

FFFFFFFBriefing Statement

Date: September 30, 2004

For: DMG

Title: California Desert Riparian Challenge: A Strategic Plan for the Restoration of Native Riparian Plant Communities in the California Deserts

Issues:

1. Agreement on the purpose and need statement for the Strategy
2. Review/approval of final list of landscapes and watersheds that will be addressed by the strategy (attachment)
3. Approve criteria that will be used to rank and prioritize landscapes/watersheds
4. Field Trip on November 4 and 5

Background/Status:

1. Many DMG agencies are conducting tamarisk control, primarily in an uncoordinated fashion. The purpose of the strategy is to coordinate tamarisk control within the DMG and serve as a tool to secure additional funding for tamarisk control.
2. Several NGO funders (National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and Wildlife Conservation Board) have requested a strategy to better focus their efforts. Funders also require monitoring for measurable accomplishments, which the strategy addresses.
3. Both Congress and the Administration are keenly aware of tamarisk and its related evils. As a result, the potential exists for additional appropriated tamarisk control funding. If the DMG wishes to position itself to be competitive for this potential funding, such a strategy is required. A strategy exists in final draft form for New Mexico and Arizona has had an initial scoping meeting to begin work on a strategy.
4. The DMG approved work on a California Desert tamarisk control strategy at the April 2004 meeting in 29 Palms.

Proposed Next Steps:

- 1. Approve the purpose and need statement for the strategy.**

Riparian weed control and restoration has been a priority for many of the DMG agencies for a number of years. Great progress has been made on a local basis in several watersheds. Unfortunately, however, there has been little coordination among agencies and an overall lack of a desert-wide strategic approach.

In order to effectively treat weeds and restore functional native ecosystems, riparian weeds must be treated throughout watersheds and landscapes without regard to jurisdictional boundaries. The benefits of watershed-based treatment include the decreased probability of reinfestation from upstream seed sources; systematic restoration of native vegetation and natural stream flows; cost savings resulting from sharing of resources, combined procurements, crew mobilizations; and increased funding opportunities.

The lack of a coordinated, desert-wide strategic plan for riparian weed control and restoration has resulted in numerous individual, project-specific, funding requests, sometimes for projects within the same watershed. This may result in duplicative work (especially for planning, monitoring, and research); an inability to utilize fully all leverage funding; and the inability for funders to determine highest priorities for support.

The purpose of the strategic plan is to coordinate the restoration, management, and enhancement of native riparian plant communities among public land managers and private landowners within priority watersheds and landscapes in the California desert (Table 1). It also establishes a scheme for prioritizing riparian weed control and native plant restoration projects throughout the California desert. These priorities will be used to coordinate funding request to outside entities interested in funding weed control and native plant restoration projects in the California deserts

The goal of the strategy is to increase natural biodiversity and improve habitat quality for riparian dependent sensitive species by controlling woody riparian weeds in all sites listed in table 1. The course of action outlined in the following sections will define measures of success and allow resource managers to meet and maintain these objectives.

2. Review/approved final list of landscapes and watersheds that will be addressed by the strategy (Table 1)

Table 1 originated in a BLM grant preproposal and was expanded based on DMG agency staff input. It was presented to the DMG at the July meeting in San Diego and then redistributed to staff for review. Agencies providing input are RIFO, NEFO, BAFO, PSSC, ECFO, DEVA, MOJA, and JOTR. I expect comments from DFG and ABDSP.

Does DOD have input?

3. Approve the watershed prioritization scheme

Limited funding and labor sources make it impractical to obtain the resources needed to simultaneously treat all of the priority landscapes and watersheds in Table 1. Consequently, priorities for seeking funds for restoration were determined based on the following criteria:

- 1) Number of obligate sensitive species: Rationale: the goal of the strategy is to return riparian ecosystems to natural conditions thereby increasing their natural biodiversity and improving habitat quality for sensitive species;

- 2) Size of the riparian habitat being restored: Rationale: sites that restore more riparian habitat will provide greater benefits to sensitive species and will receive a higher priority;
- 3) Fire Danger: Rationale: dense stands of weeds and riparian sites with heavy fuel accumulations pose a wildfire hazard and will be given a higher priority;
- 4) Historical cottonwood gallery forests: Rationale: these stands are rare in the California desert and deserve special considerations;
- 5) Areas of cultural significance: Rationale: removal of invasive weeds restores the integrity of the cultural landscape;
- 6) Areas where perennial water could be restored: Rationale: water salvage from weed control results in more available water for native plant species, wildlife, and human consumption;
- 7) Special protection lands such as lands within National Parks/Monuments, wilderness and BLM Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs).

Individual projects within watersheds and landscapes must also be coordinated and prioritized by the agencies working within the watershed or landscape. The principles within this strategy will be used to establish those priorities.

4. Schedule a meeting and field trip with potential funders

The purposes of the field trip are to:

1. Introduce potential funders to the DMG tamarisk strategy
2. Showcase DMG agency projects and accomplishments
3. Introduce a funding preproposal to the funders. Coordinate the potential funders' funding capacities with short-term (one-year) and long-term (three-year) workplans.

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Attachment

**Table 1
Priority Landscapes and Watersheds Addressed and Significant Resources**

Landscape/ Watershed	Land Ownership	Special Designation	Special Status SpeciesPP¹	Other Notable Values	Estimated Acreage of Weed
Inyo Mountains/ Saline Valley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BLM Ridgecrest FO • Death Valley National Park • California Department of Fish and Game 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Saline Valley ACEC² • Saline Valley SER³ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oasis Valley springsnail (NPS) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Springsnails • Neotropical migratory birds • Waterfowl and shorebirds 	100
Argus Mountains/ Darwin Falls Canyon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BLM Ridgecrest FO • Death Valley National Park • California Department of Fish and Game 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Great Basin Falls ACEC • Indian Joe Spring SER 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inyo California towhee (FT/SE) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Springsnails • Neotropical migratory birds • Desert bighorn sheep 	40
Eastern Sierra Canyon within Inyo County	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BLM Ridgecrest FO 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Olancha Creek • Five-mile Canyon • Deadfoot Canyon • Nine-mile Canyon 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Southwestern willow flycatcher (FE/SE) • Least Bell's vireo (FE/SE) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Springsnails • Robust salamander • Neotropical Migratory birds 	16

¹ FE- Endangered under the Federal Endangered Species Act
 FT- Threatened under the Federal Endangered Species Act
 SE- Endangered under the California Endangered Species Act
 ST- Threatened under the California Endangered Species Act
 BLM- BLM Sensitive Species
 NPS- NPS Species of Special Concern

² ACEC- Area of Critical Environmental Concern, BLM's highest level of administrative protection.

³ SER- State Ecological Reserve managed by California Department of Fish and Game

Panamint Mountains	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BLM Ridgecrest FO • Death Valley National Park 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Surprise Canyon ACEC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inyo California towhee (FT/SE) • Panamint daisy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Springsnails • Panamint alligator lizard • Neotropical migratory birds • Desert bighorn sheep 	20
Panamint Valley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BLM Ridgecrest FO • Tribal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Warm Sulfur Spring and Marsh ACEC 	None	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neotropical migratory birds 	222
Amargosa River	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BLM Barstow FO • The Nature Conservancy • Private Parties • Death Valley National Park 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amargosa River ACEC • Salt Creek ACEC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Least Bell's vireo (FE/SE) • Southwestern willow flycatcher (FE/SE) • Amargosa vole (FE/SE) • Amargosa River speckled dace (BLM) • Amargosa River pupfish (BLM/NPS) • Amargosa tyronia (NPS) • Saratoga pupfish (NPS) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neotropical migratory birds • Springsnails 	1000
Mojave River	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BLM Barstow FO • Mojave National Preserve • Private lands (Mojave Weed Management Area) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Afton Canyon ACEC • Camp Cady SWA⁴ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Southwestern willow flycatcher (FE/SE) • Least Bell's vireo (FE/SE) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neotropical migratory birds 	330
Death Valley Springs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Death Valley National Park 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NPS Wilderness 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desert bighorn sheep • Neotropical migratory birds 	50

⁴ SWA- State Wildlife Area managed by California Department of Fish and Game

East Cronese Lake	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BLM Barstow FO 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • East Cronese Lake ACEC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desert tortoise 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neotropical migratory birds 	50
Harper Lake	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BLM Barstow FO • Private Parties 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harper Lake ACEC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Western snowy plover (nesting) – non-coastal population 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neotropical migratory birds • Shorebirds/ waterfowl 	50 5 (retreat)
San Sebastian Mash/ San Felipe Creek	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BLM El Centro FO • California Department of Fish and Game • Anza-Borrego Desert State Park • Ocotillo Wells SVRA • Private Parties 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • San Felipe Creek ACEC • SERs • Imperial SWA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desert pupfish (FE/SE) • Least Bell’s vireo (FE/SE) • Southwestern willow flycatcher (FE/SE) • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neotropical migratory birds 	750
Dos Palmas Oasis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BLM Palm Springs FO • California Department of Fish and Game • Center for Natural Lands Management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dos Palmas ACEC • Oasis Springs SER 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desert pupfish (FE/SE) • Yuma clapper rail (FE/SE) • Southwest willow flycatcher (FE/SE) • Least Bell’s vireo (FE/SE) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neotropical migratory birds 	400 640 (retreat)
Coachella Valley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BLM Palm Springs FO • California Department of Fish and Game • Center for Natural Lands Management • Wildlands Conservancy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coachella Valley Preserve • Big Morongo Preserve ACEC • Whitewater Canyon ACEC • Hidden Palms SER • Mission Creek Preserve • Edom Hill Willow Hole ACEC • Corn Springs ACEC • Chuckwalla Well ACEC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desert pupfish (FE/SE) • Yuma clapper rail (FE/SE) • Southwest willow flycatcher (FE/SE) • Least Bell’s vireo (FE/SE) • Arroyo southwestern toad (FT/ST) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neotropical migratory birds 	40 100 (retreat)

Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains National Monument	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BLM Palm Springs FO • California Department of Fish and Game • San Bernardino National Forest • Coachella Valley Mountain Conservancy • Agua Caliente Tribal Lands • Deep Canyon Reserve 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carrizo Canyon SER • Magnesia Spring SER • Santa Rosa SWA • Bear Creek Oasis • Cathedral Canyon Oasis • Cat Canyon • Palm Canyon • Andreas Canyon • Deep Canyon 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desert slender salamander (FE/SE) • Southwest willow flycatcher (FE/SE) • Least Bell's vireo (FE/SE) • Peninsular ranges bighorn sheep (FE/SE) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neotropical migratory birds 	200
Eastern Mojave Desert Springs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BLM Needles FO • Mojave National Preserve • California Department of Fish and Game 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Piute Creek SER • BLM Wilderness 	None	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neotropical migratory birds • Springsnails 	220