

COLORADO RIVER RECOVERY PROGRAM  
FY 2012 ANNUAL PROJECT REPORT

RECOVERY PROGRAM  
PROJECT NUMBER: C-6 Easement

I. Project Title: Easement & weeds mgmt.

II. Bureau of Reclamation Agreement Number(s):  
R10PG40050

Project/Grant Period: Start date (Mo/Day/Yr): 10/01/06  
End date: (Mo/Day/Yr): 9/30/12  
Reporting period end date: 9/30/12  
Is this the final report? Yes X No \_\_\_\_\_

III. Principal Investigator(s):

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IV. Abstract:

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 as part of the Lower Green River NWR Complex. 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 \$50,000 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.

V. Study Schedule: Annual, ongoing

VI. 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.

### VII. Accomplishment of FY 2012 Tasks and Deliverables, Discussion of Initial Findings and Shortcomings:

The Refuge contacted landowners preparing them for site inspections that took place in May of 2012 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. Administrative maps and descriptions of the easements were reviewed. Three easement properties consume the highest percentage of administrative and refuge staff time (GJ Pipe, Lamb, Thunder Ranch). Considerable time was spent coordinating levee repair work that was completed by the Bureau of Reclamation on Thunder Ranch in April 2012. There was much time spent coordinating trail construction and completion of the weir cut at the Grand Junction Pipe parcel in May 2012. Weed monitoring/control tasks had to be lowered in priority due to focus on coordinating activities related to oil and gas development, trail construction planning/coordination and levee repairs. Some tamarisk removal was conducted at the GJ Pipe site and more is planned for FY13. Also, in October 2012, Russian knapweed control was conducted at the GJ Pipe site.

### VIII. Recommendations:

The Refuge does not have adequate funding or personnel to address much of the 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.

### IXI. Project Status: This project is ongoing. In FY 2013 it is recommended this project be fully funded in order to continue easement management program. Funding is required for all coordination and enforcement issues. There continues to be a need to monitor proposed energy development and construction activities to ensure easement terms are not violated. If funding allows, weed monitoring/control efforts will be addressed on select properties.

### X. FY 2013 Budget Status

A. Funds Provided: Recovery Program funding: \$58,256.74 (\$50,000 funded in FY-2012 and \$8,256.75 was carried over from FY-2011). FWS Refuge funding: ~\$16,000.

B. Funds Expended: \$58,256.74 . FWS Refuge funding: ~\$16,000.

