

FY 2015 Cooperative Recovery Initiative Southwest Region

Project Descriptions

The Cooperative Recovery Initiative was established in 2013 to restore and recover federally listed species on national wildlife refuges and surrounding lands. It funds on-the-ground conservation projects that provide high conservation benefits. To read more about the 2015 projects and previous years, visit <http://www.fws.gov/refuges/whm/cooperativeRecoveryInitiative.html>.

Riparian Restoration on the Middle Rio Grande for the Benefit of the Rio Grande Silvery Minnow, Southwestern Willow Flycatcher and Western Yellow-billed Cuckoo Sevilleta National Wildlife Refuge, NM

The project team will restore the river-floodplain connection by physically lowering the elevated floodplain terrace and replacing water control gates to promote seasonal flooding. The goal of the project is to create 56 acres of new nursery habitat for the Rio Grande silvery minnow. In addition, these acres will be restored and enhanced as nesting and foraging riparian habitat for the southwestern willow flycatcher and western yellow-billed cuckoo along the Middle Rio Grande corridor on Sevilleta National Wildlife Refuge. River channelization of the Middle Rio Grande has improved downstream water conveyance, but has detrimentally altered the river-floodplain connection, causing the loss and fragmentation of habitat for these species. The project will allow flooding to occur at moderate flow levels in May and June to encourage spawning and other life stages of the Rio Grande silvery minnow.

To increase habitat for the southwestern willow flycatcher and western yellow-billed cuckoo, the project team will remove invasive plants and plant Gooding's willow, coyote willow, and cottonwood poles in new and existing restoration areas, while ensuring water reaches forested areas in May and June by creating channels to connect the river to the riparian units. Similar projects have been completed to the north and south of this project site. Completing this project will create greatly needed "stepping stones" of habitat. Species that can additionally benefit are the New Mexico meadow jumping mouse, and pecos sunflower.

Applying Strategic Habitat Conservation to the Restoration of the South Texas Coastal Corridor for the Recovery of Ocelot and Northern Aplomado Falcon Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge and Lower Rio Grande Valley National Wildlife Refuge, TX

This project will increase the amount of suitable Tamaulipan thornscrub and coastal prairie habitat in the South Texas Coastal Corridor that is available to endangered ocelots and

endangered northern aplomado falcons respectively, by enhancing areas that are in use and restoring adjacent areas. The Tamaulipan thornscrub and coastal prairie habitat of the ocelot and aplomado falcon is tightly interspersed across the landscape on or near Lower Rio Grande Valley and Laguna Atascosa national wildlife refuge lands in south Texas. Vehicle strikes are the most common mortality factor for ocelots, accounting for 35-56% of ocelot deaths. The Texas Department of Transportation will install strategic wildlife crossing over the next three years within the Coastal Corridor. The most critical conservation factor facing ocelots remains habitat loss and fragmentation, and so maintaining or restoring optimal habitat in this connectivity corridor is crucial for the long-term survivorship and recovery of these species. The project team will focus on preventing brush encroachment, tree and shrub removal, invasive species control, plantings and establishment of nest structures. The goals of the project are to connect isolated parcels of existing, optimal habitat, and restore thornscrub and coastal prairie habitat to increase landscape level habitat. Species that can additionally benefit are the Sprague's pipit, and long-billed curlew.