

Environmental Flows Bulletin

1st Edition

April 2012



Published by the Utton Transboundary Resources Center at the University of New Mexico School of Law, Environmental Flows highlights ideas, strategies, and successes of organizations and individuals across New Mexico who are working to ensure environmental flows for the state's rivers and streams.

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Jemez River - Photo by Joe Avalos

The Inaugural Issue of Environmental Flows Bulletin



New Mexico's rivers and streams are connected to everything: they are where climate change, population growth, groundwater pumping, pollution, and land management converge. In order to respond to drought

and allocate water among different communities, water agencies are considering new water management approaches. Meanwhile, the state of New Mexico is pursuing new water projects to address areas of shortfall and municipalities are implementing contingency plans.

But the rivers of the state are more than conduits for the delivery of water. They are the source of water for wildlife and riparian fauna and the necessary medium for fishes. They also draw tourists and New Mexicans alike to their banks on hot

afternoons. They are where we walk with our friends and teach our children to fish.

[full story here](#)

Bringing Beauty Downstream: Mayor Coss on the Santa Fe River

On a March afternoon, two great-tailed grackles call to one another across the sandy channel of the Santa Fe River. Meanwhile, a canyon towhee ducks for cover beneath the brush.



To the delight of a handful of two- and three-year old boys, construction workers just above Frenchy's Field are laying back the bank of the river channel and positioning boulders in the channel. Meanwhile, a handful of men plant cottonwood and willow saplings along the edges of the wide, sandy channel.

Acting in partnership with citizens, activist groups, the County of Santa Fe, and the New Mexico Environment Department, in recent years, the City of Santa Fe has begun restoring reaches of the river-whose waters are impounded in municipal reservoirs above the city.

Since entering office in 2006, Mayor David Coss has made the river's restoration a central objective of his administration's, and in February, the Santa Fe City Council enacted an ordinance allocating 1,000 acre-feet of water to the river-when there is water enough to spare.

In early March, Coss spoke with Environmental Flows spoke about the new ordinance, his affection for the Santa Fe River, and his vision for its future.

[full story here](#)

Conservationists and Irrigation District Blaze the Way on Water Transfers



Southwestern Willow Flycatcher
Photo by Dave Menke, U.S. Fish
and Wildlife Service

In the lower Rio Grande in New Mexico, water managers and conservationists are working together to address endangered species issues, ensure farmers can earn a living, and create an innovative water transaction program.

"It's a collaborative effort to increase habitat territory for the southwestern willow flycatcher that is sensitive to farmers' water needs," says Beth Bardwell, director of freshwater conservation for Audubon New Mexico. "It's cool because we've found a way to walk together down this path."

As part of a long-term project by the United States International Boundary and Water Commission to manage the Rio Grande Canalization Project-the 105-mile stretch between Percha Diversion Dam and the American Dam near El Paso-the commission has set aside funding for two projects, one dedicated to habitat restoration on five pilot project sites and the other to establish an environmental water rights transaction program.

[full story here](#)

Rio Chama Project Addresses Stream Flow Dilemmas

Guest Column
By Steve Harris, Rio Grande
Restoration

When a recent U.S. Environmental Protection Agency-funded study concluded that flows in virtually all the state's streams had been significantly altered by past water development

- some critically so - no one who cares about New Mexico's rivers was surprised. While it is useful to acknowledge a whole new class of water supply problems and factor them into public discourse on the future of urban and agricultural water availability, the issue of how society might accommodate ecological and other instream requirements still needs to be addressed.

Now, a new project on the Rio Chama is not only an experiment with analytical techniques for managing reservoir releases to accommodate both consumptive and non-consumptive uses, it is also an experiment with collaborative



governance and a test of the hypothesis that cooperation yields power.

[full story here](#)

Salazar Convenes New Committee on the Middle Rio Grande

When U.S. Department of the Interior Secretary Ken Salazar came through Albuquerque on his two-day tour of the western United States in January, he made a point to talk about management of the Middle Rio Grande-and the need for better coordination and efficiency among agencies.

Formed in 2000, the Middle Rio Grande Endangered Species Collaborative Program's members-which include federal, state, and local agencies; conservation organizations; American Indian tribes; and the University of New Mexico-focus on how to manage the river to the benefit of consumptive users, such as municipalities and irrigators, while heeding impacts to two endangered species, the Rio Grande silvery minnow and the southwestern willow flycatcher.

But at the Albuquerque meeting, Salazar challenged Middle Rio Grande partners to move beyond endangered species and develop a plan that focuses on the entire ecosystem-and supports the President's America Great Outdoors Initiative.

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