



# desert conservation PROGRAM

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## Permit Amendment: An Overview of Objectives and Major Changes

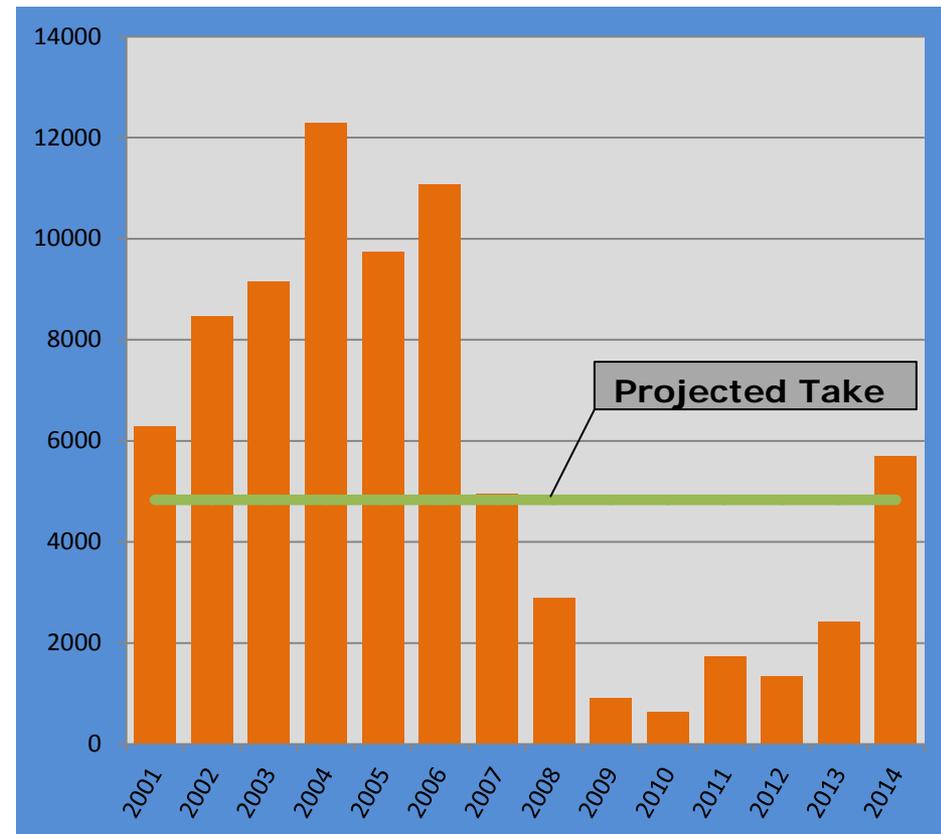
August 13, 2015





- Incidental take dramatically outpaced projections through the first 7 years of implementation.
- To date, we have expended approximately 95,000 acres of take (66% of permitted amount).
- Available habitat for desert tortoises is limited – Acquiring take in the future may be more difficult.

Acres of Development Per Year





## Objectives for Obtaining an Amendment:

1. Increase Take Authorization
2. Reduce the number of Covered Species
3. Revise the Conservation Strategy
4. Revise Biological Goals and Objectives
5. Restructure Plan Implementation
6. Change Permit Term to 50 Years



**Objective 1.** To obtain coverage for acres that are not currently permitted for take in Clark County.

- Original plan allows for up to 145,000 acres of take.
- Under the Amendment, we are requesting an additional 200,000 acres of take.
- SNPLMA expansion of disposal boundaries.
- Much more land will become available for development that is not currently permitted.



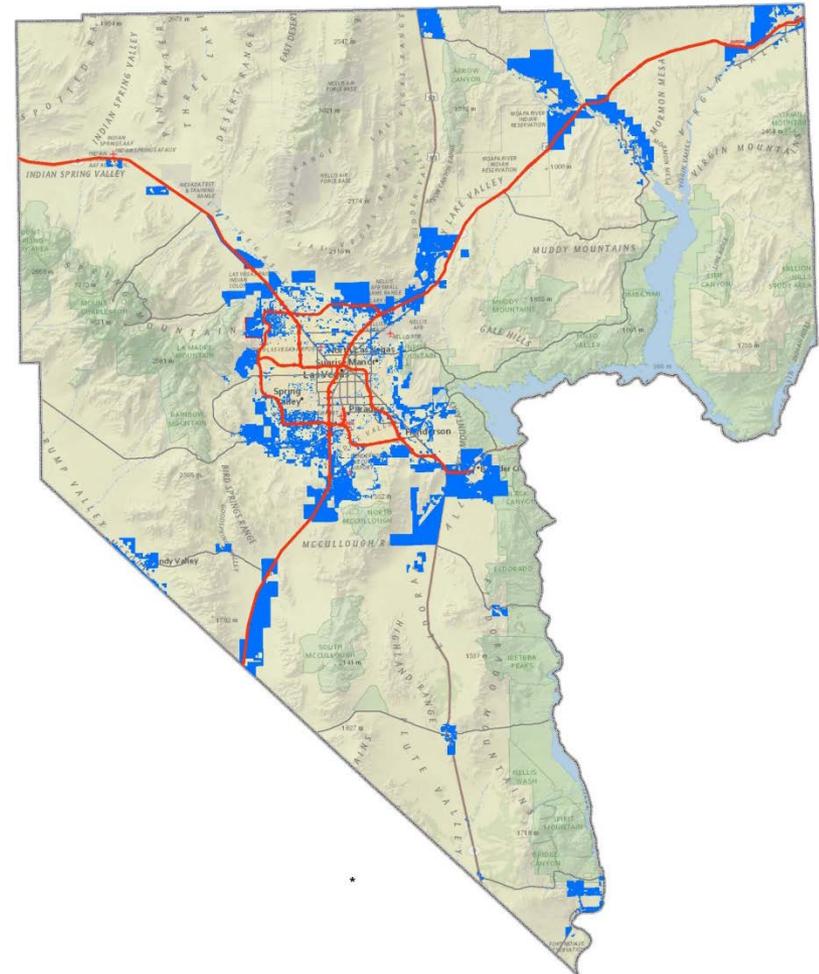
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## Objective 1: Increase Take Authorization

- Approximately 190,000 acres potentially available for development, but not permitted.
- Absent an amendment, landowners would be required to conduct project-by-project consultations.
- Increased take authorization provides long-term assurances for continued economic growth.

### Projected Take





**Objective 2.** To reduce the number of species covered by the MSHCP to focus on those most at risk.

- Approximately 50% of covered species occur at higher elevations (>4,000 feet).
- Approximately 4% of covered species occur in aquatic habitats.

### Species Addressed by the MSHCP

Taxon	Covered Species	Evaluation Species	Watch List Species	Total
Mammals	4	15	8	27
Birds	8	7	15	30
Reptiles	14	7	1	22
Amphibians	1	2	3	6
Fish	0	8	1	9
Invertebrates	10	34	10	54
Vascular Plants	37	21	10	68
Non-vascular Plants	4	8	3	15
Total	78	102	51	231



### Covered species revision:

- Started with a list of over 450 species to evaluate for potential coverage under the Amendment.
- Met with other agencies and species experts.
- Reduced list to 56 species that are being further evaluated.
- Species must meet criteria each of four evaluation criteria: range, status, impact, and data.





**Objective 3.** To revise the conservation strategy to improve mitigation effectiveness and accountability.

After 14 years of implementation, the current strategy is not as effective or efficient as envisioned.

The current conservation strategy:

- Is expenditure based – mitigation is counted in terms of the amount of money that is spent.
- Consists of a “pick-list” of over 600 conservation actions that may be implemented.
- Relies on the use of federal lands to carry out conservation actions – no guarantee of durability.



A revised conservation strategy is needed to:

- Mitigate for increased disturbance.
- Reduce our dependence on having others carry out mitigations actions on our behalf and on lands that are not fully protected.
- Ensure durability of mitigation actions.
- Provide greater transparency and accountability.



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## Objective 3: Revise Conservation Strategy

The revised conservation strategy will:

- Focus on management of reserve units that provide habitat to support covered species.

Within the Reserve System:

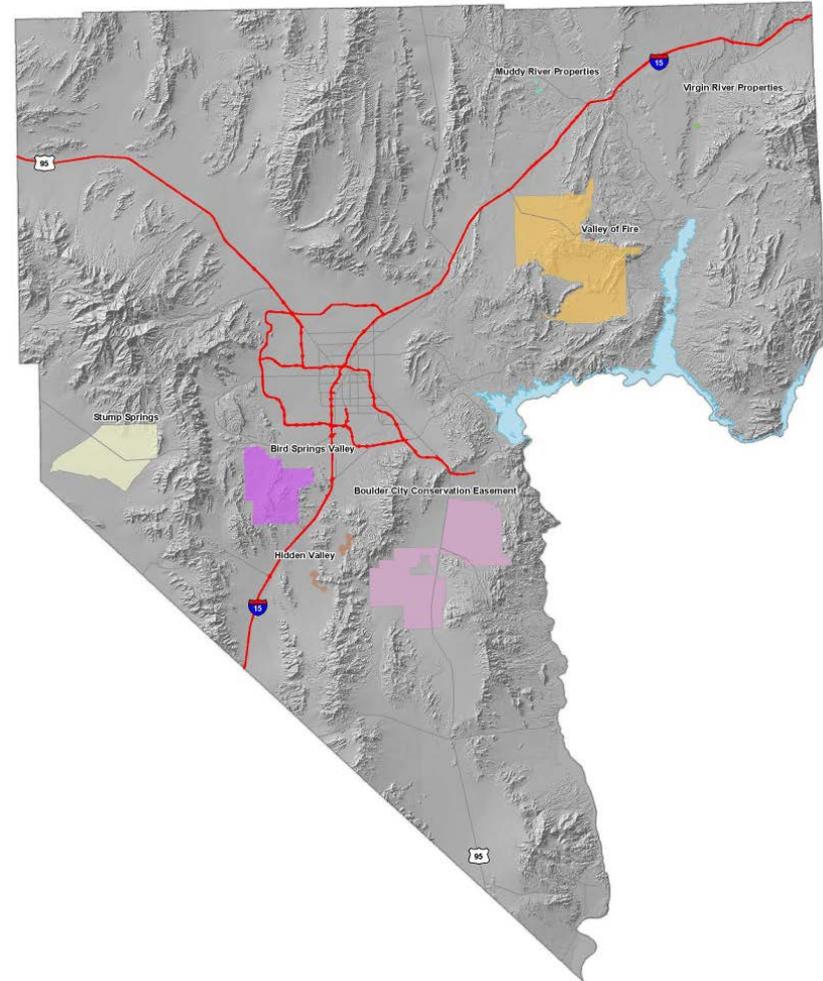
- Implement species and/or habitat monitoring.
- Restoration and enhancement of covered species habitat.
- Incorporate Adaptive Management principles.



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## Objective 3: Revise Conservation Strategy

- Reserve system will conserve lands at a 1:1 ratio commensurate with take.
- Will consist of private land holdings and ACECs created through the BLM RMP revision process.
- Clark County would enter into a cooperative management agreement with BLM for the management of reserve units.





### **Objective 4.** Revise Biological Goals and Objectives

Current Plan – “no net unmitigated loss or fragmentation of habitat and to maintain stable or increasing populations of covered species in intensively managed (IMAs) areas and less intensively managed areas (LIMAs)”

Biological goals and objectives under the current plan:

- Do not conform to FWS Policy.
- Do not clearly define expected outcomes.
- Are not obtainable or within the realm of our control.



## Objective 4: Revise Biological Goals and Objectives

Biological goals and objectives under the Amendment:

- Will clearly define conservation targets and desired results.
- Will be quantitative and measurable where possible.

Goals: Maintain or improve covered species habitat quality and quantity within the Reserve System and minimize impacts to covered species from covered activities.

Objectives: Protect, manage, and enhance covered species habitat within the Reserve System. Objectives also include specific measures to minimize effects of covered activities, such as requiring clearance surveys, seed collection, or construction worker training.



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## Objective 5: Restructure Plan Implementation

**Objective 5.** To restructure plan implementation to improve efficiency and reduce bureaucracy.

- Governance of the MSHCP should balance representation of all permittees.
- Centralize fee collection.
- Continue use of independent science advisor and peer review.
- Implement annual financial audits.



**Objective 6.** Change the permit term from 30 years to 50 years.

- Preparing an MSHCP of this scale is very costly and time consuming.
- Provides the permittees with long-term assurances under the “no surprises” clause, which states:

FWS will not require additional mitigation, financial compensation, or land use restrictions should any changed circumstances arise, so long as the permit is being properly implemented.



### Benefits of pursuing an Amendment to the Clark County MSHCP:

- Provides a streamlined approach to Endangered Species Act permitting for all private land development activities.
- Provides long-term assurances for continued economic growth in Clark County.
- Provides a large-scale regional approach to species conservation in the County.



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Questions?

