

# DOCKET

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Dear Chris Otahal,

These comments are written by me, Len Warren, as a private citizen in hopes that BLM will continue to list the protection of birds within ACEC, and Wild and Scenic area as a top priority.

A plan is only as good as its implementation.

The 2007 ACEC plan, lists the priorities in order with Tamarisk removal as a top priority. Bird surveys place near the top of the priorities list. In the implementation plan, the BLM recommends approximately \$1,000,000 for cowbird control, related songbird nest monitoring, and surveys for federally endangered Least Bell's Vireo and Southwestern Willow Flycatcher over the next 20 years. The excellent 2007 plan was never implemented, but has been posted on the Barstow BLM website for years. There does not seem to be any explanation of why the 2007 plan, which must have taken considerable federal resources to prepare, (can the BLM estimate what that cost was?), has not been pushed forward. The 2007 plan appears to have been put aside in order to wait and combine it with the Wild and Scenic designation was approved and a new plan would unfold, therefore eliminating overlap, duplication, and increase efficiency.

Many agencies fly the Southwestern Willow Flycatcher flag, and the Bell's Vireo banner, publicly supporting the protection of birds in fragile desert riparian ecosystems, and the Amargosa area in particular. Yet it is disturbing, and surprising that BLM, or any other state or federal agency for that matter, currently provides ZERO DOLLARS towards bird surveys in this Amargosa ACEC, and Wild and scenic area even while publicly listing cowbird control, related songbird nest monitoring, and surveys for federally endangered Southwestern Willow Flycatcher, as top priorities of ACEC Plan. The Willow Flycatcher and Bell's Vireo are featured prominently in the ACEC plan. Their life histories and importance are well documented in the plan. Bell's Vireo migrates to and nests in the Amargosa ACEC, and Wild and Scenic areas, Willow Flycatcher migrates to and has historically nested in the ACEC, and may again as Amargosa habitat restoration occurs, and if overall Willow Flycatcher population increases due to millions of federal dollars spent on their habitat elsewhere. Have BLM priorities officially changed?

China Ranch appears to be a source population for Bell's Vireo. China Ranch has not been fully surveyed for Bell's Vireo however it is apparent by even casual observation that 30 or more pairs inhabit the ranch, and that their population continues along Willow Creek to Amargosa River. China Ranch also historically held a small population of federally endangered Yellow-billed Cuckoos; therefore Yellow-billed Cuckoos should be surveys for annually.

The Amargosa Region should be considered, treated and evaluated as potential habitat for Yellow-billed Cuckoo.

The area of the confluence of Willow Creek and the Amargosa River is currently inhabited by Bell's Vireos during breeding season and appears to be excellent potential nesting habitat for Willow Flycatcher. This area especially needs micromanagement of habitat restoration, and related bird surveys in order to ensure contiguous avian habitat structure, while implementing Tamarisk control.

This ACEC, and Wild and Scenic area is crucial nesting habitat for many other bird species that are not currently on endangered lists. It is disturbing, that only endangered species are currently even considered for any type of funding or habitat protection, therefore an amazing array of 319 Amargosa bird species, including year young residents, winter residents, migratory breeding birds, and a profusion of migrants, many quite rare, must depend on a few endangered, unfunded migrants for their long term protection.

Brood parasitism by Brown-headed is a major cause of nest failure in Bell's Vireo and Willow Flycatcher. Cowbird control measures directly correlate to the success ratio of these species. An official commitment should be made by BLM to ensure long term funding of Cowbird control, related nest monitoring, vegetation surveys, and endangered bird surveys.

Areas of Critical Environmental Concern should be surveyed for birds and funding should be contiguous, and BLM should make it their business to support cooperative efforts to directly protect and survey bird life and populations. Bird protection measures along the Amargosa River should be permanent or until unnecessary, and should not just be a website page on federal sites, and site of NGO's as partners" giving the appearance of a long term commitment to bird protection while ZERO DOLLARS are available for 2012, and no clear plan seems to ensure their future. Copying and pasting and advertising the life histories of endangered species does not constitute a protection plan, nor does a well planned well researched plan that goes unimplemented.

It should go on record that I am often employed on bird survey work, and hope to continue to directly protect the breeding birds of Amargosa on future surveys.

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