

Lower Colorado River Multi-Species
Conservation Program
Conservation Strategy
Program Status & Issues

Salton Sea Advisory Committee

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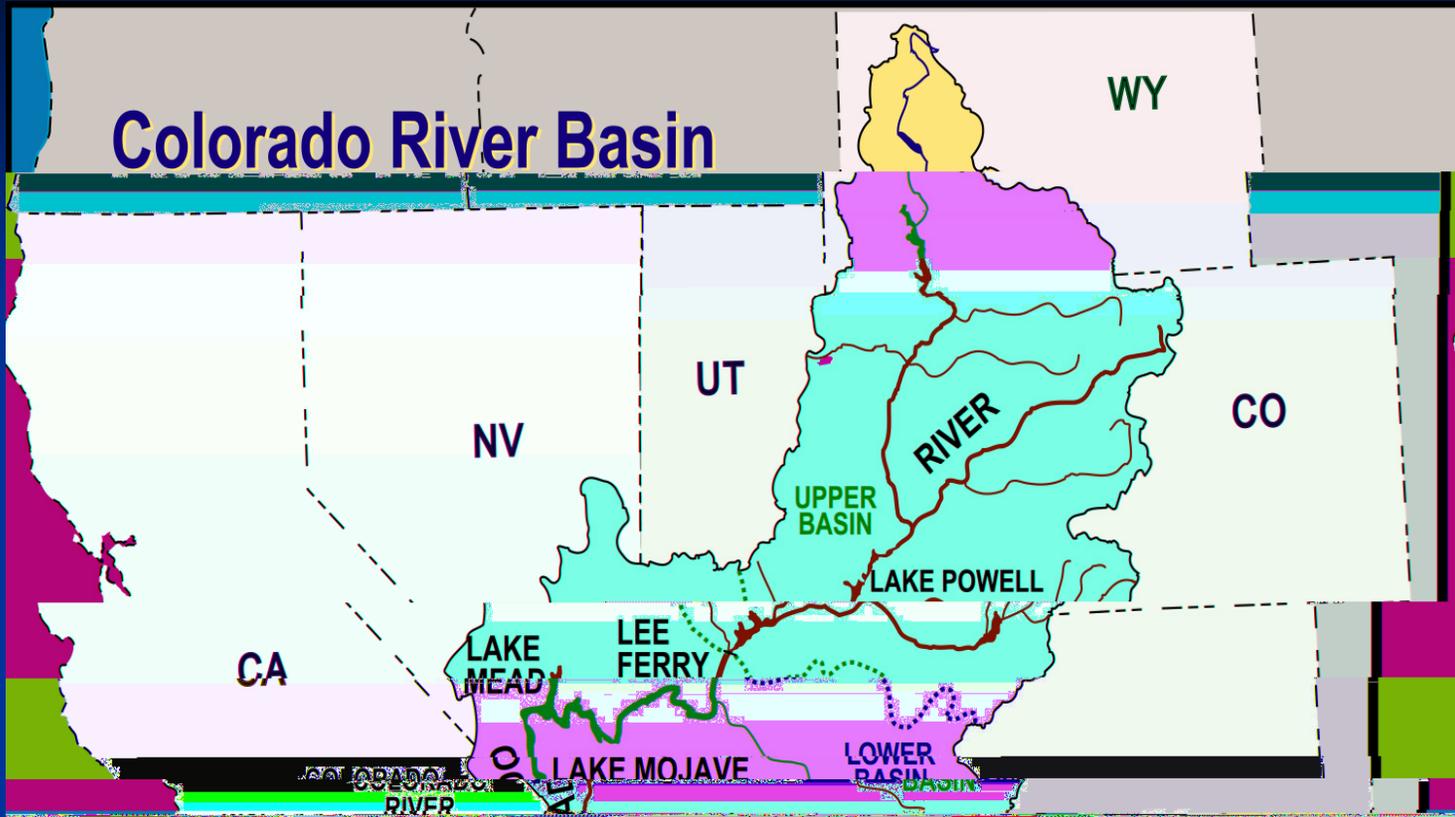
Purpose of the Briefing

- Provide an overview and status of the proposed Lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation Program Conservation Plan
- Identify outstanding issues and review schedule
- Answer questions



Least bittern

Colorado River Basin





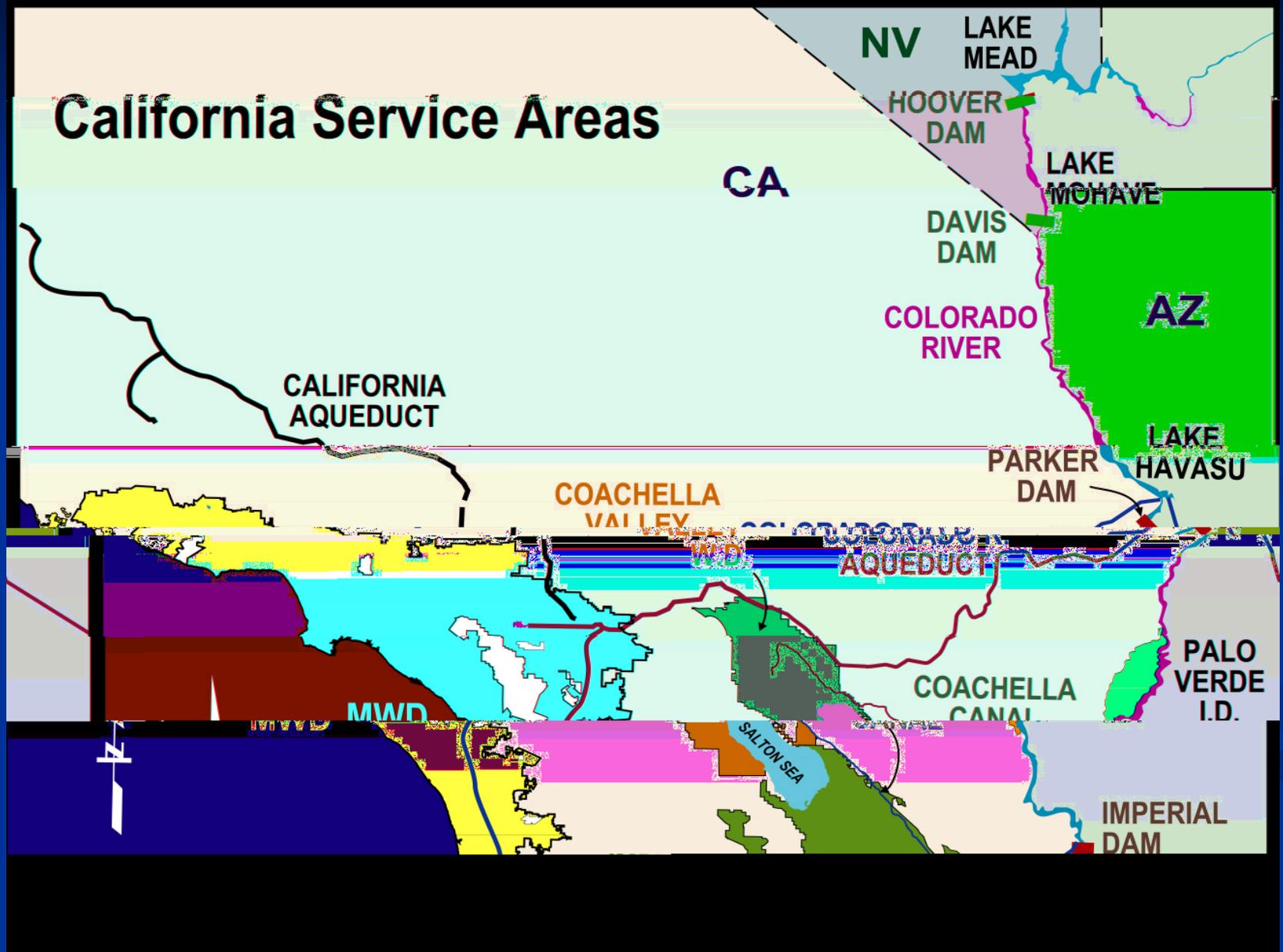
LCR Multi-Species Conservation Program

Planning Area:

Lake Mead to
SIB (historic
floodplain)



California's Colorado River Water Users



LCR MSCP Participants

- **Broad cross-section of interests representing:**
 - Department of the Interior (i.e., USBR, USFWS, BLM, NPS, and BIA)
 - Department of Energy (i.e., Western Area Power Administration)
 - Native American Tribes
 - State Agencies in Arizona, California, and Nevada (Water, Power, and Game & Fish)
 - Colorado River Water and Power providers in the three states
 - Environmental organizations
 - County, City, and general public representatives

LCR MSCP Goals & Objectives

- Conserve habitat and work toward recovery of listed species
- Attempt to reduce likelihood of additional species listings
- Accommodate current water diversions and power production and optimize opportunities for future water and power resources development

LCR MSCP Goals & Objectives (cont.)

- Provide a 50-year coordinated and comprehensive species conservation and habitat management prescription for the Lower Colorado River planning area
- Provide the basis for incidental take authorizations pursuant to the Federal and California Endangered Species Acts
- Provide ESA compliance for 27 “covered” species, and 4 “evaluation” species

Key LCR MSCP Species

- Aquatic – Razorback sucker (E/CFP); Bonytail (E/CE)
- Marsh – Yuma clapper rail (E/CFP); Black rail (CFP)
- Riparian – Southwestern willow flycatcher (E/CE); Arizona Bell's vireo (CE); and Yellow-billed cuckoo (CE/petitioned for federal listing)

ESA Incidental Take Authorizations

- The delivery, diversion, and return flow of up to 7.5 MAF/year, plus any such surpluses, or unused apportionment, as the Secretary of the Interior may determine, from existing facilities;
- The future transfer and change in points-of-diversion of up to 1.574 MAF/year;
- Additional conversion of riparian habitat to agricultural land on Indian reservations; and
- Operations and maintenance of existing facilities and associated activities, both flow and non-flow-related, all of which have been identified and approved by the MSCP Steering Committee and analyzed in the Conservation Plan.

Importance to California

- LCR MSCP provides ESA/CESA compliance umbrella for QSA-related programs
- LCR MSCP provides the ESA/CESA compliance umbrella related to long-term protection of California's 4.4 MAF mainstream apportionment, and lawful surpluses
- LCR MSCP provides ESA/CESA compliance for future California Colorado River activities (e.g., transfers, changes in points-of-diversion, etc.)

Proposed Action

- Creation and restoration of native wetland, riparian, and aquatic habitats;
- Implementation of measures to maintain and enhance existing habitats;
- Implementation of species-specific conservation measures;
- Implementation of avoidance and minimization measures
- Implementation of long-term monitoring & research activities;
- Implementation of adaptive management; and
- USFWS issuance of ESA incidental take authorizations

Restoration Proposal

Land Cover Type	Acres Affected	Acres To Be Restored
Cottonwood-Willow	2,141	5,940
Mesquite	590	1,320
Marsh	256	512
Backwaters	357	466
TOTALS	3,344	8,238

Riparian Habitat Restoration



Marsh Restoration



Backwater Restoration



Maintenance of Existing Habitat

- **\$25,000,000 Fund – Up front in process, used to fund actions to avoid impacts to existing habitats within the planning area**
- **Available to Land Managers, via a grant application program with consent of Reclamation, USFWS, and State participants**



Native Fish Proposal

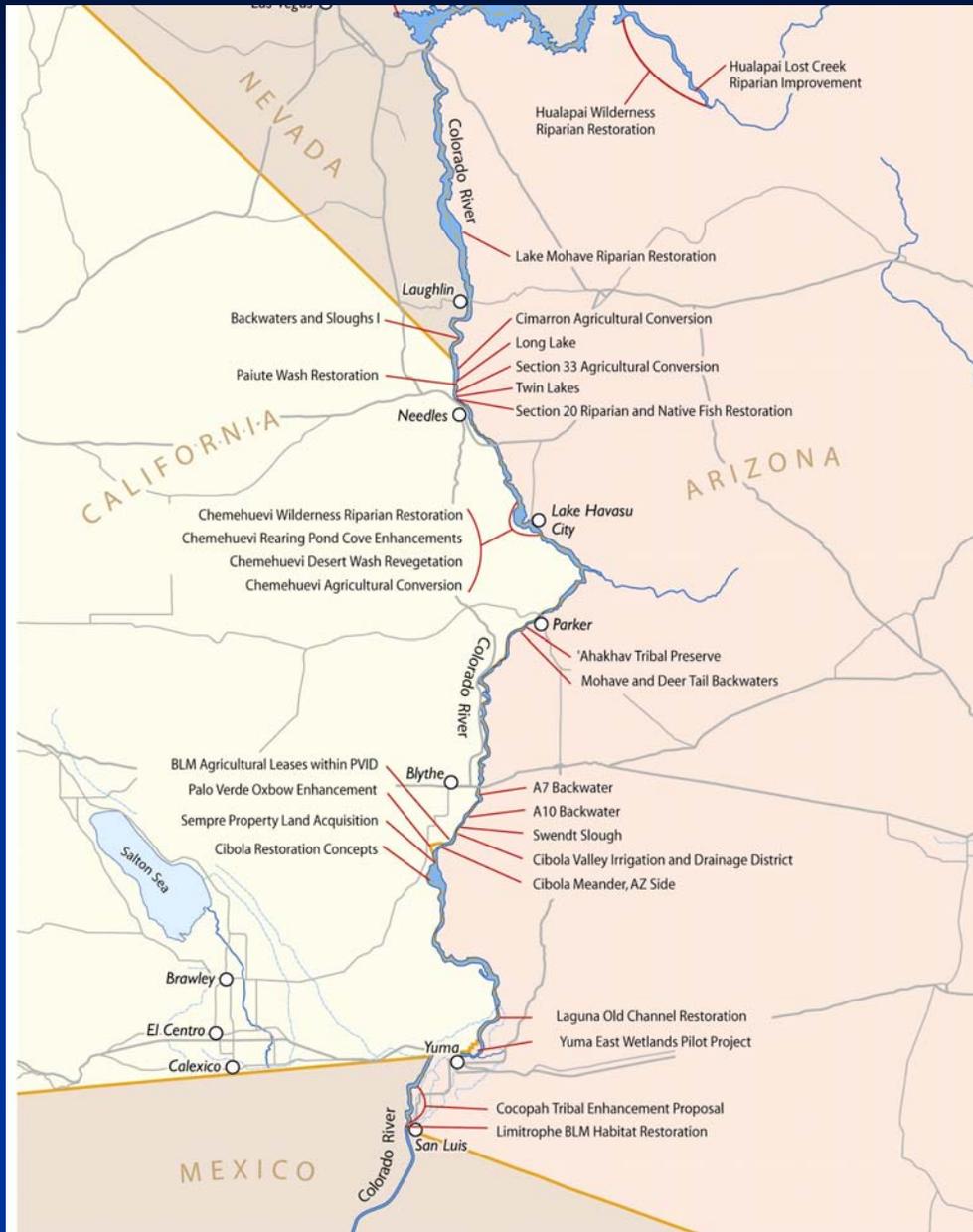
SPECIES	ACTIVITY
Razorback Sucker	660,000 fish Over 50-year period
Bonytail	620,000 fish Over 50-year period
Humpback Chub	\$10,000/year to GCDAMP For 50 years
Flannelmouth Sucker	\$80,000/5 years + 85 acres of backwaters



Conservation Area Site Design

- Habitat will be created in patches with optimal patch sizes
- Designed to create an “integrated mosaic,” to approximate historical vegetative conditions
- Habitat restoration may involve conversion of agricultural lands to native riparian and marsh habitats
- As necessary, incorporate buffer areas
- Minimize construction of new infrastructure

LCR MSCP Potential Conservation Areas



Lower Grand Canyon
& Lake Mead

Mohave Valley

Parker, Palo Verde,
and Cibola Valleys

Imperial Division

Yuma Valley

Mainstream Water Use

- Site preparation, habitat establishment, and maintenance irrigation requirements
- Managed flooding to promote moist-soil conditions, and flying insect production for birds & bats
- Restoration of relict backwaters or sloughs, and creation of new backwater features
- Restoration and rehabilitation of existing marsh, and creation of new marsh habitats
- Water uses associated with native fish rearing facilities located within the floodplain
- Total estimated annual mainstream water consumptive use requirement – 40,000 acre-feet

Implementation Costs

- Proposed habitat restoration on a 30-year build-out schedule
- Habitat maintenance, monitoring, research, and adaptive management costs are included over 50-year period
- Estimated costs in 2003 dollars at \$620 million

Proposed Governance Structure

- USBR-LC to provide staff and management of annual LCR MSCP implementation
- “Steering Committee” comprised of stakeholders will assist USBR in developing annual work plans, budgets, monitoring, research, and utilizing adaptive management
- Dispute resolution includes appeal process to Commissioner of USBR and Secretary DOI

LCR MSCP Schedule

- Release of Draft Biological Assessment, Habitat Conservation Plan, and EIS/EIR for public review & comment – Spring 2004
- Final Documents – Summer 2004
- Record of Decision – December 2004
- LCR MSCP Implementation – Early 2005
- Current LCR Operations BO terminates in April 2005

Significant Remaining Issues

- Cost-Sharing Issues – Federal/Non-federal; Inter-state; and Intra-state
- Mainstream water use issues (e.g., Section 5 contract water uses for habitat, system loss concept, etc.)
- CDFG - CESA & Fully-Protected Species compliance issues:
 - 2003 QSA Legislation
 - March 9, 2004 USFWS memorandum Re recent *Center for Biological Diversity, et al. vs. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service* lawsuit

Significant Remaining Issues (cont.)

- Execution of Implementation Agreement
- Development of Federal, and if necessary, state legislation packages:
 - Authorizing appropriations and implementation of the LCR MSCP
 - Authorizing mainstream water use for habitat restoration and maintenance uses
 - Providing non-federal certainty and assurances

LCR MSCP Benefits to California

■ Benefits

- Protection of California's mainstream apportionment
- Restoration & maintenance of the LCR Ecosystem
- Moving listed species toward recovery
- ESA/CESA protection for 50 years

LCR MSCP Benefits to California (cont.)

- Benefits:
 - Coverage for on-going & future operations
 - ESA/CESA coverage for future transfers & changes in Points-of-Diversion
 - Limitations on local funding
 - Congressional “Certainty” & “Assurances” for the non-federal partners
 - Federal funding for long-term implementation



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