SALTCEDAR CONTROL PROGRAM

The goal of Saltcedar Control Program is to eliminate existing saltcedar stands, to prevent the spread of saltcedar throughout the Lower Owens River and associated wetland environments, and to sustain the ecological restoration that is now occurring in the LORP.

PROGRAM BACKGROUND

Saltcedar (*Tamarix ramosissima*) is an invasive non-native shrub or tree that can grow to 25 feet and live up to 100 years. Given favorable conditions, a tree can grow 10 to 12 feet in one season. Saltcedar can compete with native vegetation and degrade wildlife habitat. Its presence in the southern Owens Valley has the potential to interfere with the LORP goals of establishing a healthy, functioning Lower Owens River riverine-riparian ecosystem.

References to the importance of managing saltcedar can be found in documents that guide the saltcedar program and govern the LORP:

- The LORP Monitoring, Adaptive Management, and Reporting Plan (MAMP), notes that saltcedar may increase in some areas of the river because of seed distribution with stream flows. The MAMP states that the potential risk of infecting new areas with saltcedar is considered a significant threat in all management areas

- The 1997 Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), between Inyo County, City of Los Angeles, Sierra Club, Owens Valley Committee, CA Dept. of Fish and Game and California State Lands Commission, expresses that saltcedar reinfestation in the LORP area would compromise the goal of controlling deleterious species whose "presence within the Planning Area interferes with the achievement of the goals of the LORP" (1997 MOU B. 4)

- Parties to the Long-Term Water Agreement (LTWA) recognized that even with annual control efforts saltcedar might never be fully eradicated, but that ongoing and aggressive efforts to remove saltcedar will be required. (Sec. XIV. A).

PROJECT MANAGEMENT AND STAFF

The Salt Cedar Control Program is administered by the Inyo County Water Department, and managed by a Saltcedar Project Manager. Work crews are hired seasonally and consist of seven employees and one shared county employee. In addition, the California Department of Forestry (CDF) can provide work crews to assist in efforts to treat slash. In 2011-2012, the field season began in October and concluded in mid-April.

METHODS

Plants are treated using the two-step, cut-stump method, where the tree and associated root sprouts are cut with a chainsaw or clippers as close to the ground as possible and the stump and

plant perimeter sprayed promptly with Garlon 4 Ultra (triclopyr). Triclopyr is a systemic herbicide with a soil half-life ranging from 1 to 90 days. It has a low toxicity to animals.

WORK ACCOMPLISHED

In 2011-2012, crews cut and treated saltcedar in four areas: at the Homestead and North of Mazourka mitigation sites; in water-spreading basins on the west side of the River (these basins are a concern because they harbor mature saltcedar thickets that function as reservoirs of seed); and in the LORP river-riparian area and along the river, where crews cleared saltcedar by pulling seedlings and treating plants that had resprouted after being cut and treated in previous years (triclopyr is not 100 percent effective, and plants found in water cannot be sprayed). Surveying the river to locate and remove saltcedar is an annual and ongoing activity.

Crews started early in the 2011-2012 season clearing tamarisk from two new mitigation sites; the new Homestead Project, and the North of Mazourka project, both located near Mazourka Canyon and the Owens River. These sites required clearing before mitigation water could be released. Cutting here was completed in late December.

Crews then moved on to the spreading basins where they cleared approximately 50 acres. The area worked was north of two culverts.

Later in the season, crews walked the edge of the Lower Owens River to locate and treat plants that had resprouted from previous treatments, and to clear seedlings. Crews were guided to these sites by maps and GPS information developed during the 2011 LORP Rapid Assessment Survey.

SLASH

In addition to cutting, Inyo County Saltcedar crews, and California Department of Corrections crews successfully burned slash in the month of April. The burning program will be continued in the late fall and early winter months after precipitation occurs and burning conditions are favorable. LADWP and California Department of Correction (CDC) crews burned saltcedar slash associated with the new mitigation projects from January 2012 through March 2012.

FUNDING

The County's three-year Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB) Saltcedar Eradication Grant expired in April 2011. The County made a new grant submission, and was awarded a new three-year Wildlife Conservation Grant (WCB) in December 2011, which was partially matched by LADWP under terms described in the LORP Post Implementation Agreement. Thw WCB's generous funding will enable a level of effort that would not have been possible with just Inyo County and LADWP contributions alone.

An ongoing responsibility of the Saltcedar Program is to secure grant funding to maintain a strong program. LADWP has assisted the County in its efforts to renew the WCB grant. Additional outside funding will be sought to continue an aggressive saltcedar eradication program in the LORP area.

PLANNING

In 2011, a saltcedar work plan was developed to more precisely describe the work to be conducted in 2011-2012. Plans include:

- Ongoing efforts to clear the Lower Owens River corridor of saltcedar plants to prevent the aggressive spread of new saltcedar.
- Reducing the amount of slash (saltcedar cuttings) that has accumulated after years of cutting through burning and other means.
- Protecting birds during nesting season.
- Coordinating with LADWP to help the saltcedar program and assist range management efforts.