

## **BRIEFING STATEMENT**

**Date:** June 12, 2003

**Title:** Restoration Coordinator Update

### **Project Update:**

- **San Sebastian Marsh- San Felipe Creek Restoration**

The San Sebastian Marsh- San Felipe Creek (SSM-SFC) restoration project is located in Imperial and San Diego Counties primarily on lands managed by El Centro Field Office (ECFO), California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG), and Anza-Borrego Desert State Park (ABDSP). Last year the DMG identified that a watershed based restoration project for SSM-SFC would be initiated. Last month, the DOI Coordinator and the restoration coordinator held a conference call with managers and staff from ECFO and ABDSP to discuss the scope of the project and ways in which the DMG can enhance current agency restoration activities. One item identified as a need by both agencies was an agreement that sets the framework for restoration activities, work planning, sharing of resources, and reporting accomplishments. The agreement could also be used as a tool in grant writing. The restoration coordinator has drafted an agreement, which is receiving review. More conference calls will be scheduled this summer to engage CDFG and finalize the agreement.

- **Amargosa Groundwater Strategy**

The Amargosa River, whose headwaters begin in the mountains of Nevada, is situated primarily between Bad Water in Death Valley National Park (DEVA) and Beatty, Nevada. While there is a fair amount of private land within the Amargosa's watershed, especially in Nevada, most of the watershed is managed by the BLM and the NPS. GS has conducted extensive ground water studies in the basin and developed a regional flow model on behalf of the Department of Energy, NPS and others.

Endemic mammals, plants, fish, and invertebrates, most of which are listed species, rely on the habitat provided by the valuable islands of water fed by the Amargosa River aquifer. Devils Hole, home of the endangered Devil Hole pupfish and the Ash Meadow National Wildlife Refuge are part of the aquifer. The Amargosa River in California includes seventeen miles of perennial surface flow which supports a rich cottonwood-willow community and has been determined by BLM to be eligible for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River System. Many of the springs within Death Valley National Park (DEVA) are fed by the Amargosa River aquifer. There is growing concern that new and continued groundwater pumping in the Amargosa Basin will lead to aquifer overdraft and impact many important wildlife and recreational resources on the Amargosa River.

Currently, there is no coordinated interagency management strategy for the Amargosa River watershed. Due to the land and water management complexities within the region, any type of groundwater protection strategy for the Amargosa River watershed must include federal, state, and local agencies, water users, non-governmental agencies, and academia from

California and Nevada.

- Weed Management Areas

The DOI and restoration coordinator continue to work with the Mojave Weed Management Area (MWMA). The MWMA has adopted a five-year plan that reflects their mission, a program description, and actions relating to education and outreach, prevention, inventory and mapping, control projects, and funding. The MWMA has been awarded a Coordinated Weed Management Area Grant for \$5,000. This grant will be used to begin a coordinated salt cedar control and restoration project for the Mojave River.

Palm Springs-South Coast Field Office (PSSC) has expressed an interest in the establishment of a WMA that would include the new Santa Rosa National Monument. The restoration coordinator is exploring several options to meet this need. A meeting is being set in July to discuss PSSC's ideas with the Imperial WMA and to explore the possibility of expanding the Imperial WMA into the desert portion of Riverside County.

- Recoverability and Vulnerability of Desert Ecosystems (RVDE) project

The restoration coordinator is continuing to work with GS regarding their RVDE project. GS would like to schedule a meeting this summer to further define the direction of the inclusion of a "roads study" within RVDE. The Roads study would address roads and trails both as impacts and as the access they provide. Questions ask might include how roads affect the spread of weeds, if closing roads in truly beneficial, and how roads and their closure affect tortoise recovery.

- Restoration Conference

Over two-hundred people attended last spring's DMG sponsored restoration conference. We have received many positive comments after the conference. Many attendees have asked when we plan to host another conference. The publication *Restoration Ecology*, which is the journal of the Society of Ecological Restoration, has asked if they could publish the conference's proceedings.

The restoration coordinator would like to plan a much smaller meeting with DMG agency restoration staff in the fall. The purpose of the meeting would be to share information on projects and resources and to network. This meeting would be a "low budget" one to two day meeting probably held in an agency conference room.

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