FINAL REPORT

January 1, 2004 through March 31, 2006
PLMA FUNDS
2003-PIC-256-P-2004-11

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Featured Project:
GPS Roads Project #256

Project Description:
The BLM requires designated route systems in each of their ACECs (areas of critical environmental concern); additionally the CCMSHCP (Clark County Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Program) requires route designation systems and road management strategies in order to satisfy conservation actions identified as necessary for the Section 10 permit. Road management strategies and route designation systems conserve plant and animal species while ensuring access to public land in rural Clark County. Before either of those two objectives can be implemented, an accurate and complete baseline inventory must be established. PIC, BLM, and volunteers from rural organizations work together GPSing routes, campsites, trash, cattle-guards, parking areas, intersections, signs, illegal hill climbs, etc., as well as digitally photographing key points and scenic sites. Over 1,500 volunteer hours have been donated to collect GPS data on over 1,200 miles of roads in the 3 ACECs in northeast Clark County, approximately 1,400 intersections, and 800 other feature points.
PIC worked with the BLM to develop a data dictionary for this project as well as protocols for volunteers to follow while doing fieldwork. PIC and the BLM trained and worked with the volunteers to ensure quality, consistent GIS data collection. PIC reviewed, downloaded, differentially corrected, and forwarded all GIS data to the BLM and to the DCP as well as associated copies of all Daily Field Notes and other relevant documents and files.

Project Status:
As of March 31, 2006, this project is completed. The following numbers reflect what has been accomplished throughout the duration of this project. 121 presentations, reports, updates, and/or displays have been provided to rural organizations, PR events, town board and city council meetings, and miscellaneous workshops and/or conferences. Roads, intersections, camping areas, fire-rings, and other man-made features and disturbances within the 3 ACEC's in northeast Clark County and other adjacent areas are 100% mapped with Trimble Geo3c GIS equipment and all that data has been transmitted to the BLM and to Clark County. Data verification, review, and ground truthing is complete. Roads Working Group meetings have been held to assist the BLM in the public process phase of the project; PIC chaired the Roads WG meetings and assisted the BLM with appropriate duties during the public process phase. 8 cleanups, one each quarter, at Whitney Pockets have been completed.

Partners:

Clark County MSHCP, Clark County, BLM, American Legion Post 75, Moapa Valley Veterans of Foreign Wars, Mesquite Virgin Valley Sunrise Rotary Club, Mesquite ATV Club.

Project Contact:

Elise McAllister, Administrator, Partners In Conservation; Moapa, Nevada.

Funding Awarded:

$297,000.00

Completion Date or Status:

This project is complete.

Products Produced from Project:

GIS data files; Daily Field Notes; Training Packet for Volunteers, Digital Photographs

Volunteers collect GIS data in Gold Butte ACEC.

Road GPSed in Mormon Mesa ACEC.

INTRODUCTION:

Description:

This project addresses the requirement that the BLM develop and implement route designation systems for each of the ACEC's of Clark County. This project also provides the background data needed to develop road management strategies; both the designated route systems and road management strategies are conservation actions deemed necessary to satisfy conditions of the Section 10 permit. Road management strategies and route designation systems conserve plant and animal species while ensuring access to public land in Clark County.

Background:

Before either conservation action can be accomplished, an accurate, systematic, and complete inventory of all routes in the ACEC's must be obtained. Partners In Conservation (PIC) worked with the BLM to develop two proposals which together would accomplish a complete inventory from which the designated route systems would be created. The BLM's proposal #347 addresses the milestones and deliverables the BLM needs to accomplish to achieve a complete inventory system and route designation system for each of the ACEC's in Clark County. Proposal #256, from PIC, identifies the milestones and deliverables PIC must complete to provide support, assistance, data collection, rural involvement, raw GIS data and other related data – all necessary items needed for the BLM to accomplish their tasks.

Need:

Rural involvement and 'buy-in' are essential to the success of both conservation actions, i.e., the designated route system and the road management strategies. PIC is uniquely positioned to facilitate rural involvement; Project #256's main component is active participation of rural residents, frequent, continual, and on-going communication with rural residents about the progress of the data collection process and the route designation system to ensure that the BLM's promise of a transparent process is kept, and a horizontal, subtle educational message of responsible use and stewardship. The utter disdain and angry rejection of the first attempt at designating routes in the ACEC's of northeast Clark County, although 8 years ago, is still painfully alive in the memories of CCMSHCP participants. The need for this proposal is equally obvious—no route designation system or road management strategy will be successful unless rural residents accept and participate in the process.

Conservation Actions:

BLM (207): Implement the following management actions in desert tortoise ACECs,…
BLM (211): Designate 1,107,800 acres as limited to designated roads,…
BLM (212): BLM shall consider with respect to rural roads the following measures,….

GOALS, INDICATORS, AND PERFORMANCE

Goals and Objectives:

The goals and objectives of Project #256 were to collect raw GIS data for a complete, accurate, and thorough inventory of all existing routes and route features in the 3 northeast Clark County ACECs, to supplement raw GIS data with daily field notes and digital photographs, to train rural residents to collect this data, to oversee, administrate, download, transfer, and coordinate all GIS data collection and all rural involvement, to communicate on an ongoing and frequent basis to the rural communities the progress of this project, and to cleanup the Whitney Pockets campground sites quarterly.

Accomplishments:

1. Over 30 rural residents were trained to operate Trimble Geo3c units, were trained to follow outlined procedures of data collection, were trained to systematically inventory routes in selected areas, and were trained to follow a precise process of collecting and recording data. (necessary step to accomplish items below)
2. 1502 volunteer hours, not counting training time, were documented for this project; 1188.8 miles or 1911.96 kilometers were GPSed; 1418 intersection points were collected, GIS points were collected on 788 other manmade features or disturbances, and 20 areas were GPSed in the 3 northeast ACEC's. (Milestones #3, #7, #8, #9, #10, #11, #12; Deliverables #6, #7)
3. 121 presentations about this project, the overall route designation system process, the progress of this project, and the active involvement of rural residents were made. (Milestones #1, #2, #4, #7, #8, #9, #10, #11, #12, #13)
4. Whitney Pockets camping sites were cleaned up 8 times, once each quarter. (Milestone #14; Deliverable #8)
5. All GIS data, all digital photographs, all Daily Field Notes, and all supplemental data, volunteer logs, summaries, and reports were delivered to the Las Vegas BLM Field Office and to Clark County MSHCP or DCP. (Milestone #3; Deliverables #4; #5, #6, #7)
6. All DCP required reports and meetings were completed. (Milestones #5, #6; Deliverables #1, #2, #3)

INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL CHALLENGES

Internal Challenges:

Internally, the biggest challenge was learning how to operate the Trimble Geo3c unit and then teaching the volunteers how to operate the unit. Part of that challenge was also learning the proper procedures necessary to produce accurate, consistent, and dependable raw data. In retrospect, it would have been helpful to have a knowledgeable GIS data collection specialist work directly with PIC for a length of time and to have a trainer/teacher lead the first few training sessions with the volunteers. BLM specialists worked with PIC briefly, but they already had full-time jobs and it was difficult for them to spend much time training us. We muddled through this training/learning process but it was difficult, time-consuming, and frustrating in the beginning.

Also, in hindsight, it is now apparent that an overall lesson on what happens to the GIS data once it is collected would have provided clarity to PIC and the volunteers as to the entire process instead of only knowing the one part of the process that we performed.

External Challenges:

External challenges were two-fold: Weather and the BLM process. Surprisingly, in the desert, there were many rainy or muddy days when data collection sessions had to be rescheduled. Additionally the hot summer prevented much data collection from occurring for almost 4 months each year. Nothing could be done about this; working with volunteers, we did not push them to go out on bad days nor did we encourage travel and use of the dirt roads when they were muddy, preferring to not create ruts and bad road conditions if possible.
The BLM process was definitely a challenge; their internal process of hiring a roads coordinator took considerable time and resulted in a slow start to this project. Replacing the roads coordinator half way through the project also resulted in some slow months. Finally, waiting for a response from SHPO before commencing the public workshop phase was another period wherein not much was done. Working closely with the BLM was necessary for this project to be successful and PIC chalked up the inevitable delays and slowdowns as just part of doing business with the federal land manager; on the plus side, it provided many opportunities for volunteers to practice and allowed time for more volunteers to be trained, thus significantly increasing the number of actual participants.

LESSONS LEARNED

Project Successes:

This project resulted in many success stories; perhaps the biggest success was simply the working relationship of the partners---the BLM, a private non-profit organization, and rural residents---and the trust that developed because of that relationship. For rural volunteers to collect so much GIS data, to have collected the data properly, and for the BLM to 'use' that data – that success story simply wouldn't have happened a decade ago, so the biggest success is that government entities and rural residents can work together, can trust what each is doing, and can produce useable information.
Another lesson learned from this project is that controversial issues or projects can be resolved when all sides actively participate.
Finally, another lesson learned from this project and its unique structure is that average citizens can produce valuable products for government entities; to not engage citizens in projects is missing a real opportunity to develop trust and to find common ground.

Recommendations:

More private/government partnerships should be developed; government entities often only see the clinical descriptions of what they manage and implement. Citizens bring a real-life perspective to issues and projects that scientists, managers, and planners rarely envision. Likewise, citizens rarely understand the well meaning reason why programs are developed; partnerships and working together allow each other to slowly understand the other's point of view.

IMPACT TO DATE

Since the public workshops and actual designation of routes has not occurred yet, the impact is difficult to discern. A shift in attitude, an acceptance of the DCP, the tortoise as

a threatened species, and the BLM are occurring, but no quantifiable statistics are available. Small signs of such can be surmised from certain events like the Bunkerville Elementary School adopting a tortoise, from citizen's acceptance of BLM rangers living in Mesquite and Moapa Valley, in citizen's complaints about others dumping in the desert, in a general intolerance for those who 'tear up the land' and in a general understanding that the incredible growth in southern Nevada has resulted in many more people using the desert and that this growth does need to be 'managed' somehow. However, quantifiable proof of such is not available as of yet.

ADDITIONAL RESEARCH OR EFFORTS

The BLM and PIC have submitted proposals to monitor road conditions, to document illegal tracks, to document and quantify roads that are pushed in, to monitor traffic conditions, and to monitor and repair signage in ACECs. These proposals would provide some information as to whether the route designation systems and road management strategies are having a positive effect on the habitat and would provide some documentation as to whether or not people's behavior has been changed in regard to staying on designated roads and trails and in regard to behavior being changed as to responsible use in the desert. Additionally, perhaps the monitoring proposals may or may not document a decrease in negative user impacts; however, there seems to be a great need for someone to develop a survey to determine if people's attitudes have changed recently and why their attitudes have changed.

LITERATURE CITED

None.