

**Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act
Multi-Species Habitat Conservation Plan
Round 19**

Clark County Desert Conservation Program



Muddy River Restoration Project – Phase II

Amount Requested: \$1,613,521

A. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Muddy River is one of the region's most ecologically important and threatened riparian landscapes. However, due to settlement that began in the 1800s, the Muddy River has become deeply entrenched and channelized as a result of water diversions from both surface and groundwater sources and floodplain alteration for agricultural and other domestic purposes. As the landscape has been developed, the riparian zone has been greatly reduced, leaving a narrow strip of riparian corridor along a cut bank. Nonnative plants such as tamarisk, Russian knapweed, Malta starthistle, and Australian saltbush have further degraded the quality of habitat in this region. Efforts to control nonnative species are ongoing, but the need to actively remove weeds and dead tamarisk and replant with native species is more important than ever to restore the sustainability of the ecosystem and enhance habitat for native species.

Pursuant to the Clark County Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP) and Permit Condition K of the associated Incidental Take Permit (TE034927-0), the Clark County Desert Conservation Program (DCP) owns properties with desert riparian habitat along the Muddy River. The DCP currently manages 117 acres on the upper Muddy River and is actively engaged in pursuing acquisition of additional properties within this watershed. These properties are managed with the goal of improving sustainability of biological communities, with a particular focus on riparian bird species covered by the MSHCP. The covered riparian birds include: the federally endangered southwestern willow flycatcher (*Empidonax traillii extimus*), the federally threatened yellow-billed cuckoo (*Coccyzus americanus*), Arizona bell's vireo (*Vireo bellii arizonae*), blue grosbeak (*Passerina caerulea*), summer tanager (*Piranga rubra*), and vermillion flycatcher (*Pyrocephalus rubinus*).

The DCP is proposing to conduct additional restoration work to reestablish native riparian and upland vegetation within the Muddy River Reserve Unit properties. This project will restore native habitat along the Muddy River and include nonnative plant removal throughout the project area. The DCP may also utilize earth moving techniques such as grading, excavating, and ground contouring to reconnect the habitat within the floodplain and reduce bank line incision. This restoration project would complement work, both ongoing and completed, conducted by various agencies (BLM, the Moapa Band of Paiutes, the Southern Nevada Water Authority, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service) working in the region to restore the Muddy River as functional habitat for species that depend on desert riparian habitats.

This project is being submitted under the MSHCP category, one of the four original funding categories included in the Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act (SNPLMA). The MSHCP is a critical part of SNPLMA's success because it allows the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to streamline its Endangered Species Act and National Environmental Policy Act compliance associated with the disposal of federal lands. Through this streamlined process, the MSHCP provides the necessary compliance and helps facilitate orderly disposal of federal land throughout Clark County. Through SNPLMA, Congress determined that it was appropriate that proceeds resulting from the disposal of federal land be directed to the MSHCP to mitigate for the impacts associated with development of disposed land.

1. Describe relationship to prior approved phases or related SNPLMA projects and anticipated future phases:

The DCP was previously awarded funds under SNPLMA Round 16 to conduct restoration on the Muddy River properties (grant # L17AS00039). The Round 16 project included funds to conduct the following planning activities to support 40 to 75 acres of riparian and mesquite/acacia habitat of restoration: geotechnical assessment, soil analysis, water table monitoring, and restoration design development. During the Round 16 planning and design phase, it was determined that it would be necessary to conduct restoration in phases due to budget and schedule constraints. Under the Round 16 project, the DCP will conduct approximately 40-45 acres of restoration, in accordance with the Round 16 assistance agreement. Grading and restoration activities for the Round 16 project will be completed in 2022. This nomination is the second phase of the project initiated in SNPLMA Round 16. Phase II has not been fully designed nor built out to its entirety because of budget and schedule constraints. Refer to Location Map for a map showing the approximate boundaries for Phase I and II.

2. Acknowledgement of stand-alone project and no guarantee of funding for future phases:

The DCP acknowledges that there is no guarantee or expectation of funding for future phases of restoration.

B. SNPLMA STRATEGIC PLAN VALUES

MSHCP projects have two goals identified in the Strategic Plan:

- Goal 1: Sustain the quality of the outdoor environment by conserving, preserving, and restoring natural and cultural resources.
- Goal 2: Improve the quality of life for all publics in urban and rural communities by enhancing recreational opportunities that connect people with the outdoor environment.

Nominated projects should meet these goals by focusing on the three SNPLMA core values, connectivity, sustainability, and community. Every nomination must explain how the three values are promoted by the project.

1. Sustainability:

This project will improve the sustainability of the riparian ecosystem along the Muddy River by incorporating durability and relevancy into the design to restore the functionality and integrity of the habitat in the near and long term.

2. Connectivity:

This project will promote connectivity by creating a healthy and resilient landscape that will connect important habitat patches. This project's location plays an important role in connecting other past restoration projects and those currently underway by neighboring land

owners along the Muddy River (e.g., BLM, USFWS, and Southern Nevada Water Authority) and will facilitate the creation of a larger restored riparian corridor.

3. Community:

This project will protect the integrity of biological communities by stabilizing the soil and reducing erosion in the project vicinity and to adjacent landowners.

C. PURPOSE STATEMENT

The Clark County DCP is proposing to conduct riparian habitat restoration on the Clark County Muddy River Riparian Reserve Unit, in Moapa, Clark County, Nevada (refer to Location Map), to restore and enhance habitat for the federally endangered southwestern willow flycatcher (*Empidonax traillii extimus*), the federally threatened yellow-billed cuckoo (*Coccyzus americanus*), and other covered riparian bird species as mitigation under the Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP). This project will improve the sustainability of the riparian ecosystem along the Muddy River by restoring the functionality and integrity of the native biological community and improving connectivity with other intact and restored riparian habitats along the river.

D. PROJECT DELIVERABLES

1. Primary Deliverables:

- a. Preparation of restoration plan to include engineering and design components.
- b. Treat approximately 4-5 acres to remove invasive species and hazardous fuels. Locations will be determined by field conditions during the course of the project.
- c. Prepare project site for planting via grading and creation of a terraced riparian planting zone adjacent to the river channel.
- d. Acquisition of plant materials.
- e. Revegetate 4-5 acres with native species.
- f. Conduct post-planting monitoring.
- g. Conduct post-planting watering, as appropriate.

2. Anticipated Deliverables:

- a. Pending BLM approval, conduct restoration site planning to include mitigation of a headcut that crosses BLM land. (This would require additional engineering and any necessary permission via a right-of-way (or other mechanism) to complete the project).
- b. Pending BLM approval, conduct stabilization of headcut on BLM property.

3. Standard Deliverables:

- a. Ongoing administration of financial instrument.
- b. Pre-award planning, scoping, and budgeting activities and award of contract(s).
- c. Section 106 and State Historic Preservation Office consultation. An initial assessment of the project indicates that additional cultural surveys are not required. Project coordination with BLM archaeologists will be required to comply with Section 106.

- d. Coordination with the BLM geologists to obtain any necessary permits from the BLM for the use of subsurface mineral materials managed by the BLM.
- e. NEPA documentation.
- f. Tribal outreach and collaboration.
- g. Develop scopes of work for contracting.
- h. SNPLMA close-out package and coordination with BLM for project closeout.

E. PROJECT LOCATION

Latitude and Longitude:

- 36.707225°, -114.692755°

Congressional District(s):

- This project is located in the 4th Congressional district of Nevada.

F. PROJECT TIMEFRAME

The DCP anticipates needing five years to complete this project.

G. LEVEL OF PROJECT READINESS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Is this a shovel-ready project (explain if "Yes"): Yes -or- No

A majority of the planning is complete. A portion of the project that crosses BLM land that was identified for mitigation would require additional engineering and any necessary permission via a right-of-way (or other mechanism) to complete the project.

H. FUTURE OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

The DCP acknowledges responsibility for all future operation and maintenance costs of the project. DCP is responsible for the ongoing maintenance of acquired properties pursuant to the County's Section 10 Incidental Take Permit. Funds for ongoing operations and maintenance are derived from Section 10 developer fees and will be identified in the DCP's biennial implementation plan and budget.

I. PROJECT BUDGET

Complete the project budget using the provided SF424A budget information PDF fillable form and budget detail template (MS-Word). Upload each as separate document to the Location Details tab in the Nomination Portal. Do not embed the budget in this document.

Partnership and/or Contributed Funds:

This project will be 100% funded through SNPLMA funds.

J. KEY CONTACTS

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Project Manager: Caryn Wright, Environmental Specialist
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K. ORDERS AND PRIORITIES

A. Executive Orders (EO):

- ***EO No. 13855: Promoting Active Management of America's Forests, Range Lands to Improve Conditions and Reduce Wildfire Risk***

Answer: This project will help reduce hazardous fuels (e.g., nonnative vegetation removal) in order to protect adjacent communities, critical infrastructure, and natural and cultural resources. Treatments will be prioritized to enhance fuel reduction as well as to improve conservation value.

- ***EO No. 14004: Ensuring the Future is Made in All of America by All of America's Workers***

Answer: This project will maximize the use of goods, products, and materials produced in, and services offered in, the United States by procuring plant materials from local nurseries. All work for this project will be performed by American companies.

B. Secretarial Orders

- ***SO No. 3347: Conservation Stewardship and Outdoor Recreation.***

Answer: This project will improve habitat for wildlife and promote conserving the valuable wildlife resources of the upper Muddy River for current and future generations to observe and enjoy.

- ***SO No. 3356: Hunting, Fishing, Recreational Shooting, and Wildlife Conservation Opportunities and Coordination with States, Tribes and Territories.***

Answer: This project will improve habitat for wildlife and promote conserving the valuable wildlife resources of the upper Muddy River for current and future generations to observe and enjoy.

- ***SO No. 3362: Improving Habitat Quality in Western Big-Game Winter Range and Migration Corridors.***

Answer: Not applicable. This project is outside of the geographic scope of this Order as it affects Western Big Game Winter Range i.e., sagebrush ecosystems.

- ***SO No. 3366: Increasing Recreational Opportunities on Lands and Waters Managed by the U.S. Department of the Interior***

Answer: Not applicable. This project will occur on land owned and managed by Clark County.

- ***SO No. 3370: Conservation Stewardship and Increasing Public Access to Urban National Wildlife Refuges.***

Answer: This project will promote collaboration with adjacent landowners and aim to restore trust in the stewardship of public lands by being a good neighbor.

- ***SO No. 3372: Reducing Wildfire Risks on Department of the Interior Land Through Active Management.***

Answer: This project will occur on land owned and managed by Clark County. However, this project will help reduce hazardous fuels (e.g., nonnative vegetation removal) in order to protect adjacent communities, critical infrastructure, and natural and cultural resources. Treatments will be prioritized to enhance fuel reduction as well as conservation value.

- ***SO No. 3373: Evaluating Public Access in Bureau of Land Management Public Land Disposal and Exchanges (focus is on Sec. 4.b.(3) Potential increased public recreational access to existing public lands resulting from the proposed land acquired through an exchange (acquisition).***

Answer: Not applicable. This project will occur on land owned and managed by Clark County.

- ***SO No. 3374: Implementation of the John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management and Recreation Act.***

Answer: Not applicable. This project will occur on land owned and managed by Clark County.

- **SO No. 3376: Increasing Recreational Opportunities through the use of Electric Bikes.**

Answer: Not applicable. This project will occur on land owned and managed by Clark County.

C. Department of the Interior Priorities:

1. **Identifying steps to accelerate responsible development of renewable energy on public lands and waters.** *We are investing in climate research and environmental innovation to incentivize the rapid deployment of clean energy solutions, while reviewing existing programs to restore balance on America's public lands and waters to benefit current and future generations.*

Answer: Not applicable.

2. **Strengthening the government-to-government relationship with sovereign Tribal nations.** *We understand that tribal sovereignty and self-governance, as well as honoring the federal trust responsibility to Tribal Nations, must be the cornerstones of federal Indian policy.*

Answer: This project includes tribal involvement and/or consultation. Tribal involvement and consultation will occur as part of restoration planning and implementation.

3. **Making investments to support the Administration's goal of creating millions of family-supporting and union jobs.** *This includes establishing a new Climate Conservation Corps Initiative to put a new generation of Americans to work conserving and restoring public lands and waters, increasing reforestation, increasing carbon sequestration in the agricultural sector, protecting biodiversity, improving access to recreation, and addressing the changing climate.*

Answer: This project will increase reforestation by revegetating with native riparian tree species and will create habitat to protect diversity.

4. **Working to conserve at least 30% each of our lands and waters by the year 2030.** *We will work to protect biodiversity, slow extinction rates, and help leverage natural climate solutions by conserving 30% of America's lands and waters by 2030. This relies on support for local, state, private, and tribally led conservation and restoration efforts that are underway across America.*

Answer: This project promotes the protection of biodiversity by creating habitat through conservation and restoration efforts.

5. **Centering equity and environmental justice.** *The impacts of the multiple crises in the United States are not evenly distributed in our society. Communities of color, low-income families, and rural and indigenous communities have long suffered disproportionate and*

cumulative harm from air pollution, water pollution, and toxic sites. At every step of the way, Interior will engage diverse stakeholders across the country, as well as conduct formal consultation with Tribes in recognition of the U.S. government's trust responsibilities.

Answer: This project includes tribal involvement and/or consultation. Tribal involvement and consultation will occur as part of restoration planning and implementation.

D. Forest Service Priorities:

1. *Controlling the COVID-19 pandemic*

Answer: This project will occur on land owned and managed by Clark County. However, the County will ensure on-site personnel are in compliance with guidelines set by the CDC.

2. *Providing economic relief*

Answer: Not applicable. This project will occur on land owned and managed by Clark County.

3. *Tackling climate change*

Answer: Not applicable. This project will occur on land owned and managed by Clark County.

4. *Advancing racial equity*

Answer: Not applicable. This project will occur on land owned and managed by Clark County.

5. *Improving our workforce and work environment*

Answer: Not applicable. This project will occur on land owned and managed by Clark County.