

COLORADO RIVER RECOVERY PROGRAM
FY 2010 ANNUAL PROJECT REPORT

RECOVERY PROGRAM
PROJECT NUMBER:
Easement

- I. Project Title: Easement & weeds mgmt.
- II. Principal Investigator(s):
Ryan Mollnow, Project Leader – Colorado River Wildlife Management Area
Ouray NWR, HC 69 Box 232, Randlett, UT 84063
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- III. Project Summary:
The easement program began in the late 1990s with the intent of acquiring flood easements on floodplains within the upper Colorado River system which would function as critical habitat for threatened and endangered fish species. Easements were acquired through the 2000s and were turned over to the National Wildlife Refuge System for management by Ouray National Wildlife Refuge. The Fish and Wildlife Service owns very little interest in many of these easements meaning we only want to see the floodplains flood and function as naturally as possible. This project requires annual inspections and partnerships with the landowners and their land. This requires annual funding of about \$40,000 to administer these lands. When and where possible the Refuge will try to enhance these properties through partnerships and additional project funds. Currently and in the past these funds are used for administration and enforcement of the easements to ensure that the landowners are abiding to the easement language.
- IV. Study Schedule: Annually on-going
- V. Relationship to RIPRAP:
-GREEN RIVER ACTION PLAN: MAINSTEM ACTIVITY II.
RESTORE HABITAT
II.A. Restore and manage flooded bottomland habitat.
-COLORADO RIVER ACTION PLAN: MAINSTEM ACTIVITY II.
RESTORE HABITAT
II.A. Restore and manage flooded bottomland habitat.
-COLORADO RIVER ACTION PLAN: GUNNISON RIVER ACTIVITY II.
RESTORE HABITAT
II.A. Restore and manage flooded bottomland habitat.
- VI. Accomplishment of FY 2010 Tasks and Deliverables, Discussion of Initial Findings and Shortcomings:
In FY 10 the Refuge sent letters acknowledging a leadership change had taken place at the Refuge. The Refuge also sent a letter to the landowners preparing them for a site inspection that took place in May and June of 2010 and reiterated the easement obligations. The landowners were given the opportunity to inform the Refuge of any potential issues within their easement. All the easement sites were visited via ground

transportation by the Refuge and notes were taken of potential violations. A few landowners were contacted face to face. The Refuge spent a considerable amount of effort towards producing administrative maps and descriptions of the easements and the boundaries. The Refuge has obtained updated maps of all easements. Two easement issues are being worked requiring a considerable amount of administrative and law enforcement staff time. The Refuge fell short in the weed control tasks do to focus placed on gathering new landowner information and maps.

VII. Recommendations:

The Refuge does not have adequate funding or personnel to address much of the potential floodplain enhancement projects. After our sites visits the Refuge recognized some potential floodplain enhancement projects. With additional funds the Refuge could hire a term position to fulfill the role of landowner contacts, initial scoping of projects, and project organization. The end result would be better relations with the landowners and enhanced conservation of critical habitat.

VIII. Project Status: This project is on-going. In FY 11 it is recommended this project be fully funded in order to effectively continue the management of the easements. The additional funds will be needed for enforcement issues and initiating pre-construction meetings with Thunder Ranch for a potential water control structure. Funds will be used for addressing some weed control on select properties.

IX. FY 2010 Budget Status

- A. Funds Provided: \$86,267 was held over from FY09
- B. Funds Expended: \$41,288.85 was spent
- C. Difference: \$44,978.15 to be held for FY11 in expectation of no FY11 funding
- D. Percent of the FY 2010 work completed, and projected costs to complete:
97% of funds for FY10 spent
- E. Recovery Program funds spent for publication charges:
None

X. Status of Data Submission: N/A

XI. Signed: _____ Date
Principal Investigator
Signed by Ryan Mollnow 11/15/2010

APPENDIX: None