

# San Luis Valley Habitat Conservation Plan

2022 Year end updates

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Photo credit: Cassandra McCuen of RGWCD

## Overview of Mitigation

Impacts to riparian habitat from HCP covered activities must be mitigated and monitored. To meet this requirement, the District works with landowners to secure mitigation sites on private lands through voluntary, cooperative agreements. These agreements allow a subject property to be enrolled in the HCP Mitigation Program, and provide mitigation credits. Mitigation credits are quantified in acres, and are responsible for offsetting all habitat impacts from covered activities throughout the San Luis Valley.

Lands are eligible to enroll in the mitigation program if they contain high quality riparian habitat, and are protected by a conservation easement, management agreement, or similar mechanism that ensures the conservation of riparian habitat. While in the mitigation program, landowners agree to continue their established land management practices and allow routine habitat monitoring. As of 2022, there are over 400 acres of habitat enrolled in the Mitigation Program across Alamosa, Conejos, Mineral, and Rio Grande Counties. The District is always seeking more mitigation credits to ensure a secure and diverse mitigation pool.

2022 / Issue 3



### WHAT'S NEW IN 2022

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#### 10-YEAR MAPPING PROJECT AMENDED

ERO Resources Inc completed additions to the 10-year woody riparian vegetation mapping project

#### 2022 SURVEY SEASON

Habitat survey results from two HCP mitigation properties

#### YELLOW-BILLED CUCKOO UPDATES

2022 was the first range-wide survey conducted for the western yellow-billed cuckoo

### LOOKING TO 2023

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#### VALLEY-WIDE FLYCATCHER SURVEY

Every 3 years, entities across the valley conduct SWFL surveys to monitor population trends

#### MITIGATION PROGRAM

The District is working to create incentives for the mitigation program—details will be released as they are finalized

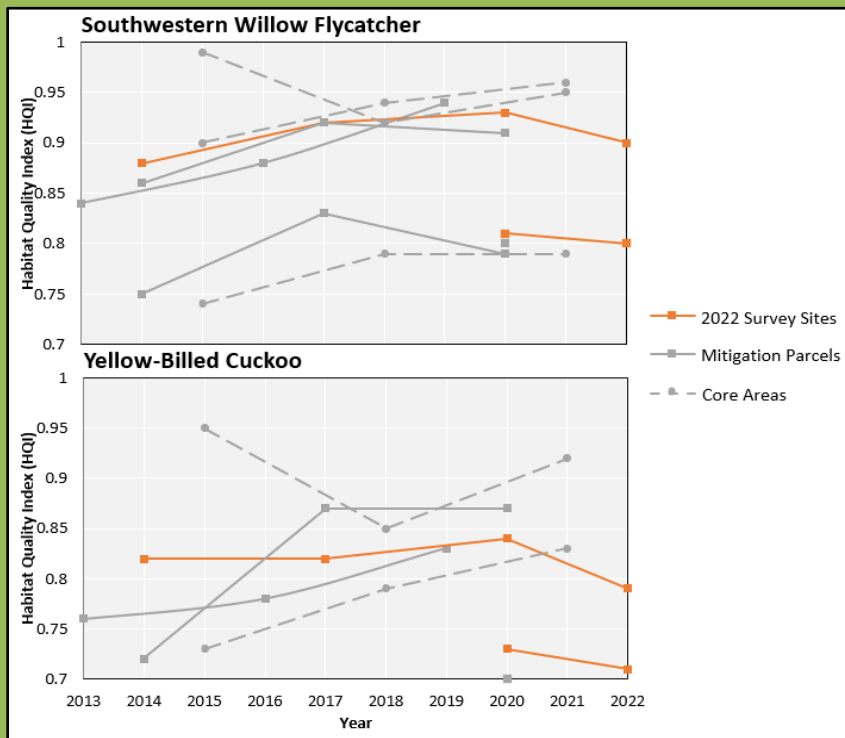
To view the full annual report, sign up for our email list, or for more information on the HCP, visit [www.rgwcd.org/hcp](http://www.rgwcd.org/hcp)



# 2022 Survey Results

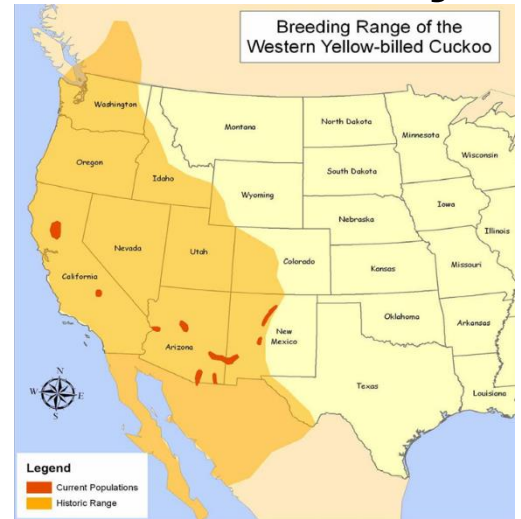
Properties in the mitigation program are monitored once every three years to determine the amount of habitat present and quantify the quality of the habitat. The quality is determined using a Habitat Quality Index (HQI) that ranks several habitat components on how suitable they are for both species- a score of 1 being most suitable. The same methods are used on public land reference sites for comparisons with the mitigation properties. There are currently over 400 acres of habitat enrolled to offset 246 acres of habitat impacts over the 30-year permit term.

Two mitigation properties were surveyed in 2022. There was a slight decrease in HQI values on both properties, but this is likely due to observer differences rather than a decrease in habitat quality. Overall, HQI values remain stable across all properties.



Graph credit: Cassandra McCuen of RGWCD

# First Range-Wide YBCU Survey



Western yellow-billed cuckoo historic and current known breeding range. Map obtained from BOR, 2018.

2022 was the first range-wide survey effort for the western yellow-billed cuckoo.

Historically, their breeding range spanned west of the continental divide from British Columbia down to Mexico. They have become increasingly rare, and no longer occupy much of their historic range. Listed as threatened in 2014, state and regional populations have been steadily declining.

The goal of this robust survey effort was to understand YBCUs *occupancy*, or where the species is present across the landscape. Surveys were conducted throughout their historic range from June-July.

According to unofficial results, Colorado saw 27 unique detections of cuckoos throughout 11 survey sites, with 3 of those detections in the San Luis Valley.

# 10-Year Mapping Revisions

ERO Resources Inc made revisions to the 10-year Mapping Report update completed in 2021, following suggestions from the HCP Steering Committee. This update includes 620 acres of newly mapped stream reaches, new tables, climate and hydrological context, and more. Find the full report at [www.rgwcd.org/hcp](http://www.rgwcd.org/hcp).