

**LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION FUND Project Data Sheet**

**Agency:** Bureau of Land Management

**Fiscal Year:** 2024

**Project/ Unit:** Blackfoot River Watershed

**Priority:** 1

**State(s):** MT

**Congressional District(s):** MT-1

**Location:** The proposed acquisition is located approximately 30 miles east of Missoula, Montana, in Missoula County.

**Project Estimates**

Land/Cost	Acres	\$
<b>Estimate for FY 2024</b>	<b>2,200</b>	<b>\$2,200,000</b>
Acquired to Date	36,636	\$48,000,000
Remaining to be Acquired	18,250	\$ 18,250,000

**Project Description:**

This proposed acquisition is a continuation of the Blackfoot River Watershed Project which started in 1992. The project has acquired lands by direct LWCF purchase (36,636 ac.), land exchange (10,733 ac.) and donation (197 ac.). BLM is actively working multiple acquisitions in the area using prior year funds. Recreation use is increasing in this area due to proximity to Missoula, Montana. In 2000, the Blackfoot Challenge, a local watershed collaborative including The Nature Conservancy (TNC), began having discussions concerning the future ownership and management of industrial forestland in the area. The real estate market has dramatically changed in recent years and now land often commands its highest value when subdivided into smaller parcels and sold for residential or recreational development. BLM has participated in TNC’s community-driven process, together with the U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks, Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, local county governments and local private landowners, in developing a long-term plan for the disposition and management of the lands.

**Purpose/Need:**

The proposed acquisition of 2,200 acres, adjacent to existing public lands managed by the BLM, maintains access to public lands for recreational opportunities, including but not limited to snowmobile use, cross country skiing, hiking, biking, horseback riding, and fishing. Under past and present landowner

“open lands” policies, recreationists have come to view the former industrial timberlands as if they are publicly owned. The proposed acquisition maintains access for public use and enjoyment as well as protecting critically important resources. The proposed acquisition would ensure active management for multiple benefits including climate change mitigation, restoring habitat for threatened and endangered species (Canada Lynx and grizzly bear), and ensuring proper watershed function for aquatic species. It would also provide working lands with active forestry and fuels programs; continued grazing; and provide greater access to sacred areas, plant gathering areas, and other important areas for tribal groups.

**Cooperator(s):** U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks, Montana Department of Natural Resources, Blackfoot Challenge, The Nature Conservancy, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation.

**Operations & Maintenance**

Savings/Cost	Start-up	Annual
Estimated O&M Savings:	\$ 0	\$ 0
Estimated O&M Costs:	\$ 6,000	\$ 12,000

**O&M Description:**

Maintain facilities (signs, roads, trails, boat ramps and/or buildings, etc.); maintain, monitor, or restore resources; treat noxious and/or invasive plants.

**LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION FUND Project Data Sheet**

**Agency:** Bureau of Land Management

**Fiscal Year:** 2024

**Project/ Unit:** California Coastal National Monument

**Priority:** 2

**State(s):** CA

**Congressional District(s):** CA-2

**Location:** The California Coastal National Monument is located along the entire 1,100 miles of coastline of the U.S. State of California. The portion of the monument adjacent to this acquisition nomination is in Mendocino County, approximately 150 miles north of San Francisco and 25 miles north of Fort Bragg.

**Project Estimates**

Land/Cost	Acres	\$
<b>Estimate for FY 2024</b>	<b>1,150</b>	<b>\$ 10,500,000</b>
Acquired to Date	10,014	\$25,800,000
Remaining to be Acquired	100,000	\$ 1,000,000,000

**Project Description:**

On January 11, 2000, the California Coastal National Monument (CCNM) was established to protect the unique coastal habitat for marine-dependent wildlife and vegetation on 7,924 acres in six mainland units (Trinidad Head, Waluplh-Lighthouse Ranch, Lost Coast Headlands, Point Arena-Stornetta, Cotoni-Coast Dairies, and Piedras Blancas) and more than 20,000 rocks, islands, exposed reefs, and pinnacles along the 1,100 miles of California coastline. Although millions of people view the monument from beaches, bluffs, and watercraft, a closer look reveals untrammeled nesting habitat for an estimated 200,000 breeding seabirds and thousands of loafing and breeding marine mammals, including harbor seals and California and Steller’s sea lions. The California Coast is a way of life for millions of Californians and a destination for visitors from around the world. Many people travel to the coast for health, play, work, discovery, and enjoyment. The scenic beauty and important wildlife habitat within the monument are protected by the Bureau of Land Management as National Conservation Lands. Along its length, this spectacular interplay of land and sea is an experience that creates lasting connections between people and nature. In cooperation with the California Coastal Conservancy and the Wildlife Conservation Board, BLM has preserved several miles of California coastline through acquisition and donation. Those acquisitions, in addition to the proposed project, are designed to retain the dramatic coastal vistas and important gateways for interpreting the CCNM.

**Purpose/Need:**

The proposed acquisition of 1,150 acres is one of three contiguous tracts totaling 4,466 acres. The tracts secure a key section of a connected landscape along a 45-mile stretch of the Lost Coast and permanently protect threatened California redwood and other forests for wildlife, water, and climate resilience benefits. The Lost Coast Redwoods property is a place where the traditional territories of the Sinkyone, Cahto, and Coast Yuki peoples converge and may have important cultural sites. The requested tract has 12 miles of Class I, II, and III streams wholly located on the tract, which support habitat for threatened and endangered (T&E) species such as Northern spotted owl (seven NSO activity centers are on or within 0.7 miles of the project), marbled murrelet, coho salmon, and steelhead trout. Roosevelt elk, black-tailed deer, and mountain lions roam all three tracts. The requested tract includes a portion of Hwy 1 and other roads, enhancing public access to a rare coastal redwood landscape. The location of the project in proximity to other protected lands complements ongoing work of diverse entities to own and manage significant resource lands for conservation and recreation. Several tracts include recently completed firebreaks totaling 4.5 miles. Immediately adjacent to the acquisition are Sinkyone Wilderness State Park and Usal Redwood Forest (55,000 acres conserved), while 10 miles north and east are the Intertribal Sinkyone Wilderness and the BLM’s King Range NCA. The acquisition is also just 5 miles west of three other BLM wilderness areas. The proposed acquisitions include nearly 200 acres of redwood forest including unique old “candelabra” trees and access to the Peter Douglas Trail now used by over 4,000 hikers a year. The landowner recently completed a three-mile fire break on the tract. Partner contributions will defray the acquisition cost to BLM by over 50 percent.

<https://youtu.be/uY0PFREVs3U>

**Cooperator(s):** California Department of Fish and Wildlife; California State Parks; California State Parks–North Coast Redwoods; California Coastal Conservancy; Mendocino County Resource Conservation District; Fort Bragg City Council; Mendocino Land Trust; Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership; American Forests; California Audubon; Mendocino Coast Audubon, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation; Conservation Lands Foundation; Humboldt Redwoods Interpretive Association, Mendocino County Blacktail Association; Trout Unlimited – Redwood Empire; The Conservation Fund; California Deer Association; California Trout, Point Cabrillo Lighthouse Stewards; Westport Hotel; Usal Redwood Forest Company.

**Operations & Maintenance**

Savings/Cost	Start-up	Annual
Estimated O&M Savings:	\$ 0	\$ 0
Estimated O&M Costs:	\$ 1,035,000	\$ 75,000

**O&M Description:**

Start-up costs are to inventory interagency planning, roads, invasive species, cultural resources; construct trails, host site facilities; and restore roads, streams, wildlife habitat. Annual expenses will be to maintain and replace equipment; maintain facilities; maintain, monitor, or restore resources; and forest health treatment. Annual costs are offset by anticipated annual contributions from Save the Redwoods League, Trout Unlimited, other NGO support, and annual fee collection.

**LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION FUND Project Data Sheet**

**Agency:** Bureau of Land Management

**Fiscal Year:** 2024

**Project/ Unit:** Henrys Lake ACEC and Island Park

**Priority:** 3

**State(s):** ID

**Congressional District(s):** ID-2

**Location:** Southeast Idaho, 14 miles west of Yellowstone National Park on the shoreline of Henrys Lake and along the shoreline of Island Park Reservoir.

**Project Estimates**

Land/Cost	Acres	\$
<b>Estimate for FY 2024</b>	<b>4,020</b>	<b>\$7,450,000</b>
Acquired to Date	2,641	\$3,427,000
Remaining to be Acquired	5,126	\$ 12,300,000

**Project Description:**

On the western doorstep of Yellowstone National Park and surrounded by the Continental Divide, the 35,875-acre Henrys Lake Area of Critical Environmental Concern’s (ACEC) exceptional aesthetic and wildlife values have been an attraction to generations of Americans who have fished, hiked, hunted, skied, and snowmobiled here. The area offers high-quality open space, rangeland, streams, wetlands, and wildlife and fish resources to the 4 million annual visitors who pass through the project area. This area lies within a hub of seasonal wildlife movement activity. Large carnivores such as grizzly bears and wolverines, antelope, elk, moose, and mule deer use the region for summer/winter range and as a migratory corridor connecting summer range in Yellowstone National Park with winter range in Idaho and Montana. Other conservation priority species that use this area include Yellowstone cutthroat trout and a variety of BLM Sensitive species and Idaho-designated Species of Greatest Conservation Need. The vast wet meadows support large concentrations of long-billed curlews and sandhill cranes. The world-renowned fishery is the last stronghold in the Henrys Fork basin for the Yellowstone cutthroat trout. White spruce and aspen forested wetlands on the east and north shores of the lake are globally rare and found nowhere else in the continental United States. Chief Joseph led his Nez Perce Tribe through the basin on their flight to Canada, now evidenced by the Nez Perce National Historic Trail. The Continental Divide National Scenic Trail rings the project area to the west and north. The Shotgun Valley and Island Park Reservoir area lies near the junction of three ecological sections (defined by underlying geology):

the Snake River Basalts, Beaverhead Mountains, and Yellowstone Highlands (Cleland et al. 2007). The unique ecological sections create a diverse intersection of habitats and seasonal wildlife use within the Idaho portion of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem. The northern and western shores of Island Park Reservoir and adjacent Shotgun Valley support seasonal mudflats, aquatic bed vegetation, marsh, and meadow wetlands; sagebrush steppe; mixed conifer forest; riparian/wet meadow complexes along the creeks and rivers; aquatic stream habitats; and human-made lacustrine habitat. A thriving demand for rural-residential development represents a significant threat to the integrity of wildlife habitats and broader ecological functions.

**Purpose/Need:**

The acquisition of three conservation easements on 4,020 acres are examples of continuous opportunities in the project area. These and other acquisitions will support the Administration’s priorities and key principles for guiding conservation efforts; specifically, by conserving lands and waters to protect biodiversity and help address natural climate solutions (e.g., help limit residential subdivision of lands). All three sample properties will remain working ranches, preserving the cultural and historic character of the area. Maintaining open spaces and working with the landowner to limit wildfire risk in the landscape will strengthen resilience to climate change. This project would add significant value to landscape-level habitat protection by preventing development along critical migration routes, summer range for ungulates, and other seasonal wildlife movement in the area. The sample acquisitions provide crucial transitional and summer range for pronghorn antelope, elk, moose, and mule deer (hereafter, ungulates). Protection of these lands supports maintenance of interstate ungulate migrations across Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming, including Yellowstone National Park.

Diamond D—A conservation easement will be placed on the ranch to restrict development in perpetuity. Precluding subdivision development will significantly contribute to maintaining the outstanding scenic value of the Henrys Lake ACEC. Diamond D lies along the historic stagecoach/freight wagon route between Henrys Lake and the Montana mining towns of Virginia City and Alder Gulch. The owners of Diamond D established the first commercial state coach access to Yellowstone National Park as well, taking early tourists from the railroad siding at Monida, Montana, on a 70-mile trip to the park.

H Bar L Ranch—The property encompasses about 1.5 miles of Howard Creek and a little less than .5 mile of Targhee Creek. Both creeks are important Yellowstone cutthroat trout spawning streams. The property contains primarily sagebrush steppe habitat and a smaller amount of riparian and wetland habitat along Howard Creek and Targhee Creek.

Flying W Bar Ranch—This 465-acre historic family ranch is in Fremont County at the Island Park Reservoir. The ranch borders the reservoir to the south and BLM land to the northwest. In addition to having lake and waterfront habitat, the property contains a wide range of other habitats, including willow riparian and emergent wetlands; vast sagebrush uplands; and Douglas fir and aspen forest.

**Cooperator(s):** Henry’s Fork Foundation; Idaho Department of Fish and Game; Henrys Fork Wildlife Alliance; Idaho Backcountry Hunters and Anglers; Mule Deer Foundation; Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks; Idaho Chapter of Safari Club International; The Nature Conservancy; Teton Regional Land Trust; Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership

**Operations & Maintenance**

Savings/Cost	Start-up	Annual
Estimated O&M Savings:	\$0	\$0
Estimated O&M Costs:	\$0	\$ 5,000

**O&M Description:**

Conservation easement stewardship; monitor for compliance, trespass, overuse, hazards, etc. Print/update maps and brochures.

**LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION FUND Project Data Sheet**

**Agency:** Bureau of Land Management

**Fiscal Year:** 2024

**Project/ Unit:** California Wilderness

**Priority:** 4

**State(s):** CA

**Congressional District(s):** CA-2

**Location:** This acquisition is adjacent to the Yuki Wilderness Area, in Lake and Mendocino Counties in Northern California, approximately 150 miles north of Sacramento.

**Project Estimates**

Land/Cost	Acres	\$
<b>Estimate for FY 2024</b>	<b>3,383</b>	<b>\$ 4,000,000</b>
Acquired to Date	400,200	\$57,000,000
Remaining to be Acquired	200,000	\$150,000,000

**Project Description:**

California is home to more wilderness areas than any other State in the Nation. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) alone has 92 designated wilderness areas, encompassing more than 3.9 million acres of public land in California, including the Yuki Wilderness, which is adjacent to the subject property. Those wilderness areas stretch from the north coast of California to the peaks of the Sierra Nevada to lands along the Mexican border. More than 37 million people live in California, and the wilderness areas offer places of solitude, where people can experience freedom from our fast-paced, industrialized society. Wilderness areas provide an amazing recreational experience and are important habitat for a wide variety of animal and plant species—many threatened or endangered and some federally listed species. The region hosts seven species of oaks and many rare plants, and its Sargent cypress grove is the largest known cypress grove in the world. The project area shares a boundary with the Mendocino National Forest, and the Forest Service has also used funding to improve access and acquire lands within the Yuki and Sanhedrin Wilderness.

**Purpose / Need:**

The acquisition consists of two tracts with a combined 3,384 acres of lands that would connect and consolidate CA wilderness areas, providing newly accessible lands and 14 miles of creeks and would improve access to 30,000 acres of public lands. The two tracts are the 2,264-acre Elk Creek East, adjacent to the CA wilderness areas, and the 1,120-acre Elk Creek West, surrounded by the Eden Valley



Wilderness Study Area (WSA), which is currently difficult to access because it is surrounded by private lands on most sides. The acquisition includes numerous points of interest for hunting, rafting, camping, and hiking and provides a connection for recreation enthusiasts between the wilderness and the Eden Valley WSA. This project expands hunting and fishing opportunities for trout, black-tailed deer, Tule elk, turkey, black bear, and upland and migratory birds. Acquisition of the property would increase and diversify public access for outdoor recreationists and local underserved communities. The lands along the creek also offer opportunities for horseback riding, backpacking, swimming, and a multitude of other experiences. This property is part of the ancestral territory for the Yuki People, who maintain a strong connection to this land, which contains high densities of cultural and sacred resources. The property supports both terrestrial and aquatic habitats. The Eel River supports close to one-half of California’s entire remaining summer-run steelhead trout population. The project will extend a network of adjoining protected, undeveloped lands upon which numerous species of concern rely, including the federally listed California coastal Chinook salmon, Northern California steelhead, northern spotted owl, 65 other special status species. This tract’s water and habitat attract game species and are heavily sought after by hunters and photographers. Numerous creeks that traverse the property feed the Eel River, and the springs that feed Elk Creek are a recreation destination for many user groups. The springs and streams support more than 700 acres of intact oak woodland habitat that serves as biodiversity hotspots for native understory grasses and forbs. In addition, Bennett Valley, a 70-acre meadow that was the property’s original homestead site, is part of the parcel. This valley offers lush ground with flat topography, which is perfect for camping. surrounded by public lands (Eden Valley WSA). The numerous springs and streams support over 700 acres of intact oak woodland habitat.

**Cooperator(s):** Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, California Deer Association, Mendocino County Blacktail Association, Backcountry Hunters and Anglers, USDA—Mendocino National Forest, NOAA—National Marine Fisheries Service, Friends of the Eel River, Douglas Wheeler—Former Secretary California Natural Resources Agency, Peregrine Audubon Society, Salmonid Restoration Federation, Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership.

**Operations & Maintenance**

Savings/Cost	Start-up	Annual
Estimated O&M Savings:	\$ 0	\$ 0
Estimated O&M Costs:	\$ 465,000	\$ 20,500

**Describe O&M:**

Start-up costs are to inventory roads, invasive species, cultural resources, restoration/seeding, and treat invasive species. Annual expenses are to maintain, monitor, or restore resources, monitor for compliance, trespass, overuse, hazards, and treat invasive species. Annual costs are offset by anticipated annual contributions from Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, California Deer Association, and Blacktail Deer Association.

**LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION FUND Project Data Sheet**

**Agency:** Bureau of Land Management

**Fiscal Year:** 2024

**Project/ Unit:** South San Juan Project Area

**Priority:** 5

**State(s):** CO

**Congressional District(s):** CO-3

**Location:** The project area is in south-central Colorado in the majestic San Luis Valley in Conejos County, about 20 miles west of La Jara, Colorado.

**Project Estimates**

Land/Cost	Acres	\$
<b>Estimate for FY 2024</b>	<b>3,750</b>	<b>\$ 4,500,000</b>
Acquired to Date	0	\$ 0
Remaining to be Acquired	22,575	\$ 27,100,000

**Project Description:**

From soaring 14,000-ft. peaks to spectacular river gorges, the San Luis Valley (SLV) captivates, with sweeping, unspoiled vistas and Hispanic and Native American heritage. This area is rich in biodiversity due to its remoteness, ruggedness, and connectivity to other protected lands. It provides crucial wildlife corridors connecting habitats for elk, mule deer, pronghorn antelope, black bear, mountain lion, turkeys, and bighorn sheep. Large aquatic habitats lie within the project area, including 135 miles of perennial streams and two reservoirs, providing key habitats for the native Rio Grande cutthroat trout, Rio Grande chub, and Rio Grande sucker and important recreational fisheries for brook, brown, rainbow, and tiger trout. La Jara Creek provides occupied habitat for the federally endangered Southwestern Willow Flycatcher. The South San Juan Project Area is at the Colorado/New Mexico border and extends to the Conejos/Rio Grande County line in the southwest portion of the SLV. The project area encompasses multiple Areas of Critical Concern and State Wildlife Areas and borders Rio Grande National Forest (RGNF) lands. Its unique topography, geography, and cultural landscape provide an ideal opportunity to address the critical needs of adjacent underserved communities by developing recreational resources; providing livestock grazing resources; restoring riparian and upland wildlife habitat; providing vitally important traditional uses, including hunting and fishing, firewood collection, and piñon nut gathering; and preserving significant cultural sites across a cultural landscape near sacred sites and the Old Spanish Trail and the Sangre de Cristo Natural Heritage Area. La Jara Reservoir Archaeological District (listed on the National Register of Historic Places) is also within the project boundary.

The SLV is sacred and ancestral lands to 25 Native Tribes and Pueblos, who use the area frequently. Widespread, unique cultural sites exist within the project area, indicating more than 8,000 years of Native American occupation, including La Botica, or “the pharmacy,” a unique, ecologically distinct microhabitat sacred to many Tribes and a culturally significant location for Hispanic Americans to collect medicinal and ceremonial plants. Public lands, or “Nuestras Tierras Publicas,” are a key part of the Latino heritage in southern Colorado. The diverse neighboring communities of La Jara, Antonito, and Capulin (Conejos County) have complex histories that intermingle with public lands.

**Purpose/Need:**

The proposed acquisition is 3,750 acres with the larger La Jara Creek Parcel Acquisition, a collaborative multiagency acquisition consisting of 45,650 acres from a willing landowner. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) would acquire 22,575 acres bordered or surrounded by BLM-managed land, Forest Service would acquire 21,245 acres bordered by the RGNF, and CPW would acquire 1,833 acres in the La Jara Reservoir SWA, which they manage under a lease. The proposed acquisition supports the Biden Administration’s 30x30 and Justice40 initiatives to invest Federal resources in disadvantaged areas and goals for connecting with communities and conserving landscapes for wildlife migration corridors and movement (reducing fragmentation). It also supports environmental justice communities in the region, allowing for access and traditional uses, and reduces future impacts from climate change. The proposed acquisition will also help to reduce or eliminate adverse environmental, biological, and cultural impacts to the landscape if it were to be sold to a private entity. The enhanced public access resulting from this acquisition would increase different types of outdoor activities and experiences for visitors in a resource-rich area. The wildlife migration corridors and habitat connectivity, rich cultural resources, recreation opportunities, and regional and local traditional uses will remain intact and be enhanced through public lands management and cooperation among agencies.

**Cooperator(s):** Western Rivers Conservancy, Rio Grande National Forest, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, Colorado State Land Board, Trout Unlimited

**Operations and Maintenance**

Savings/Cost	Start-up	Annual
Estimated O&M Savings:	\$ 7,000	\$ 2,000
Estimated O&M Costs:	\$ 12,000	\$ 2,000

**O&M Description:** Savings are from management efficiencies associated with the expense and management of isolated lands. Startup and annual expenses would: maintain facilities (signs, roads, trails, boat ramps, buildings, etc.); monitor for compliance, trespass, hazards, etc.; update/print maps and brochures; treat noxious and invasive plants. Annual expenses are subsidized through partnerships and include challenge cost share, grants, donations, stewardship/monitoring, and volunteer services from grazing permittees, San Luis Valley Great Outdoors (Partner), and the Southwest Conservation Corps.

**LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION FUND Project Data Sheet**

**Agency:** Bureau of Land Management

**Fiscal Year:** 2024

**Project/Unit:** Lower Gila Terraces and Historic Trails ACEC

**Priority:** 6

**State(s):** AZ

**Congressional District(s):** AZ-7, AZ-9

**Location:** The property is within the BLM Lower Sonoran Field Office area along the Lower Gila River in western Maricopa County, southwest of the City of Buckeye and north of the Town of Gila Bend and is readily accessible from Enterprise Road.

**Project Estimates**

Land/Cost	Acres	\$
<b>Estimate for FY 2024</b>	<b>590</b>	<b>\$ 2,500,000</b>
Acquired to Date	0	\$ 0
Remaining to be Acquired	590	\$ 2,500,000

**Project Description:**

The proposed acquisition is within the Lower Gila Terraces and Historic Trails Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) and the subject parcels are identified for acquisition in the Lower Sonoran Resource Management Plan (RMP) (2012). The basaltic escarpment is an extensive area of petroglyphs. Some 2,000 petroglyph elements are estimated to be present in a three-quarter-mile stretch within the project area. The oldest petroglyphs likely are at least 2,000 years old, with most glyphs created after about 500 CE. The southern portion of the project area is dominated by four Hohokam ballcourt villages. Ballcourts were constructed and used for ritual gatherings of communities for feasts, trade of crafts and other goods, and performance of rituals. At least one village was active during the 1200s and small campsites or seasonal use of the area is evidenced by scatters of pottery shards and hearth areas that indicate use of this area well into the historic era. In addition, portions of the proposed acquisition are within or include Category II Sonoran desert tortoise habitat (110 acres), a Lower Sonoran RMP-designated wildlife movement corridor that crosses the Gila River (185 acres), and an RMP-designated wildlife habitat area (234 acres) especially important for desert tortoise and big game. The project area is also within the proposed Great Bend of the Gila National Conservation Area (NCA), with associated wilderness expansion areas.

**Purpose/Need**

This proposed acquisition conforms with the Lower Sonoran Resource Management Plan and would provide an opportunity to protect important archaeological sites and a culturally significant landscape of state- and regionwide importance which lie in the path of future development. The 590-acre parcel contains extensive prehistoric Indian petroglyphs, village sites, ball courts, canals, and other artifacts and cultural resources. This area is also an access point to the Woolsey Peak Wilderness and the Gila Bend Mountains Extensive Recreation Management Area. These areas are noted for their wilderness characteristics and opportunities for primitive recreation. The northern two miles of the project area are dominated by a volcanic landscape that transitions abruptly to low terraces that parallel the Gila River floodplain. The acquisition will also maintain recreational access to existing BLM public lands and protect important habitat for a variety of species, including the Sonoran desert tortoise. The area’s cultural resources and value as wildlife habitat and for recreation are threatened by near-term residential development. Acquisition would allow for preservation of these areas in the sensitive Gila River corridor. BLM’s partner in this acquisition, the Trust for Public Lands, would add value by paying for due diligence costs.

**Cooperator(s):** Trust for Public Lands, Archaeology Southwest, Arizona Game and Fish, Arizona Site Stewards, Arizona Sportsmen for Wildlife Conservation (includes 27 member groups), Arizona State University, Audubon Southwest, Gila River Indian Community, Lower Gila River Collaborative (includes eight constituent municipalities, agencies, and stakeholders), Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community, Tohono O’odham Nation

**Operations & Maintenance**

Savings/Cost	Start-up	Annual
Estimated O&M Savings:	\$ 0	\$ 0
Estimated O&M Costs:	\$ 200,000	\$ 15,000

**O&M Description:**

Start-up costs are associated with performing a cultural inventory of the sites and to construct new parking areas and trails within the site. Annual costs are to maintain facilities (signs, roads, trails, boat ramps, buildings, etc.), monitor, or restore resources; monitor for compliance, trespass, overuse, hazards, etc.

**LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION FUND Project Data Sheet**

**Agency:** Bureau of Land Management

**Fiscal Year:** 2024

**Project/Unit:** Sands Desert Habitat Management Area

**Priority:** 7

**State(s):** ID

**Congressional District(s):** ID-2

**Location:** Project area is in southeast Idaho. Parcel 1 is approximately 40 miles north of Idaho Falls in Fremont County, and parcel 2 is about 65 miles north of Idaho Falls in Clark County.

**Project Estimates**

Land/Cost	Acres	\$
<b>Estimate for FY 2024</b>	<b>3,352</b>	<b>\$ 2,600,000</b>
Acquired to Date	945	\$ 4,701,000
Remaining to be Acquired	11,788	\$ 16,217,000

**Project Description:**

The Sands Desert Habitat Management Area (HMA), also referred to as Sand Creek Desert, encompasses some of the best remaining sagebrush steppe habitat in the State of Idaho. This high-quality habitat supports healthy populations for two species of national importance: the greater sage-grouse and the Columbian sharp-tailed grouse. For Idahoans, though, it is best known for its large mammal populations. Since 1947, both the elk herd and the size of their winter range have expanded. Most of the current elk winter range is a mosaic of State, Federal, and private lands. These substantial game resources also support outstanding hunting opportunities for both Idahoans and nonresidents. The Nine Mile Knoll Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC), St. Anthony Sand Dunes Research Natural Area (RNA), Sand Mountain Wilderness Study Area (WSA), and Sand Creek Wildlife Management Area (WMA) are all within the Sands Desert HMA. The Sands Desert HMA provides crucial winter range for approximately 3,300 mule deer, 4,600 elk, 200 to 300 white-tailed deer, and 300 to 500 moose annually. The Nine Mile Knoll ACEC is in the northeast portion of the Snake River Plain. The ACEC encompasses all of the St. Anthony Sand Dunes, a unique ecological setting within an isolated area of large active sand dunes with great variability in dune stability and a complex series of successional vegetative stages. The central portion of the ACEC (the active dunes) is also designated as a WSA and a Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA). A high-profile recreation program is at the St. Anthony Sand Dunes SRMA, especially motorized recreation. Although recreation activities vary, motorized recreation represents the majority of recreation use within the SRMA. Other activities include developed and undeveloped

camping, hiking, big and upland game hunting, horseback riding, antler hunting, wildlife viewing, mountain biking, and winter activities such as snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, and snowmobiling. The SRMA is a destination location for regional and national visitors seeking a high-quality motorized recreation experience. In addition, the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes rely heavily on the areas to continue their aboriginal hunting and gathering treaty rights.

**Purpose/Need:**

The acquisition of two conservation easements (CE) on 3,352 acres in this project area will support the Administration’s priorities and key principles for guiding conservation efforts—specifically, by conserving lands and waters to protect biodiversity and help address natural climate solutions. Both properties will remain working ranches, preserving the cultural and historic character of the area. Maintaining open spaces and working with the landowner to limit wildfire risk in the landscape will strengthen resilience to climate change. This project would expand opportunities for improving habitats, big-game migration corridors, and crucial winter range. Sand Creek Ranch is approximately 2,952 acres just north of St. Anthony and abuts Idaho’s Sand Creek WMA and BLM lands. The ranch has native habitats and spatially serves as a buffer between intensive agriculture and larger blocks of functional sagebrush steppe on private and public lands extending onto the Sand Creek Desert. Ungulates wintering on the Sand Creek Desert migrate from summer range as far away as Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Parks and the Madison Valley in Montana. This ecologically resilient sagebrush steppe also plays a vital role in providing habitat to native grouse species designated as BLM Sensitive species and Idaho Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN). In addition, the Sand Creek Desert is one of the three most important landscapes in the Upper Snake Watershed for conservation of Columbian sharp-tailed grouse. Protection of these properties via conservation easements by BLM and the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership would add significant value to landscape-level habitat protection by preventing development in wintering big-game habitat in the Sand Creek Desert. The protection of the properties would also help secure long-term conservation of BLM and Idaho designated species.

**Cooperator(s):** Idaho Department of Fish and Game, Henry’s Fork Foundation, Idaho Chapter of Safari Club International, Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership, The Nature Conservancy, Teton Regional Land Trust, Mule Deer Foundation, Idaho Backcountry Hunters and Anglers, Henrys Fork Wildlife Alliance, The Conservation Fund

**Operations & Maintenance**

Savings/Cost	Start-up	Annual
Estimated O&M Savings:	\$ 0	\$ 0
Estimated O&M Costs:	\$ 10,000	\$ 5,000

**O&M Description:**

Conservation easement stewardship; updating/ printing maps and brochures.

**LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION FUND Project Data Sheet**

**Agency:** Bureau of Land Management

**Fiscal Year:** 2024

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**Project/Unit:** Red Cliffs National Conservation Area

**Priority:** 8

**State(s):** UT

**Congressional District(s):**

UT-2

**Location:**

Red Cliffs National Conservation Area, north of St George, Utah

**Project Estimates**

Land/Cost	Acres	\$
<b>Estimate for FY 2024</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>\$ 2,100,000</b>
Acquired to Date	7,195.72	\$ 63,080,200
Remaining to be Acquired	336.67	\$ 8,880,500

**Project Description:**

The Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009 (Public Law 111–11) designated the Red Cliffs National Conservation Area (NCA) (1) “to conserve, protect, and enhance the ecological, scenic, wildlife, recreational, cultural, historical, natural, educational, and scientific resources” of the public lands; and (2) to protect each species listed as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act. Most of the 45,560-acre NCA is designated critical habitat for the threatened Mojave desert tortoise and supports one of the highest population densities of tortoise across its range. The NCA is bounded by the towering Pine Valley Mountains and the Dixie National Forest to the north, Snow Canyon State Park to the west, and an arc of rapidly growing communities to the south, including the five largest cities in Washington County, Utah. It affords local residents and visitors opportunities to enjoy open space, hiking, mountain biking, and equestrian trail riding on 130 miles of nonmotorized trails and to experience solitude and natural quiet in the Red Mountain and Cottonwood Canyon Wilderness areas, all within a few minutes’ drive from the urban areas. The NCA also constitutes 75 percent of the land base of a multijurisdictional mitigation reserve, locally known as the Red Cliffs Desert Reserve, which includes public lands managed by BLM,



lands managed by the State of Utah, municipal lands, and private lands. BLM and other parties signed a final HCP implementation agreement in 2021 and that agreement commits BLM to continue to acquire non-Federal lands through direct purchase, donation, and the exchange of public lands that are outside the Beaver Dam Wash and Red Cliffs NCAs and designated wilderness areas.

**Purpose/Need**

BLM’s purpose and need for acquiring 33 acres of private lands that support desert tortoise populations on critical tortoise habitat are (1) to implement management goals, objectives, and decisions from the approved record of decision for the Red Cliffs National Conservation Area resource management plan (2016, amended 2021); and (2) to fulfill agency commitments in the final implementation agreement for the Washington County HCP (2021). Acquisition of critical tortoise habitat into Federal ownership within a National Conservation Area would ensure that the habitat and populations of the threatened desert tortoise would be conserved and protected. Other resource values that may be present on the acquired lands, such as cultural or paleontological resources, would also benefit from the protections afforded by National Conservation Area status. Acquisition of the additional private inholdings would benefit Washington County and local municipalities by fulfilling the terms of the county’s HCP, the mission of BLM, and the commitments that BLM made in signing the two implementation agreements.

**Cooperator(s):**

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Washington County, Washington County Water Conservancy District, City of St. George, Washington City, State of Utah, Utah Division of Wildlife Resources, Desert Tortoise Council, Zion National Park, U.S. Forest Service, University of Utah Archeological Center, Southern Utah University, The Nature Conservancy, Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance, Dixie Mountain Bike Trails Association, American Conservation Experience, Southern Utah National Conservation Lands Friends, Utah Division of State Lands and Forestry, Utah School and Institutional Trust Lands Administration

**Operations & Maintenance**

Savings/Cost	Start-up	Annual
Estimated O&M Savings:	\$ 0	\$ 0
Estimated O&M Costs:	\$ 3,800	\$ 2,000

**O&M Description:**

Monitor for compliance, trespass, overuse, hazards, etc.; update and print maps and brochures