

## **CHAPTER 3. WILDLIFE HABITAT AND UPLAND VEGETATION MITIGATION**

### **3.1 General Wildlife Habitat and Upland Vegetation Mitigation**

The MA has a variety of values for wildlife, and is correspondingly abundant in both game and non-game species. Reclamation's commitment to purchase 2700-2900 acres of mitigation lands for wildlife habitat (which includes the 1645 acres of required upland vegetation mitigation) is exceeded within the MA by approximately 2800 acres (Table 1, above). Reclamation's further commitment to enhance those acres was to be met through weed control, seeding and water management to improve habitat conditions.

Reclamation's wildlife habitat and upland vegetation mitigation does not have a 95% milestone associated with it. Reclamation has exceeded the land acquisition target for general wildlife habitat and upland vegetation mitigation. Full mitigation completion is described under each activity below.

### **3.2 Upland Vegetation Management**

Approximately 120 acres of Tract I (Redhorse Gulch) uplands were historically used to grow feed crops for wildlife. Also, about 80 acres of the potentially irrigable acres in Tract III (Redmesa, Figure4) do not have a desirable level of ground cover and produce little forage. As part of the IVMP, all 200 combined acres were seeded with a grass mixture to enhance wildlife values. Recent observations show that seeding germination was marginal and additional seeding will be required. This re-seeding work will be accomplished incrementally starting in 2008.

Reclamation has included all upland areas in the IVMP and has conducted significant weed controls as a further measure of enhancement. Upland acres were treated for weed infestation in each year since 2003. Tamarisk and Russian olives were also removed from remote upland areas and adjoining arroyos and canyons as encountered. Reclamation has exceeded the requirements for wildlife habitat and the concurrent upland vegetation mitigation as set forth in the FSEIS.

### **3.3 Water Management**

Four existing wind-powered water wells are located in Tract I and require repair to become functional again. One of these wells was rehabilitated with a new generator-powered submersible pump installed in 2005. An additional well was put into service in 2006. The two serviceable wells will suffice to enhance wildlife values in the area by providing reliable drinking water.

Further, several man-made water catchment basins exist in the MA. Two of these upland catchments will be mucked out and restored for additional seasonal wildlife water use in 2008,

rather than 2006 as originally scheduled. Other natural water sources, such as springs and natural seasonal ponds have been monitored and will provide continued water availability for wildlife habitat functionality at these sites as an enhancement measure of wildlife.

As discussed in Chapter 2 (Section 2.1), Reclamation will continue historic hayfield irrigation practices on tract III (Redmesa) as part of maintaining the hydrologic health of the MA. A portion of current hay production is now left un-harvested for birds, deer, elk and small mammal usage, either as cover or forage.

### 3.4 Fencing

The riparian tracts already fenced include a significant amount of upland vegetation/wildlife habitat. Reclamation has further committed to expanding its fencing effort along private land boundaries in tract I, where trespass livestock grazing has occurred in recent years, which will result in approximately 27,000 linear feet of new wildlife-friendly fencing. This work, while not a specific enhancement commitment, will serve to further enhance the upland habitat by reducing the impacts of uncontrolled trespass grazing.

**Figure 62. Upland Grazing Pasture (Left) vs. Mitigation Area (Right) in 2007.**

