

## Directive

Pursuant to the Clark County Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP) and associated Incidental Take Permit TE034927-0 Condition K, the Desert Conservation Program (DCP) is required to acquire riparian lands in desert riparian habitats on the **Virgin River, Muddy River and Meadow Valley Wash** to preserve as habitat for riparian birds covered by the MSHCP.

## Property Acquisition

Acquired properties are managed to protect and enhance habitat quality. Weed abatement and restoration activities are conducted as needed and as funding allows.

The DCP has been approached by willing sellers on the Virgin and Muddy Rivers. To assist with the selection process, the DCP has developed a priority ranking criteria as a tool to determine acquisition priorities.

The total number and location of acres to be acquired within each area is dependent on a variety of factors including:

- willing sellers,
- quality and condition of riparian habitat,
- direction from the Board of County Commissioners,
- resolution of any survey issues,
- funding availability, and
- mitigation needs and requirements.

The DCP is not currently pursuing the purchase of any property located on the Meadow Valley Wash.

# Riparian Property Acquisition Priority Ranking Criteria Tool

## Administrative Criteria

### Ease of Management

- Are lands difficult to access due to legal issues, safety or other reasons?
- Are lands difficult to access due to difficult terrain?
- Are there known land use practices, such as grazing, occurring on adjacent lands that will negatively affect habitat or species?
- Does the property need a fence to keep out cattle?
- Are agreements needed for water with irrigation districts or others?

### Complexity of Land Acquisition Process

- Are there existing structures?
- Is an environmental assessment likely needed due to underground storage tanks or other reasons?
- Will the desired property require further parceling?
- Will an additional private survey need to be conducted?
- Is the property held in limbo due to the cadastral survey?

### Potential for Degradation of Habitat if not Purchased for Conservation

- Is habitat in identified flood scour zone?
- Is the habitat reasonably protected from degradation from existing or potential future land practices?

The calculations of the Administrative Criteria below are shown in Figure 1.

## Environmental Criteria

### Species Evaluation

- Are southwestern willow flycatcher (SWFL) currently present at the site?
- Is there existing SWFL habitat on the site?
- Is there SWFL occurrence data on desired land (occurrence data)?
- Is there habitat or potential habitat on the property?
- Do other covered riparian birds occur at the site? If yes, complete species evaluation for each covered bird species.

### Proximity to Sensitive Lands

- Does the desired property abut or is it adjacent to federal, state or conserved lands?
- Does the desired property abut or is it adjacent to known or potential habitat for SWFL?

### Restoration Potential

- Are plans in place or easily established for leveraging funds and projects to benefit habitat or species?
- Does the desired property boundary border the Virgin or Muddy River?
- Is there standing water at the site?
- Is there access to water at the site via irrigation district or other means?
- Does the desired property support native riparian trees or other native riparian wetland plants?

### Level of Disturbance

- Are noxious weeds (such as tamarisk, tall whitetop) absent that would require treatment?
- Is minimal restoration needed?
- Is the desired property absent of infrastructure (such as roads, chemical tanks, out buildings, septic Tanks, fences) that may require removal?

The calculations of the Environmental Criteria below are shown in Figure 2.

Species data sets were derived from NNHP, BOR, NPS SWFL model, SWCA

## Assumptions

### Administrative Criteria

- Potential for degradation of habitat if not purchased for conservation
  - If land, habitat, species, may become degraded, then the County's acquisitions priority will be higher.

### Ease of Management

- If there is no access to irrigation water, but river runs through property, water could possibly be diverted from river, but an agreement would need to be explored with the appropriate entity.

### Environmental Criteria

- Restoration Potential
  - Standing water clarification, water must be available / sufficient to support riparian habitat year round, and standing water during spring and summer breeding season to support nesting.

## Process

For ease, each willing seller was assigned a number A001 – A020 and evaluated by the environmental and administrative criteria. A number value was assigned in response to each evaluation question based on property characteristics. Values were totaled and then divided by the total number possible for both the Administrative and Environmental Criteria. The top third of the ranking is assigned a Priority 1, the second third, Priority 2 and the remaining third a Priority 3.

Figure 1, Administrative Criteria priority calculations.

Property Number	A001	A002	A003	A004	A005	A006	A007	A008	A009	A010	A011	A012	A013	A014	A015	A016	A017	A018	A019	A020
Administrative Criteria	12	10	11	9	13	8	14	7	15	6	16	5	17	4	18	3	19	2	20	1
Administrative Criteria Grand Total	12	10	11	9	13	8	14	7	15	6	16	5	17	4	18	3	19	2	20	1

### Administrative Criteria Ranking

- 9-12 priority 1
- 5-8 priority 2
- 0-4 priority 3

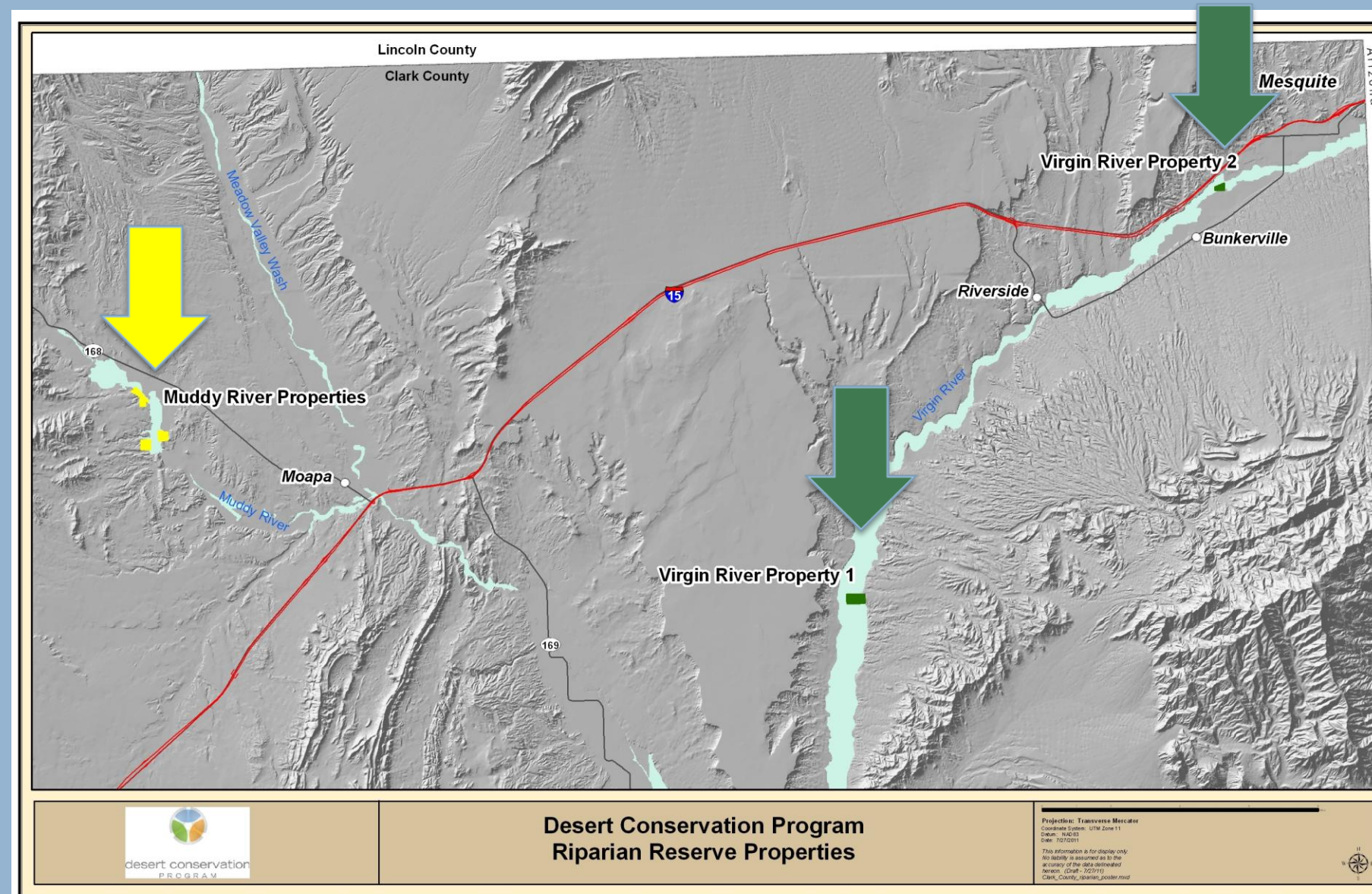
Figure 2, Environmental Criteria priority calculations.

Property Number	A001	A002	A003	A004	A005	A006	A007	A008	A009	A010	A011	A012	A013	A014	A015	A016	A017	A018	A019	A020
Environmental Criteria	17	15	16	14	18	13	19	12	20	11	21	10	22	9	23	8	24	7	25	6
Environmental Criteria Grand Total	17	15	16	14	18	13	19	12	20	11	21	10	22	9	23	8	24	7	25	6

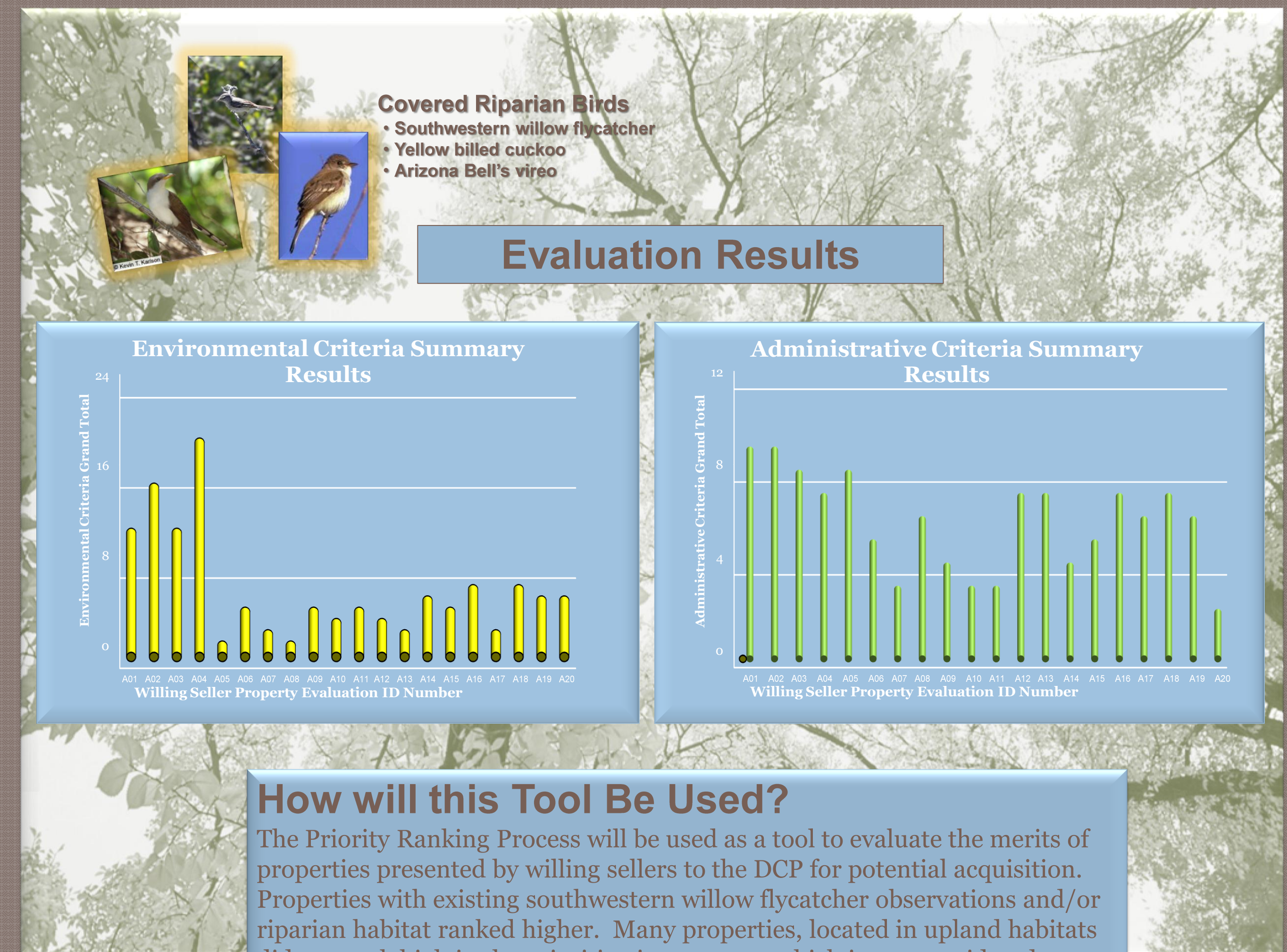
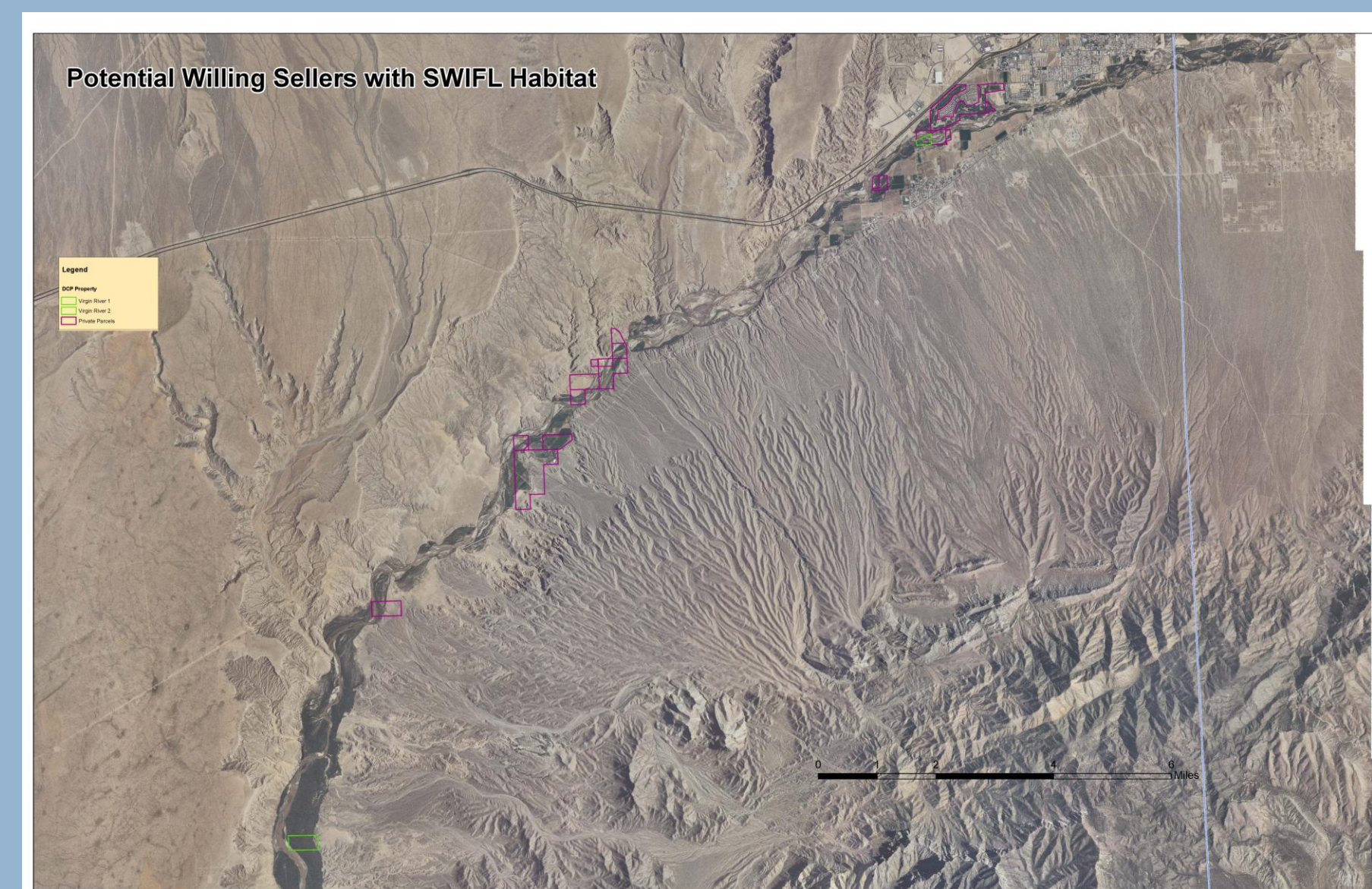
### Environmental Criteria Ranking

- 17-24 priority 1
- 9-16 priority 2
- 0-8 priority 3

## DCP OWNED LAND

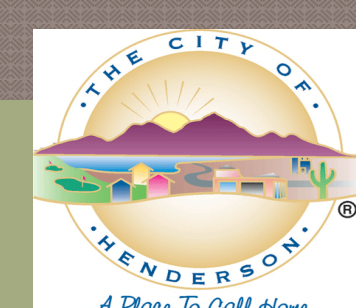


## POTENTIAL WILLING SELLERS



## How will this Tool Be Used?

The Priority Ranking Process will be used as a tool to evaluate the merits of properties presented by willing sellers to the DCP for potential acquisition. Properties with existing southwestern willow flycatcher observations and/or riparian habitat ranked higher. Many properties, located in upland habitats did not rank high in the prioritization process, which is not considered southwestern willow flycatcher habitat.



## For further information

Please contact [dk.amer@ClarkCountyNV.com](mailto:dk.amer@ClarkCountyNV.com) or go to <http://www.clarkcountynv.gov/depts/dcp/Pages/default.aspx>