DESERT CONSERVATION PROGRAM

Quarterly Administrator Update

JULY 2016

desert conservation PROGRAM

APR 2016—JUN 2016

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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.

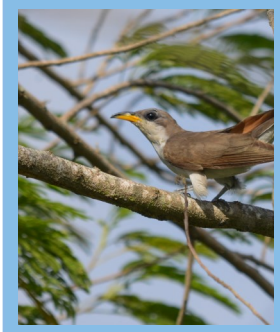
Boulder City Conservation Easement (BCCE)

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 oversight and project management for the interlocal agreement with Boulder City for Law Enforcement on the BCCE.
- Conducted site visits 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 and the Desert Tortoise Occupancy Study.
- Continued negotiations for site-use license agreement with Southwest Gas to construct fencing around the Energy Zone. Developed construction bid documents for the project which is expected to be advertised during the next quarter.
- Repaired cattle guards and roads damaged from rain-related erosion.
- Met with law enforcement during multiple site visits to plan patrols to cover areas where unauthorized uses were detected.
- Continued mapping roads on the BCCE and collaborated with other agencies to use the Database for Inventory Restoration Tracking (DIRT).

A comprehensive list of BCCE management accomplishments for this quarter can be viewed on this webpage:
http://bitly.com/BCCE2ndQTR2016



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

- An engineering firm was chosen to develop a grading plan with construction costs and time-line estimates for Muddy River restoration.
- Weed abatement efforts continued across the site.
- A new contractor is being selected for property maintenance and upkeep work.
- Native trees and shrubs planted on the Muddy River Reserve Unit continued to do well, and native shrub species have begun to come back naturally.

Virgin River Reserve Unit

- Continued photo-monitoring documentation of restored areas within Subunit 1.
- Potential contractors were identified for conducting salt cedar removal and re-vegetation with native species for the Round 15 SNPLMA project. Planning and budgeting efforts are ongoing.

Property Acquisition

- Phase II of property boundary surveys nearing completion.
- Property acquisition efforts continued along the Virgin River and Muddy River, with properties of promise being identified.
- The cadastral survey was published.

A comprehensive list of Riparian Reserve Units management accomplishments for this quarter can be viewed on this webpage: http://bit.ly/Riparian2ndQTR2016

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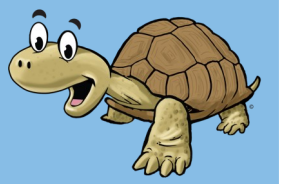


Public Information and Education

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.

Celebrated Solomon Derby, the winner of the 2016 Mojave Max Emergence Contest, and his classmates on May 13, 2016 with a field trip and pizza party to Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area.

Outreach Events and Mojave Max Appearances

Clark County Fair & Rodeo	April 7-10, 2016
Teddy Bear Clinic—Summerlin Hospital	April 22, 2016
GREENFest	April 23, 2016
Susan G. Komen Race for the Cure	May 7, 2016
Science Festival - Cashman Center	May 7, 2016

Wild Desert Tortoise Assistance

ACTIVITIES FOR THIS QUARTER

- Performed pen maintenance at Clark County's tortoise holding facility for wild desert tortoises displaced by construction on private land on May 17th, 19th, and 20th.
- Checked on one tortoise located at the tortoise holding facility on a weekly basis during this reporting period.
- Completed range wide desert tortoise monitoring, some of which took place on the BCCE and will be used to derive density estimates for the Eldorado Valley and other surrounding areas.

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.

Three calls for wild desert tortoises were received this quarter and all three wild desert tortoises were translocated. All tortoises were picked up from the new solar project inside the Energy Zone of the BCCE.

Desert Tortoise Fencing

No desert tortoise fencing was installed during this reporting period.

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.

- Completed the 2017 field season for the Desert Tortoise Occupancy Covariate study and vegetation surveys. The data will be used to develop a fine-scale predictive model to understand the distribution of the desert tortoise at the Boulder City Conservation Easement (BCCE) and similar landscapes.
- Completed the last year of a three year study to determine the short term effects of desert tortoise translocations in the Eldorado Valley. A small portion of the surveys were completed at the south end of the BCCE.
- Collected 356 observations as part of a desert tortoise telemetry study. Currently 37 tortoises are being tracked.
- Processed photos taken by up to 41 different camera locations as part of the Desert Tortoise Predation study. Placed or replaced 30 tortoise models with cameras at 16 randomly selected locations. Replaced missing cameras and adjusted motion-triggered cameras throughout the BCCE. Searched for raven and raptor nests in April, May and June. Collected data on raven point and route surveys and collected raven pellets and coyote and kit fox scat.
- Held a Biological Goals and Objectives workshop with the science advisor on April 11th and April 12th.
- Attended the desert tortoise Recovery Implementation Team meeting on April 19th.
- Held the first quarterly meeting with the new science advisor on May 10th.
- Completed field work on Vegetation Data for the Desert Tortoise Occupancy Covariate monitoring project on May 9th.
- Attended Desert Tortoise Manager's Oversight Group meeting on June 21st.

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

- Staff met with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to discuss issues related to the proposed amendment, including potential methods for conducting impact analyses and incorporating climate change considerations into the analyses. DCP will continue to meet regularly with the USFWS to negotiate details of a proposed MSHCP amendment.
- Staff completed the review of USFWS' proposed revisions to their mitigation policy and submitted comments.
- Staff began reviewing the USFWS draft Habitat Conservation Planning Handbook. This draft handbook could have important implications for the proposed MSHCP amendment. Comments on the draft handbook are due on August 29, 2016 and staff will be submitting a comment letter on the proposed revisions.
- Staff has reviewed and submitted comments on the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) revised land use planning process, a policy commonly referred to as Planning 2.0. This proposed change in policy could affect how the County collaborates with the BLM on future land use planning actions.
- Continued to administer 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 to support an application for an amended MSHCP.
- 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.
- Continued to meet with the BLM to discuss their proposed revisions to the Las Vegas Field Office Resource Management Plan.

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 GIS species data and maps to Jacobs Engineering
- Provided GIS species data and maps to Clark County Department of Aviation
- Continue to serve on the Environmental Stakeholders group to advise and assist the City of Henderson during their Comprehensive Plan update process.
- Continue to serve on the Environmental Advisory group to assist the Clark County Department of Comprehensive Planning with updating the Conservation Element of their Comprehensive Plan. A public hearing on this element is tentatively scheduled for September 6th: further details will be posted on the Clark County Department of Comprehensive Planning website.
- Facilitated meetings with the Department of Real Property Management, Department of Public Works, City of Henderson, the Bureau of Land Management, and USFWS to discuss issues related to Endangered Species Act compliance and mineral disposal on public lands leased under the Recreation and Public Purposes Act.
- Prepared letters documenting Endangered Species Act compliance for projects requiring the submittal of map revisions to the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

Out and About with the DCP

Photo of desert tortoise encountered during the Desert Tortoise Occupancy project.

Photo of cattle guard repair. Cattle guards are used on the BCCE to prevent tortoises from crossing into the road.

Photo of a sidewinder observed at the BCCE during the Desert Tortoise Occupancy project.

2016 Mojave Max Emergence Contest winner Solomon Derby, and his class.

New, Ongoing, and Closed Projects

New projects started this quarter

- Relict Leopard Frog Conservation Planning and Implementation, 1550A
- Boundary Surveys and Parceling for Virgin River Properties, 917AC
- South Loop Trail Restoration, 1530A
- Mojave Max Contest Portal, 1515H
- Tortoise Sterilization Clinic, 1555B

Ongoing projects this quarter

- Mojave Max Mascot Appearances, 916Q
- Mojave Max Education Program, 1515A
- I-15 Exit 118 Improvements, 1500F
- DCP Branding Project, 1515C
- BCCE Informative Video, 910M
- Hotline and Processing of Wild Desert Tortoises, 803E
- BCCE Law Enforcement, 1510A
- BCCE Weed Survey, 714K
- Covered Species Analysis Support, 901B
- BCCE DT Predation Study – Phase 2, 803D
- LiDAR/Aerial Imagery Data Analysis, 811K
- Fencing Installation & Maintenance, 804A
- Desert Tortoise Occupancy Sampling Crews II, 1012D
- Eldorado DT Monitoring (Year 1 & 2), 1451A
- Science Advisor Panel for the DCP, 1410B
- Desert Tortoise Telemetry on the BCCE (Years 2 & 3), 1545A

Ongoing projects this quarter Cont'd.

- Desert Tortoise Monitoring Data Management, 1540B
- Vegetation Data for DT Occupancy Covariate Monitoring Project, 811J
- Muddy River Weed Management, 1520B
- Water Rights Consulting, 805Q

Projects closed this quarter

- Muddy River Reserve Fence and Gate Installation, 804E
- Desert Tortoise Telemetry on the BCCE Year 1 , 1450B
- Eldorado Desert Tortoise Monitoring, 1450A

Requests for proposals (RFPs)

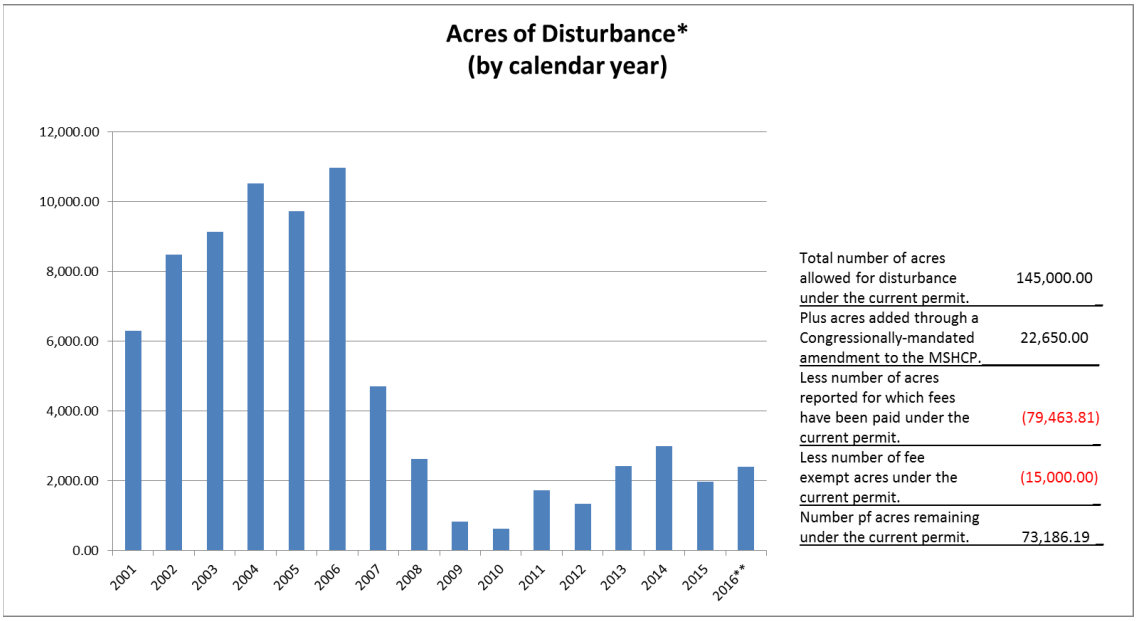
- OHV Registration Program Marketing, 807D

Administration and Finance

ACTIVITIES FOR THIS QUARTER

- Processed vendor payments 73 invoices: 69 accepted (95%), 4 rejected (5%).
- Fiscal Year (FY) 16 budgets continue to be reconciled for end of year close. Expenditures continue to be monitored regularly to ensure appropriate spending and reporting occur. Coordinating efforts with multiple internal departments to ensure a smooth transition from Comprehensive Planning to Air Quality is proceeding as planned.
- Phase 1 of converting all existing credit card terminals to the new processor, Wells Fargo, has been completed. Phase 2 of converting existing web and IVR systems has been completed. Phase 3 is in process to establish e-payment services for County departments that do not currently offer e-payments.
- Desert tortoise specialty license plate application was approved. Awaiting next steps in the process for production of the plates.
- Oversight of the SNPLMA Round 8 through 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: 3 draw downs ($101,000), and Round 14: 1 draw down ($72,374.50).

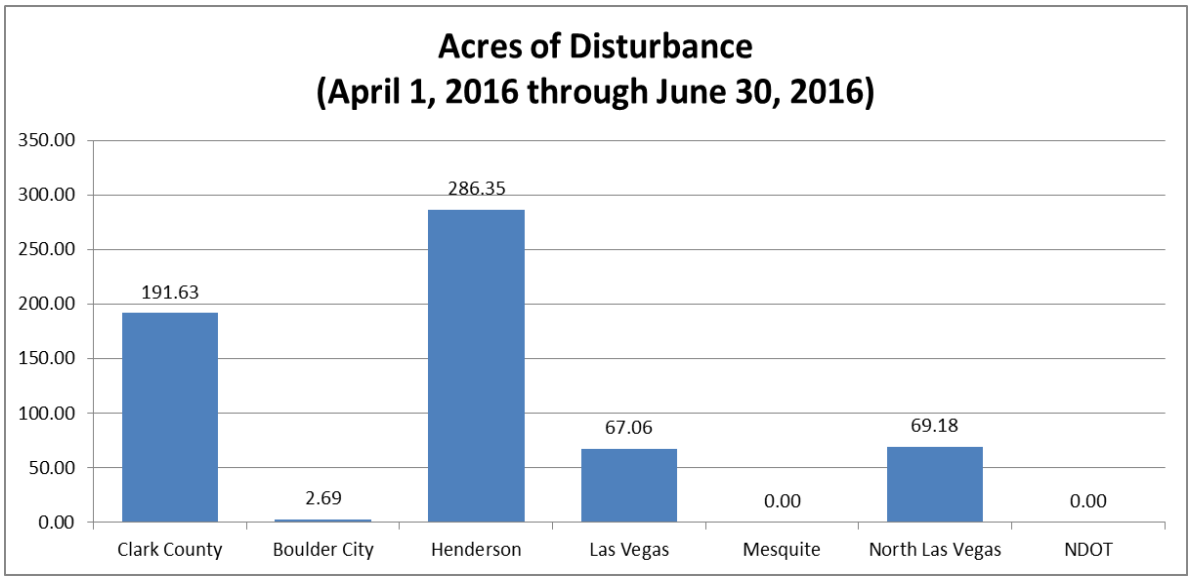
DCP staff is responsible for ensuring that land disturbed pursuant to the MSHCP is accounted for and monies are collected and deposited in the Section 10 special reserve fund established under the MSHCP. Below are charts which outline the total amount of fees collected and acres disturbed for the period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

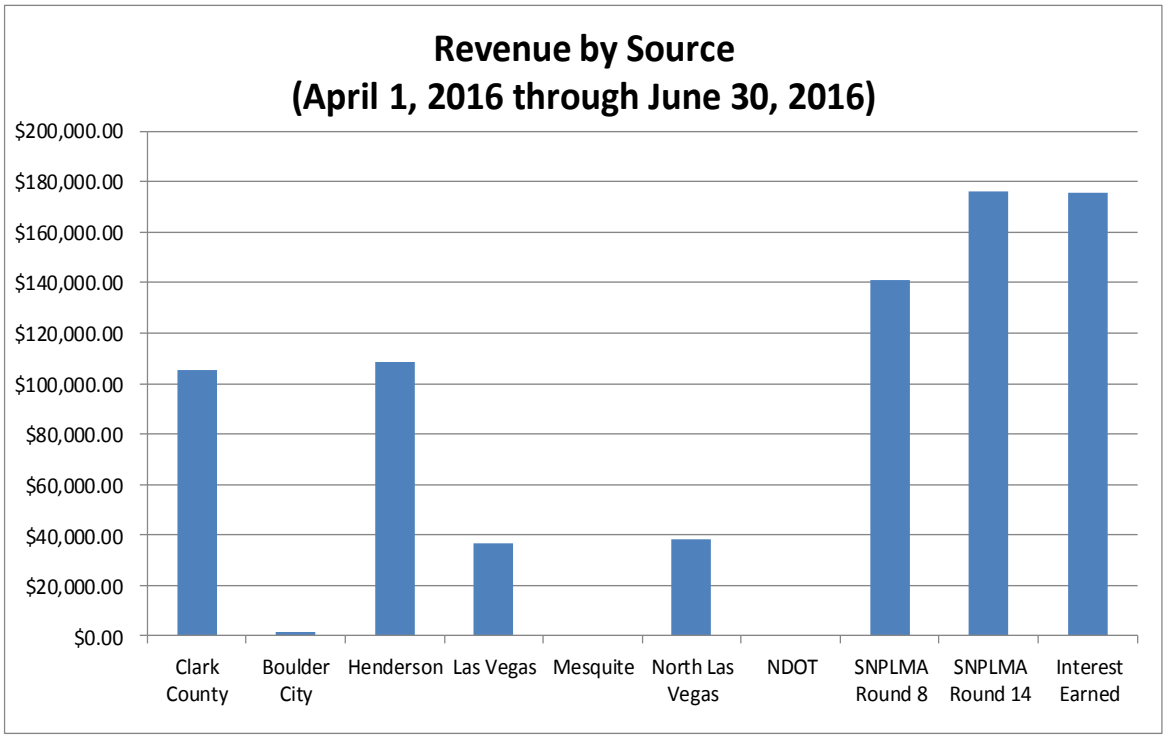


*Total acres reported in this chart do not include acres of municipal development, which were exempt from the payment of mitigation fees through January 2010. Total number of acres of municipal development that were exempted from mitigation fee payment is 15,000 acres.

**June 2016 totals are subject to change.

Administration and Finance Cont'd.





OPPORTUNITES and ANNOUNCEMENTS

The DCP will be holding it's 2016 Annual Progress Symposium on Tuesday, August 23rd in the Presentation Room on the 1st Floor of the Clark County Building Department at 4701 W. Russell Road, Las Vegas, NV.

The DCP is currently developing it's 2017-2019 Implementation Plan and Budget. Once finalized, it will be reviewed by the United States Fish & Wildlife Service and subsequently posted for public review and comment.

OPPORTUNITIES

There are currently no RFPs advertised.

Parties interested in submitting bids for an RFP must sign up through Nevada Government EMarketplace (NGEM) in order to view the advertisement.

NGEM

Check the Clark County opportunities page regularly for new opportunities.

Employment opportunities:

There are currently no employment opportunities advertised for 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
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Streamlining development, protecting species, and preserving our future.
www.clarkcountynv.gov/dcp