

# INYO/LOS ANGELES STANDING COMMITTEE

*Dedicated to the advancement of mutual cooperation*



## MEMORANDUM

Date: March 24, 2022

To: Inyo/Los Angeles Standing Committee

From: Inyo County and Los Angeles Department of Water and Power staff

Subject: Agenda Item 4: Update on Blackrock Waterfowl Management Area Interim Plan activities

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### **Background**

The Blackrock Waterfowl Management Area (BWMA) is one of the four physical features of the Lower Owens River Project (LORP), implemented by the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP) and managed jointly by LADWP and Inyo County (County) post-implementation. Under the LORP, a primary management objective for the BWMA is to create and maintain diverse natural habitats consistent with the needs of "habitat indicator species."

The LORP was implemented in late 2006 and the acreage flooded in the BWMA was set every year through 2020 by the Standing Committee according to guidance in the 1997 MOU. In Fall 2020, based on the adaptive management recommendation to implement a seasonal flooding regime in the BWMA to further improve habitat for indicator species, LADWP and Inyo County developed a 5-year Interim Management and Monitoring Plan for the BWMA, which proposes a seasonal flooding regime to flood a fixed 500 acres of the BWMA each year from fall to mid-spring with full dry down in the summer months, and to enhance forage for indicator species through moist soil management.

At their May 26, 2021 meeting, the Standing Committee set the BWMA flooded acreage for 2021-2022 in accordance with the Interim Plan, implementing it as adaptive management for a period of 5 years.

### **Update on Interim Plan Activities**

#### **Year 1 Implementation**

The initial dry down of the BWMA waterfowl units began in May 2021. LADWP Operations and Construction crews completed all necessary preparatory work in the East Winterton, Waggoner, and Thibaut Units by August 31, 2021, including disking of cattails and tules, reinforcement of berms, and upgrading flow measuring stations. Flooding of these units commenced September 15, 2021 on schedule with the Interim Plan.

## **Monitoring**

### ***Flooded Acreage***

The Interim Plan sets the target of 500 flooded acres in the fall, winter, and early spring. The Plan states:

*“Wetted acreage measurements will occur on or around November 1 and March 1, with the average of those two measurements being used to determine the flooded acreage number. If the average value is above or below the 500 acre number, releases in subsequent years will be adjusted to more accurately meet the 500 acre target.”*

Fall 2021: LADWP Watershed Resources Staff measured the flooded acreage November 1-3, 2021 in accordance with the Interim Plan. 502 acres were flooded across the Winterton, Waggoner, and Thibaut Waterfowl Units at that time.

Spring 2022: LADWP Watershed Resources Staff measured the flooded acreage February 25-March 2, 2022 in accordance with the Interim Plan. A total of 465 acres were flooded across the Winterton, Waggoner, and Thibaut Waterfowl Units at that time.

Per the guidance in the Interim Plan, the flooded acreage for 2021-2022 (Year 1) was 484 acres. Flows will be adjusted next year to meet the target 500 acres.

Inyo County has also begun remote sensing work to monitor flooding of the units for use as a measurement method in future years. Water delivery was discontinued in early March as described in the Interim Plan and the cells are currently drying down through the spring season.

### ***Avian Surveys***

LADWP and Inyo County have completed 5 of 8 avian surveys at all three waterfowl units in BWMA in Year 1 under the Interim Plan. Three surveys remain in spring 2022 to document avian response during the dry-down period. Preliminary observations indicate that the seasonal flooding regime is successfully attracting target species. Data will be analyzed and summarized in the 2022 LORP Annual Report.

### ***Vegetation Monitoring***

LADWP and Inyo County will conduct vegetation monitoring in the waterfowl units in May 2022. Field work will be coupled with remote sensing to gather information on potential forage production for waterfowl within the units, document cattail and tule encroachment, and identify areas that could further benefit from moist soil management.

### **Next Steps**

LADWP and Inyo County are currently developing the LORP Work Plan and Budget for the fiscal year 2022-2023. Maintenance to waterfowl units will be conducted in summer 2022 prior to rewetting in September 2022.

# BLACKROCK WATERFOWL MANAGEMENT AREA



**Interim Management and  
Monitoring Plan Update**



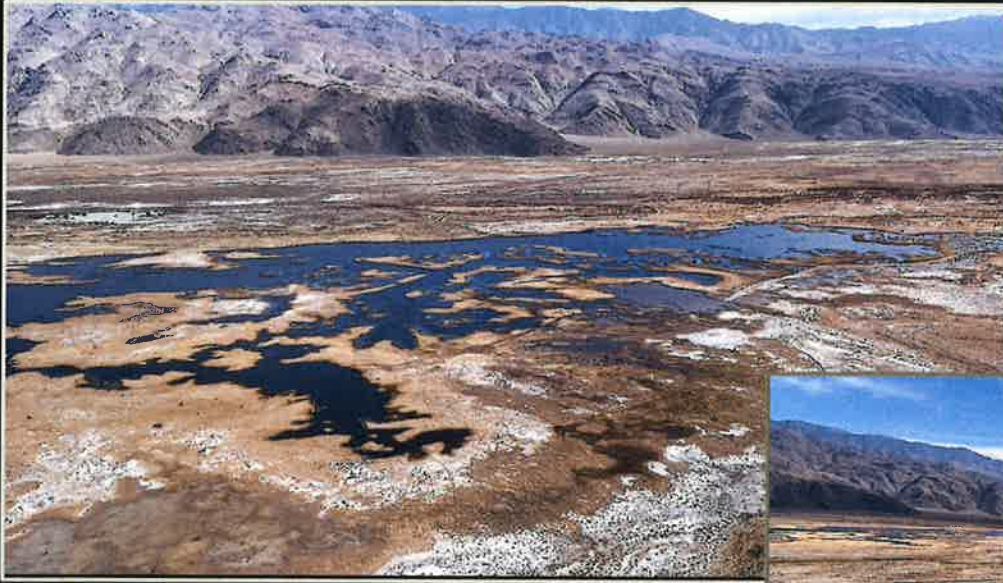
March 2022

Photo credit- Chris Corsemeire, LADWP



Photo credit: John Hays, LADWP

# YEAR 1 IMPLEMENTATION



Waggoner Unit

East Winterton/Waggoner Units



Thibaut Unit

484 acres in  
Year 1

# AVIAN SURVEYS ARE ONGOING



Green-winged teal, ebird



Gadwall, ebird

5 of 8 avian surveys are complete

Since implementation, we have observed:

- a total of 88 species
- over 9,000 individuals of 31 Habitat Indicator Species
- Over 19,000 birds, approximately half of which are waterbirds



## NEXT STEPS

- *Vegetation monitoring of waterfowl units - May 2022*
- *Development of 2022-2023 LORP Work Plan and Budget is underway*
- *2022-2023 BWMA flooded acreage to be set at May 2022 Standing Committee*
- *Necessary maintenance of waterfowl units to occur before rewetting in September 2022*

Photo credit: John Hays, LADWP