DESERT CONSERVATION PROGRAM

Quarterly Administrator Update

APRIL 2016

JAN 2016—MAR 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.

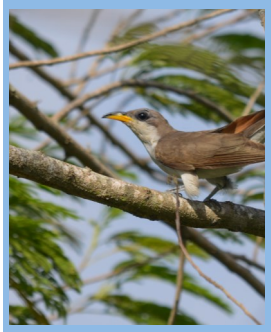
Boulder City Conservation Easement (BCCE)

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.
- Completed over 30 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.
- Met with law enforcement during multiple site visits to plan patrols to cover areas where unauthorized uses were detected.
- Collected 193 observations as part of the Post-translocation Telemetry Study and currently 39 tortoises are being tracked.
- Continued mapping roads on the BCCE and collaboration with other agencies to use the Database for Inventory Restoration Tracking (DIRT).
- Completed negotiations for site-use license agreements with two Energy Zone companies to construct fencing. Developed 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/BCCE1stQTR2016



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

- The pilot restoration project scope of work has been completed. Bids will be solicited next quarter.
- Weed abatement efforts continued across the site.
- Property upkeep and beautification projects including fence repairs and a large trash and dead weed removal project were completed.
- National Park Service (NPS) Exotic Plants Management Team planted 160 native trees, shrubs, and grass plugs on approximately 5 acres of the Muddy River Reserve Unit.

Virgin River Reserve Unit

- Continued photo-monitoring documentation of restored areas within Subunit 1.
- Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act (SNPLMA) Round 15 has been awarded to conduct 20 to 40 acres of habitat restoration on the Virgin River Reserve Unit. Planning efforts for this project have been initiated.

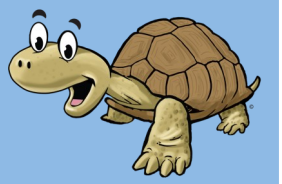
Property Acquisition

- Phase II of property boundary surveys is scheduled to be awarded.
- Property acquisition efforts continued along the Virgin River and Muddy River,

A comprehensive list of Riparian Reserve Units management accomplishments for this quarter can be viewed on this webpage: http://bit.ly/Riparian1stQTR2016

www.MojaveMax.com

Follow Mojave Max on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.



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.

Mojave Max emerged on March 8, 2016 at 1:20 pm and third-grade student Solomon Derby of John Dooley Elementary School was announced as the winner of the 2016 Mojave Max Emergence Contest. Solomon and his classmates will celebrate his win on May 13th with a field trip and pizza party to Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area, where Solomon will receive his prizes.

Outreach Events and Mojave Max Appearances

National Reading Week—Harmon Elementary School	March 1, 2016
BioBlitz at Death Valley National Park	March 12, 2016

Wild Desert Tortoise Assistance

ACTIVITIES FOR THIS QUARTER

- Assisted with the Mojave Desert tortoise health assessment training class held March 22 to March 25, 2016.
- Performed pen maintenance on January 7, 2016 at Clark County's new holding facility for wild desert tortoises displaced by construction on private land.

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 one call during this reporting period. No wild desert tortoises were picked up.

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.

- Conducted project kick-off meeting for new Science Advisor contract.
- Completed field training for the Desert Tortoise Occupancy Covariant Study and desert tortoise occupancy surveys were conducted on March 22, 2016.
- Began field work for plant surveys on March 7, 2016, where 60 vegetation plots were monitored to assess plant species richness and ephemeral species cover.
- Presented Clark County's progress on desert tortoise work at the annual Desert Tortoise Council Symposium on February 19, 2016.
- Reformatted project conception and project completion procedures to ensure an adaptive management approach is used when practical.

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 means for demonstrating additionality of mitigation actions when conducted on federal lands. DCP will continue to meet regularly with the USFWS to negotiate details of a proposed MSHCP amendment.
- Staff began reviewing a proposed revision to USFWS's mitigation policy, published in the Federal Register on March 8, 2016. This major revision could have important implications for the proposed MSHCP amendment and future mitigation strategies. Staff will be submitting a comment letter on this proposed policy revision.
- Staff has been reviewing a proposed major revision to the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) 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. Staff will be submitting a comment letter on this proposed policy revision.
- Completed a contract with TerraSpectra Geomatics. The purpose of this contract was 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. Staff will work over the next several months to implement many of the recommendations provided through this contract.
- 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 (NDF) 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

- Met with representatives from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, Nevada Institute for Autonomous Systems, and Brainlike to discuss possible applications of drone technology use in Mojave Desert environments.
- Provided mapping and assistance to Clark County Code Enforcement.
- Provided species mapping assistance to VTN Consulting.
- Provided GIS data to Nevada Department of Mines and Geology.
- 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.

Opuntia basilaris
(Credit: C. Floyd)

Out and About with the DCP

Partnering with the Nat'l Park Service for habitat restoration on the Muddy River Reserve Unit

Willows planted and naturally recruited on the Virgin River Reserve Unit

DCP Staff helping release Relict Leopard Frogs at Corn Creek (Desert Nat'l Wildlife Range)

Participating in Nat'l Reading Week at Harmon Elementary School

New, Ongoing, and Closed Projects

New projects started this quarter

- Covered Species Analysis Support, 901B
- DCP Branding Project, 1515C
- Desert Tortoise Range-Wide Monitoring, 1540A
- Science Advisor Panel for the DCP, 1410B
- Vegetation Data for Desert Tortoise Occupancy Covariate Monitoring Project II, 811J
- Relict Leopard Frog Conservation Planning and Implementation, 1550A
- Muddy River Weed Removal, 1520C
- LiDAR/Aerial Imagery Data Analysis, 811K
- BCCE Informative Video, 910M

Ongoing projects this quarter

- Mojave Max Mascot Appearances, 916Q
- Mojave Max Education Program, 1515A
- I-15 Exit 118 Improvements, 1500F
- 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
- BCCE DT Predation Study – Phase 2, 803D
- Fencing Installation & Maintenance, 804A
- Desert Tortoise Occupancy Sampling Crews II, 1012D

Ongoing projects this quarter Cont'd.

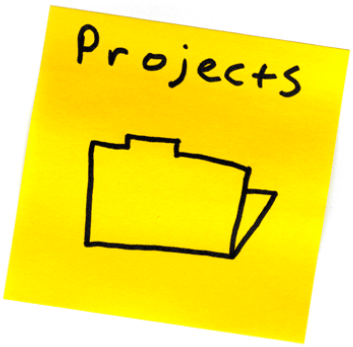
- Eldorado DT Monitoring (Year 1 & 2), 1451A
- Desert Tortoise Telemetry on the BCCE (Years 2 & 3), 1545A
- Desert Tortoise Monitoring Data Management, 1540B
- Muddy River Weed Removal, 1520C
- Muddy River Weed Management, 1520B
- Water Rights Consulting, 805Q

Projects closed this quarter

- Muddy River Fire Control – Weed Removal, 805AC
- 2013-2015 BPR Editing and Printing, 1500G
- BCCE Trans Line Alt Route Feasibility Assess, 910L
- Aerial Photography, 1412B
- Boundary Survey, 917AB

Requests for proposals (RFPs)

There were no RFPs advertised this quarter.

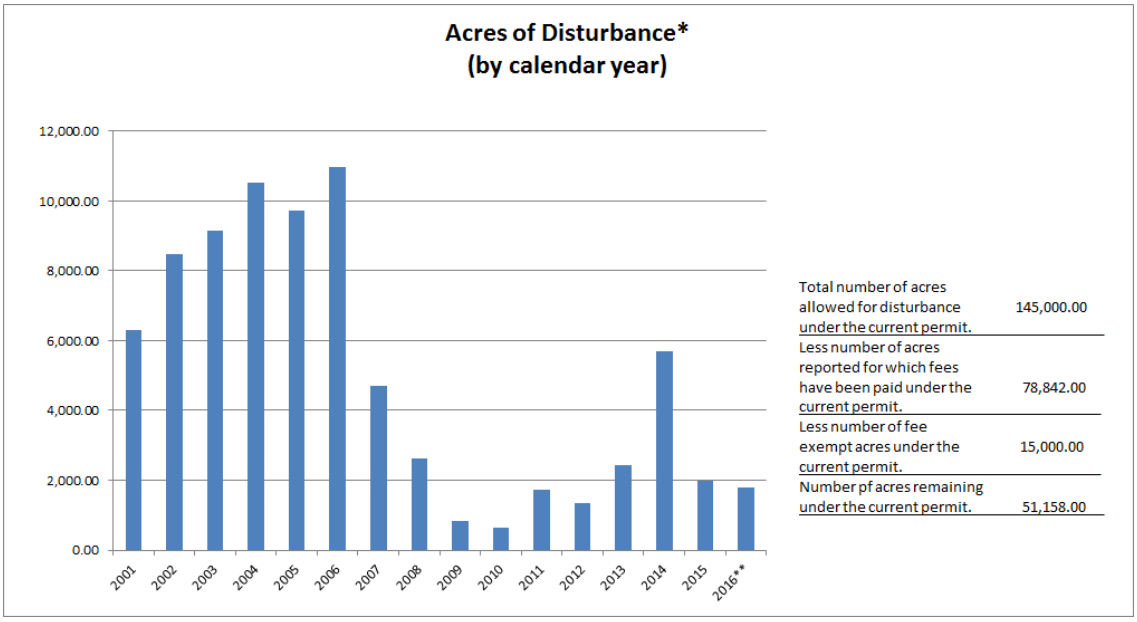


Administration and Finance

ACTIVITIES FOR THIS QUARTER

- Processed vendor payments for 53 invoices: 52 accepted (98%), 1 rejected (2%).
- Fiscal Year (FY) 16 budgets are being reconciled to prepare for end of year close. Expenditures continue to be monitored regularly to ensure that appropriate spending and reporting occur. The process of developing FY16 estimates and FY17 budget is completed and submitted to County Budget and Finance office. Continued coordination efforts with multiple internal departments to ensure a smooth transition from Comprehensive Planning to Air Quality.
- Phase 1 of converting all the existing credit card terminals to the new processor, Wells Fargo, has been completed. Phase 2 of converting the existing web systems has been completed. Phase 3 is in process to establish e-payment services for County departments that did not currently offer e-payments. Currently awaiting determination of where on the priority list the DCP lies.
- Desert tortoise specialty license plate application was approved. Awaiting next steps in the process for production.
- 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: 1 draw down ($5,647.68).

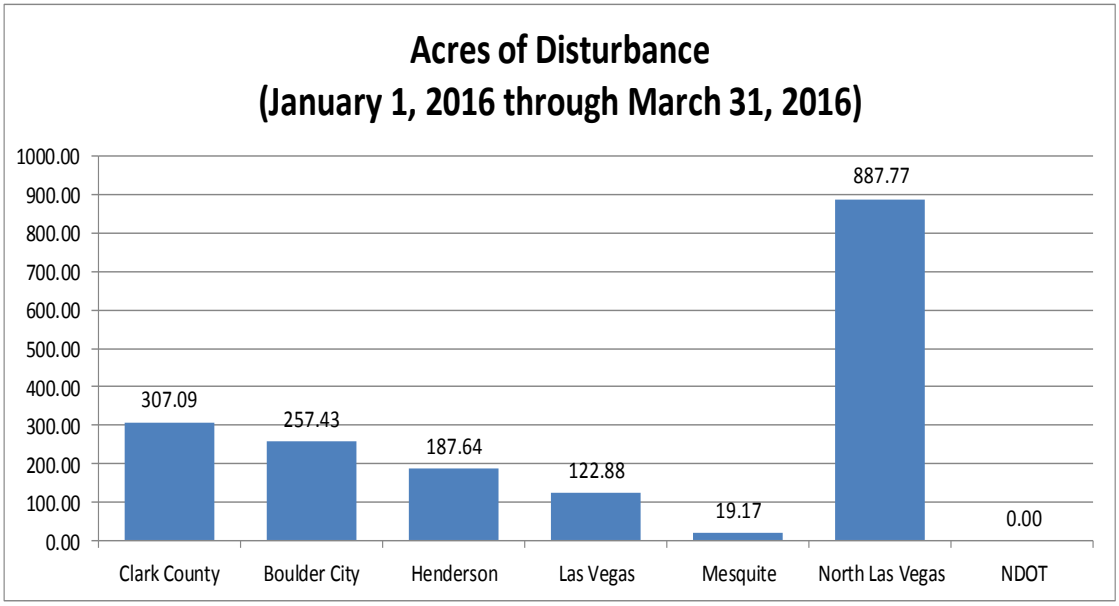
DCP staff is responsible for ensuring that land disturbed pursuant to the MSHCP is accounted for and monies are collected and deposited in the Section 10 special reserve fund established under the MSHCP. Below are charts which outline the total amount of fees collected and acres disturbed for the period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

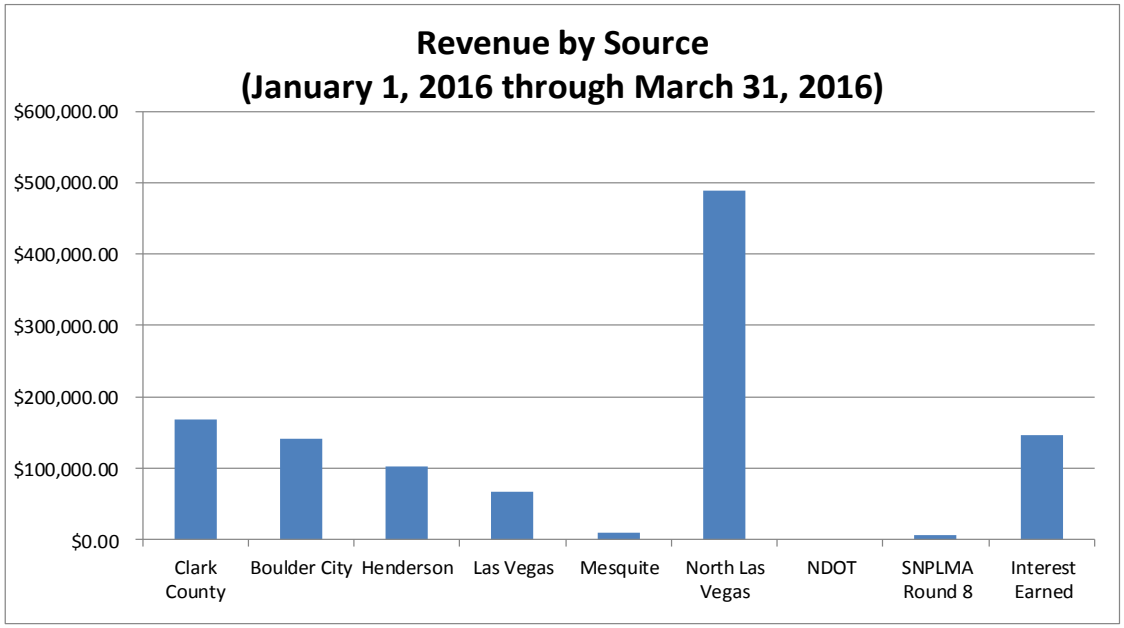


*Total acres reported in this chart do not include acres of municipal development, which were exempt from the payment of mitigation fees through January 2010. Total number of acres of municipal development that were exempted from mitigation fee payment is 15,000 acres.

**March totals are subject to change.

Administration and Finance Cont'd.





OPPORTUNITES and ANNOUNCEMENTS

The DCP celebrated 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 is currently an RFP advertised for Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) Registration Program Marketing. This RFP will close on May 31, 2016 at 3:00 pm.

Interested parties 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:

An Administrative Specialist position is currently posted on the County's website. The recruitment is limited to the first 250 applications received.

Employment opportunities can be viewed on this webpage:

HR

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