

Draft Meeting Notes
LCR MSCP Steering Committee October 22, 2008

Attending

George Caan	Rob Thomson	Laura Vecerina
John Swett	Monica Swartz	Chuck Cullom
Terry Fulp	Bruce Moore	Dana Medlock
Jerry Zimmerman	Holly Cheong	Bill Werner
Fred Worthley	Eileen Wynkoop	Perri Benemelis
Kerry Christensen	Chuck Paradzick	Wade Noble
Buster Johnson	Ray Hedrick	Tom Griffin
Bill Lamp	Sara Price	Jon Sjoberg
Michel Remington	Judi Nielsen	Leo Lentsch
Ed Smith	Gera Ashton	Danny Rakestraw
Larry Purcell	Linda Carbone	

Attending Via Conference Call

Doyle Wilson	David Elms	Lesley Fitzpatrick
Dave Weedman	Chris Harris	Laura Simonek
Troy Smith	Christine Bates	Bill Davis

1. ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

Introductions

The meeting convened at 9:35 a.m. by Chairperson George Caan.

Review of Agenda

The agenda was reviewed and approved.

Public Comments

No public comments were offered.

Approve June 25, 2008 Meeting Notes

The June 25, 2008 Meeting Notes were approved. (Moved by Bill Werner, seconded by Michel Remington, and adopted by consensus).

George Caan introduced Terry Fulp, Deputy Regional Director, Bureau of Reclamation.

Terry Fulp introduced John Swett as the new LCR MSCP Program Manager and Laura Vecerina as the Deputy Program Manager.

2. PLANET RANCH LAND AND WATER

Laura Vecerina provided information on Program Decision Document 09-001 Land and Water Approval for Plant Ranch. She indicated that Reclamation was seeking approval from the Steering Committee to enter into a long-term lease with Freeport to secure 3,418 acres of land and 4,894 ac-ft per year of consumptive use water rights at Plant Ranch. The total cost for the lease would be \$8,300,000. She stated that it was estimated that over 550 acres of habitat could be established on Planet Ranch and that 396 acres of credit would be obtained from protecting cottonwood-willow habitat on the Bill Williams National Wildlife Refuge.

The Steering Committee had several questions and a lengthy discussion ensued. Questions were raised over how and when the property would be donated to someone like the Arizona Game and Fish Department. Laura indicated that with the potential for obtaining funding for the full lease amount in FY11 that the lease payment and the donation could be done concurrently. The Steering Committee indicated that approach was their preference.

Laura clarified what approving the motion meant. An approval would mean the Steering Committee is approving Reclamation to move forward in discussions, and if there are differences from the motion, then it will be brought back to the Steering Committee. The Steering Committee indicated that it would like the negotiations to proceed and agreed to amend the motion to read:

“The Steering Committee approves Reclamation entering into negotiations with Freeport-McMoRan Corporation for \$8,300,000 to secure 3,418 acres of land and 4,894 ac-ft per year of consumptive use water right at Planet Ranch”

(Moved by Bill Werner, seconded by Chuck Paradzick, and approved by consensus.)

The Steering Committee requested updates on the negotiation process.

3. BIG BEND LAND AND WATER

Laura Vecerina provided information on Program Decision Document 09-002 Land and Water Approval for Big Bend Conservation Area. She indicated that Reclamation was seeking approval to enter into a long-term lease with the Southern Nevada Water Authority to secure 15 acres of land which are an in-holding within Big Bend State Park. By securing this property, the Program would be able to protect a 15 acre backwater.

Laura Simonek, from the Metropolitan Water District (MWD), requested that their attorneys look at the lease agreements and other agreements before they are executed. She said that there are many ways to structure the lease agreements and is asking that MWD's attorneys look at them. Laura Vecerina stated that Reclamation's legal staff reviews all agreements before they are signed and indicated that she would send the draft agreements to MWD.

The Steering Committee passed the following motion.

“The Steering Committee approves Reclamation entering into a long-term lease with Southern Nevada water Authority (SNWA) for \$872,000 to secure 15 acres of land which are an in-holding within Big Bend State Park. The Steering Committee also directs Reclamation to add language to the Land Use Agreement stipulating that if the LCR MSCP permits are renewed at the completion of the Program that all parties agree to extend the Land Use Agreement for the new time period at no additional cost to the program beyond continuing land management costs.”

(Moved by Bill Werner, seconded by Chuck Paradzick, and approved by consensus.)

4. DESERT TORTOISE LAND

John Swett provided information on Program Decision Document 09-003 Land Approval for Desert Tortoise Habitat. John stated that Reclamation had found a number of land parcels in the Chuckwalla Bench Area of Critical Environmental Concern which could be secured to meet the MSCP commitment to protect 230 acres if unprotected desert tortoise habitat. Reclamation is requesting approval to secure land up to a total cost of \$276,000. The cost estimate was based on previous acquisitions within the area of critical environmental concern.

The Steering Committee indicated that if costs were to exceed the \$276,000 that Reclamation would need to come back to the Steering Committee for additional approval. The following motion was approved.

“The Steering Committee approves Reclamation securing 230 acres of existing unprotected occupied desert tortoise habitat within the Chuckwalla Bench Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) for up to a total of \$276,000.”

(Moved by Bill Werner, seconded by John Sjoberg, and approved by consensus.)

5. WORK PLANS AND BUDGET

John Swett introduced Gera Ashton, Management and Program Analyst, from the Bureau of Reclamation, LCR MSCP office.

John Swett stated Reclamation received the concurrence letter from Fish and Wildlife Service regarding the LCR MSCP Fiscal Year 2007 Accomplishment Report and Consistency Review of Fiscal Year 2009 Work Plan and Budget. The California Department of Fish and Game was sent a letter, also. David Elms stated they were working on a reply; however, it is not finished at this time.

John Swett stated that first quarter contributions have been received by almost all entities. Starting in FY09 the San Diego County Water Authority will be using their financial credits for their yearly MSCP contribution. The CVCA Hopi Tribe water purchase was completed a week ago for a total of \$2,590,630.77 for 1,419 acre feet.

6. PROJECT UPDATES

John Swett distributed a hand-out sheet which shows what the LCR MSCP has accomplished to date. He also gave a power point presentation on the monitoring highlights. Wade Noble asked if we are working on backwater lakes north of Yuma. John stated we are working on Secret Lake on the Imperial Refuge and Headquarters Lake.

7. PROCESS UPDATES

John Swett stated a RFP was issued for restoration sites on the river. Proposals received for eleven different sites. Trip reports will be written by Terry Murphy and Barbara Raulston. There are some California sites included.

Laura Vecerina stated that trip reports will be prepared and a work group conference call will be scheduled to review them.

8. STEERING COMMITTEE SCHEDULE

Laura Vecerina reviewed the LCR MSCP Schedule. She encouraged everyone to attend the Colorado River Basin Science and Resource Management Symposium being held on November 18-20 in Scottsdale. She also stated that the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, is holding a water conference January 13-14, 2009. Laura will email the details to the Committee.

Laura distributed a short survey for those interested in going on different field trips throughout the upcoming year.

9. GENERAL INFORMATION

George Caan stated the United States and Mexico have established four working groups as part of a bi-national process to identify projects of mutual interest to both countries. They are looking at potential environmental projects in Mexico which could be incorporated into the MSCP.

George Caan provided a status of the LCR MSCP legislation. He indicated that the legislation had been incorporated into the large public lands omnibus bill.

10. SUMMARY AND ACTION ITEMS

George Caan provided a summary of the meeting. Three motions were passed, one which was amended. Reclamation will provide updates on the negotiations on Planet Ranch.

11. ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 12:06 p.m.