QUARTERLY PROGRESS REPORT
CLARK COUNTY
MULTIPLE SPECIES HABITAT CONSERVATION PLAN AMENDMENT

Agency/Organization: WRA Inc.

Project Name: HCP Consultant for Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan

Project Number: 2019-WRA-1970b

Reporting Period: April 1, 2024 to June 30, 2024

Project Contact Name and Information:
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QUESTION 1: What did you accomplish during this reporting period? How did these accomplishments help you reach the goal of your project? If relevant, what indicators or benchmarks were used to determine your progress?

During this quarter, WRA prepared for and participated in the monthly progress meetings as well as the quarterly meeting with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). WRA also submitted five deliverables, Deliverable 20 (Chapter 5, Draft 2), Deliverable 33 (Quarterly Progress Report and Schedule Update), Deliverable D60 (Chapter 2, Draft 3), Deliverable 61 (Chapter 6.4, Draft 3), and Deliverable 62 (Alternative Strategies Memo). Chapter drafts focused on incorporating new information and feedback from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service). WRA also began discussing and drafting Deliverable M59 (Annual Project Review Presentation).

QUESTION 2: What, if any, problems were encountered? Briefly describe those problems and the manner in which they were dealt.

No significant problems were encountered in Q2. Similar to previous reports, additional revisions to draft chapters will depend on the passage of legislation and further discussion with BLM and the Service. During this quarter, U.S. Senator Cortez Masto reintroduced the Southern Nevada Economic Development and Conservation Act (SNEDCA). During this quarter WRA also prepared and submitted the Alternative Strategies Memo (D62) to explore alternative avenues for take coverage under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) if the U.S. Congress fails to pass SNEDCA.

QUESTION 3: What, if any, proposed activities were not completed? Briefly describe those activities, the reasons they were not completed and your plans for carrying them out.

WRA has requested to extend the due date of D63 (Chapter 7, Draft 3) to allow for adequate time to incorporate feedback from the Service related to Chapter 7 content and references. WRA has requested a deadline extension to July 19, 2024. Therefore, WRA anticipates completing this deliverable within the next quarter. The following deliverables for the reporting period were submitted.

- D20, D33, D60, D61, D62

QUESTION 4: What is the calculated percent of work completed?

While some deliverables had deadlines that were extended to later in the quarter (i.e., D61, D62), all of the expected work for the reporting period was completed. Approximately 93% of the overall project to draft the MSHCP Amendment has been completed.

QUESTION 5: Do you foresee any upcoming problems with future project activities? If so, how do you propose to overcome those problems?

No new items that have not been previously discussed are foreseen. WRA will continue to coordinate with the County to update chapters and our approach as information becomes available and feedback is received. The congressional passage of SNEDCA and its timing could have an impact on completion of the draft MSHCP Amendment and Incidental Take Permit application submission. In response to this issue, WRA has prepared an Alternative Strategies Memo (Deliverable 62) to identify potential alternative pathways for public and private Clark Country applicants to obtain ESA take coverage for development and conservation activities. Potential alternatives include mitigation on existing Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs), purchase of BLM disposal lands for mitigation via an in-lieu fee program, reducing coverage to desert tortoise or listed species only, and other strategies, but any alteration will likely result in significant changes to the existing draft MSHCP Amendment. Feedback from the Service on draft chapters to date has also been minor and not substantive for a large-scale MSHCP. WRA will continue to push for feedback from the regional office and other experts to ensure thorough review of the draft prior to submission of the application. This and the timeline for the NEPA process may delay the application submittal timeline, but WRA will maintain close and regular coordination with the County on this issue through progress meetings and/or other meetings as needed.

QUESTION 6: Is there anything else you want to tell the DCP about this project?

WRA remains unable to finalize the Conservation Strategy as it depends on BLM coordination. A draft MSHCP Amendment is completed awaiting incorporation of new species information and Service comments. During this quarter, SNEDCA was introduced in the U.S. Senate, but the likelihood of its passage is unclear. Since its success or failure to pass through Congress will impact the Conservation Strategy, alternative options to have a new ITP in place when the existing one expires are explored in D62 (Alternative Strategies Memo). Another alternative that has been discussed is coordination with BLM on incorporating the Conservation Strategy into the Las Vegas Resource Management Plan (RMP). The BLM is proposing to create a new programmatic EIS for updates to all RMPs in the state of Nevada which could delay the timeline for submission of the MSHCP if coordination with BLM and the RMP is the pathway to approval of mitigation on federal lands. The timeline for the programmatic RMP update is still unclear but we will continue this discussion during the quarterly agency meetings which include BLM.

This quarter, WRA Wildlife and Fisheries Director Rob Schell replaced Patricia Valcarcel as WRA project principal following Patricia's departure from WRA. Patricia continued to support the project as a project-based hire throughout this quarter through the end of June. Patricia has expressed a willingness to provide guidance in a limited capacity moving forward, as she is available.

QUESTION 7: What was produced during the reporting period?

Completed deliverables:

- D20 (Chapter 5, Draft 2)

- D33 (Quarterly Progress Report and Schedule Update)
- D60 (Chapter 2, Draft 3)
- D61 (Chapter 6.4, Draft 3)
- D62 (Alternative Strategies Memo)
- M49 (Monthly Progress Call)
- M50 (Quarterly Agency Coordination Meeting)
- M51 (Monthly Progress Call)
- M52 (Monthly Progress Call)

Please report on the status of each Milestone and Deliverable, indicate whether they are not started, in progress, or completed and provide comments on the status as necessary.

The attached Gantt schedule reflects WRA's current understanding of the Permittee review schedule for draft chapters and anticipated deliverable dates for information required to update and finalize chapters. Based on this information and the schedule for final habitat distribution models to be received in spring of 2025, the Incidental Take Permit application may not be submitted until November or December 2025. This assumes the Service reviews the current draft of Chapter 3 in order to have a final MSHCP upon completion of the second draft of Chapter 3. Any further delays in review time, deliverables which WRA will be required to produce to complete the MSHCP, or conservation strategy route as described above, will most likely result in a delay in the application submittal timeline. The timing for a NEPA consultant to begin preparation of the EIS should also continue to be discussed as this could affect the application submittal date.

The chapter drafts listed in Question 7 have been submitted and accepted and are considered complete. Deliverable D63 (Chapter 7, Draft 3) is in progress; a deadline extension has been submitted and accepted.