for centralized fee collection of tortoise fees – County has selected a potential vendor for credit card and electronic payments processing and is currently in contract negotiations. It is going slower than expected and County is exploring its option regarding vendor selection.
- The desert tortoise specialty license plate application was approved. Awaiting next steps in the process for production of the plates.
- Oversight of the Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act (SNPLMA) Round 8—Round 14 projects totaling $1,649,992 continues in the County's financial system. The projects continue to be monitored for progress and reimbursement.
- Received reimbursement for SNPLMA projects: Round 8: 1 draw down ($46,354.31) and Round 12: 1 draw down ($211.50).
- Requested closeout of SNPLMA project: Round 12—CC66.

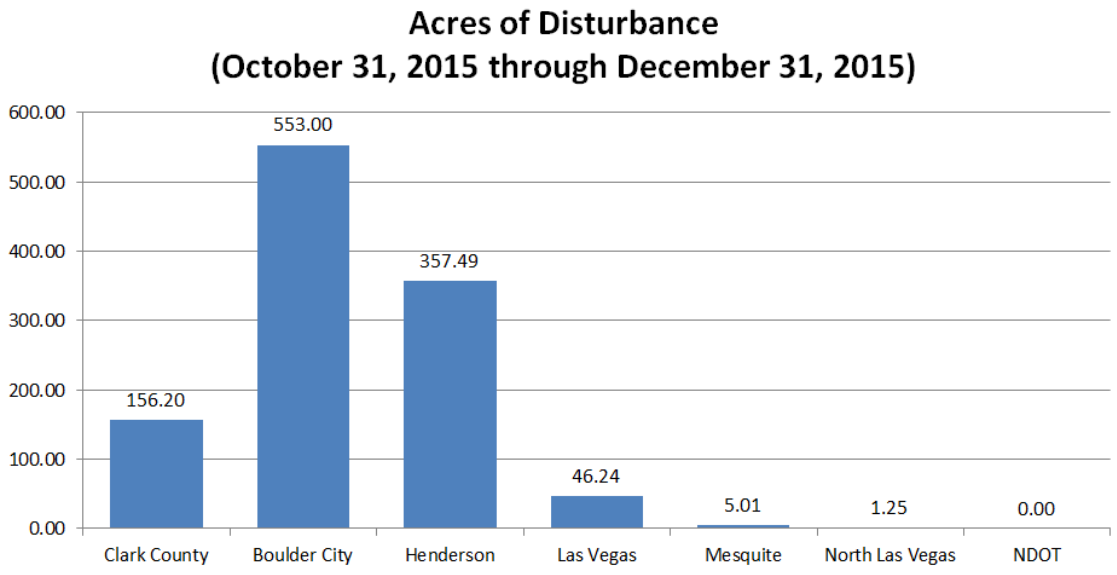
DCP staff is responsible for ensuring that land disturbed pursuant to the MSHCP is accounted for and monies are collected and deposited in the Section 10 special reserve fund established under the MSHCP. Below are charts which outline the total amount of fees collected and acres disturbed for the period 2001-2015.

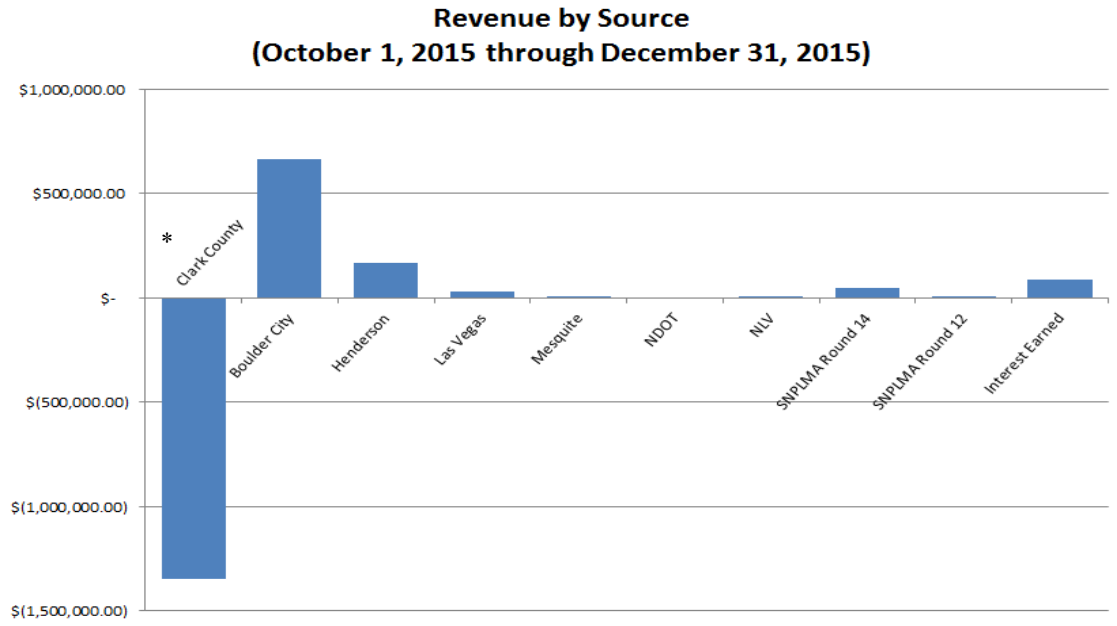


*Total acres reported in this chart do not include acres of municipal development which were exempt from the payment of mitigation fees through January 2010. Total number of acres of municipal development that were exempted from mitigation fee payment is 15,000 acres.

**December totals are subject to change.

Administration and Finance Cont'd.





*Note that the negative balance shown for Clark County is the result of a refund issued during this quarter.

OPPORTUNITES and ANNOUNCEMENTS

We have moved...

The DCP is now a division within the Department of Air Quality and, as such, has moved to 4701 W. Russell Road, Suite 200, Las Vegas, NV 89118 effective October 26, 2015.

The DCP will be celebrating 15 years of regional species conservation on February 1, 2016—the 15-year anniversary of the Clark County MSHCP. We would like to thank everyone who has contributed to and supported the program over the years. Download our 15-Year anniversary booklet and video to learn more.

OPPORTUNITIES

There are currently no open requests for proposals / quotes.

RFP opportunities can be viewed on this webpage:

RFP

Check the Clark County opportunities page regularly for new opportunities.

Employment opportunities:

There are currently no employment opportunities in the Desert Conservation Program.

Employment opportunities can be viewed on this webpage:

HR

Please check the Clark County recruitment page regularly for new opportunities.

Desert Conservation Program

Clark County Department of Air Quality
Desert Conservation Program
4701 W. Russell Road, Suite 200
Las Vegas, NV 89118

Streamlining development, protecting species, and preserving our future.
www.clarkcountynv.gov/dcp