

Colorado River Citizens' Forum  
Yuma, AZ  
March 4, 2011  
Tentative Meeting Notes\*

Board Members in attendance:

Elston Grubaugh	Kevin Eatherly
Wade Noble	Marcos Moore
Miguel Figueroa	Sam Spiller (via telecon)
Jose Angel (representing Nancy Wright)	

Board Members absent:

Stella Mendoza  
Bill Plummer

USIBWC Staff in attendance:

Anna Morales  
Diane Hinkle

MXIBWC Staff in attendance:

Francisco Bernal

❖ 22 Members of the public in attendance.

- Cibola National Wildlife Refuge, Habitat Restoration in Partnership with the Multi-Species Conservation Program - Mitch Ellis, Complex Manager, Southwest Arizona National Wildlife Refuge Complex, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Cibola National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1964 with 18,400 acres in Arizona and California along 14 miles of the Colorado River. It is used for habitat restoration and is the wintering grounds for migratory birds, neo-tropical migrants and endangered species.

Cibola National Wildlife Refuge is one of 553 refuges throughout the United States which covers 150 million acres with several refuges in Arizona which include Imperial, Kofa, Havasu, Bill Williams, Cabeza Prieta, Buenos Aires, Leslie Canyon and San Bernardino National Wildlife Refuges. Preservation of wild life is first; the types of recreation are wildlife oriented.

The Wildlife-Dependent recreation includes the Big Six:

Environmental Education

Interpretation

Wildlife Watching

Wildlife Photography

Fishing

Hunting (legitimate pursuit compatible to the refuge)

Multi Species Conservation Program (MSCP) Cooperative Partnerships (U.S. Bureau of Reclamation):

Habitat-based Conservation Program

Recovery of endangered species

Protect and maintain habitat on the Lower Colorado River

56 stakeholder entities in 3 states (CA, AZ, NV) includes water users, state agencies etc.

50/50 funding

50-year program

The measurable goals of the MSCP are 8,132 acres of habitat which include 5,940 acres cottonwood/willow, 1,320 acres honey mesquite, 512 acres of wetland marsh and 360 acres of backwaters.

Mike Oldham, Manager, US Fish & Wildlife Service, Cibola National Wildlife Refuge continued with the presentation:

Cibola National Refuge Unit 1 Conservation area (MSCP) was initiated in 2007 with 900 acres riparian (cottonwood, willow, honey mesquite)

Riparian Area #5 planted 204,000 trees on 147 acres in March 2009.

Q: How effective is the way they plant when trees mature?

A: We find that it is pretty sustainable. They plant the trees in 40 in. rows 6 ft apart. After the first year there is minimal growth of salt cedar due to the density of the trees, they may have to remove minimal amounts but overall it is pretty much under control.

Hart Mine Marsh Wetland Conservation Area (MSCP) was initiated in 2009 with 250 acres of wetlands which include emergent aquatics, Yuma clapper rail, waterfowl and water bird species.

Q: Do you harvest?

A: We do not harvest at all.

2006 Cibola Fire destroyed 4,662 acres, of which 1,800 acres is in the center where we were able to get water to it. The area was cleared and is coming back naturally. The 2009 wildfire area is a smaller area near Cibola of which 102 acres of upland honey mesquite has been restored. We are treating it the same way, and next year we will plant the remaining trees.

Q: Where do you get your trees from?

A: Some of the trees are native, some from Phoenix, Tucson, different nurseries. We make sure it is the same genetics as the area.

Q: Do they go out and get cuttings?

A: Yes, they keep them close to the native area.

Accomplishments for 2011-2012 are to control salt cedar re-sprouts, planting honey mesquite and natural germination via flooding.

New projects will be Cibola Lake, Hart Mine Marsh.

For information on work plans, projects, research and technical reports or photos go to <http://www.lcrmscp.gov/>

Q: Is the cotton rat a target species?

A: No MSCP is pretty much riparian right now.

Q: Do you burn or mow the area?

A: We find that burning is much cleaner and economical, but it depends on the situation.

Q: Do you have to have a permit?

A: No, we are not disturbing the soil which does not require us to have one.

Q: What about solar power?

A: Yuma has a 15,000 kw plant which is really good and we have a similar one at Imperial. 50 – 75% of our power is solar.

Q: Do you use source water?

A: Yes, we have Federal water rights at the river.

Q: What percentage of the budget is for Cibola?

A: We share between MSCP and other funds. Any additional funds depend on the amount of work being done. Cibola usually has \$50,000 - \$100,000 per year for work which comes from MSCP and other funding sources.

➤ Laguna Burned Area Rehabilitation Project –Erica Faulkner, Fire Ecologist, Colorado River District, Bureau of Land Management

July 1, 2008, the Laguna fire destroyed 140 acres of riparian and upland habitat along the lower Colorado River. The Burned Area Rehabilitation (BAR) Program is located south of Imperial Dam security area, which is suitable for native habitat. The BAR plan was developed and approved by Washington. Over a period of three years, habitat rehabilitation took place.

The 140-acre Laguna Fire destroyed valuable marsh and riparian habitat near Yuma. As part of that project, the native seed was allowed to germinate, invasive species were cleared and holes were drilled in preparation for planting native species vegetation.

In January, volunteers planted 8,500 locally-grown mesquite trees (by Arizona Western College students) and 5,000 lower Colorado River cottonwood and willow poles in the area.

The goal is to increase and improve the native riparian habitat, which in this case would be knocking back the salt cedar.

In 2008, during the planning stages crews went in and cleared out any salt cedar that had come back up during the last two years. Then were able to go through and replant 13,500 trees in the ground. All were planted by hand in 1½ days.

Nearly 200 volunteers from Arizona Western College, the community, and neighboring cities came out to help plant the trees.

Information is currently being gathered on the damage of the recent freeze.

Q. How do you protect the mesquites from rabbits?

A. We don't have to worry about rabbits but the birds. We are monitoring the area to see if there will be a need to start caging the trees. So far it hasn't been a problem.

Q. Why don't you wait for the trees to get sturdier?

A. The trees are planted 3ft down, which makes it pretty sturdy.

Q. Your 50% success rate for mesquite trees, is that typical?

A. We hope to have a better rate, that is a minimum that we say but it is between 60 – 70%

Q. Do they typically include replants?

A. This project is funded by Washington only for this.

Public Comment/Suggested Future Agenda Items

- Imperial/Brawley New River Wetlands, Marie Barrett and Imperial Irrigation District
- Update of New River Strategic Plan – New River TAC
- IBWC Colorado River Joint Cooperative Process

Next meeting to be held in Imperial County, tentatively for May 25, 2011. Location TBD

Thank you to all the presenters for their presentations.

\*Meeting notes are tentative and summarize in draft the contents and discussion of Citizens Forum Meetings. While these notes are intended to provide a general overview of Citizens Forum Meetings, they may not necessarily be accurate or complete, and may not be representative of USIBWC policy or positions.