

Planet Ranch
Lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation Program
Program Decision Document 15-002: Land and Water Approval

Steering Committee Motion

The Steering Committee approves, by consensus, Reclamation entering into a long-term lease with Freeport Minerals Corporation for \$8,300,000 to secure 3,418 acres and 5,549 acre-feet/year of water rights at Planet Ranch as part of the Big Sandy River – Planet Ranch Water Rights Settlement Agreement with the following conditions:

- Freeport will have constructed and included in the lease and donation agreement irrigation facilities capable of delivering at least 5,549 acre-feet per year of water over 923.5 acres, and an active irrigation of crops is occurring on at least 923.5 acres of land, as specified in Section 4.2.1(vii) of the Big Sandy River-Planet Ranch Water Rights Settlement Agreement before the lease is effective.
- The ADWR conditional order severing and transferring 5,549 acre-feet of LCR MSCP Planet Ranch water rights to the LCR MSCP Lease Property for LCR MSCP purposes becomes effective on the Enforceability Date, which shall occur no later than December 15, 2015.
- The lease shall be effective on the Enforceability Date, which shall occur no later than December 15, 2015.
- The land and water rights shall be donated and the lease assigned to Arizona Game and Fish Commission to be effective on the Enforceability Date, which shall occur no later than December 15, 2015.
- There are no suits or other legal proceedings concerning Planet Ranch pending as defined in the Escrow Agreement Section 5.1 and 5.2
- The agreements to implement the Bill Williams River Water Settlement Act of 2014 stay in substantially the same form as they were when the Settlement Act was signed into law, except for any changes needed to conform to the Settlement Act.
- The following language will be added to the lease “If the LCR MSCP permits or similar successor ESA authorizations are renewed at the completion of the Program, all parties agree to extend the Lease for the new time period at no additional costs to the Program beyond continuing land management costs.”

Benefits

Habitat Created: **405 acres on the Planet Ranch proper**

165 acres of cottonwood-willow planted

50 acres of marsh

40 acres backwater ponds

150 acres of cottonwood-willow established along the active river channel using flows from Alamo Dam

396 acres of cottonwood-willow protected on Bill Williams

River National Wildlife Refuge

- Planet Ranch is a unique property and has long been sought by numerous resources agencies.
- The Ranch offers one of the only large scale opportunities for habitat restoration within Reach 3 of the LCR
- The size, isolation, and water right, teamed with the opportunity to use flows from Alamo Dam to generate and maintain stands of cottonwood-willow, are just a few of the intrinsic values associated with the property
- In addition, the Bill Williams River maintains the largest stand of cottonwood-willow on the LCR and supports a robust community of yellow-billed cuckoos.
- In a letter dated October 2, 2014, Reclamation and Arizona Game and Fish Department came to an Agreement in Principle on items concerning water right use, habitat creation areas, public access, and site management costs.

Cost Analysis

- Lease Covers: 3,418 acres of land and 5,549 acre-feet per year of water rights
- A federal appraisal valued the property and associated water rights at \$8,300,000
- For planning purposes, the LCR MSCP Program Documents assumed the cost of private land and water acquisition to be \$8,148 per water right acre (FY 2015 dollars)
- The cost for Planet ranch is \$8,793 per water right acre (FY 2015 dollars)
- Although this figure is slightly higher than the program estimate, it does not take into account receiving an additional 396 acres of credit for cottonwood-willow habitat on the Bill Williams River National Wildlife Refuge.