

CLEARING THE WATERS

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Section 319 Project

New Planning Project Underway!

The **Watershed Protection Section** and cooperators recently started a new watershed-based planning project, to be funded under **Section 319 of the Clean Water Act**. This project was identified through a Request for Proposals. Here is a summary:

Watershed-Based Planning within the Upper Agua Chiquita Drainage Basin

Rocky Mountain Ecology, the Lincoln National Forest, and local landowners and partners will develop a watershed-based plan (WBP) for Agua Chiquita Creek. Agua Chiquita Creek is a small but important stream in the Sacramento Mountains which in the past supported a brook trout population. The stream does not support its



high quality aquatic life use because of excessive suspended sediment (aka turbidity), and this project will identify practical and locally acceptable watershed improvement projects to address that problem.

Watershed-based planning is the main approach for identifying solutions to nonpoint source pollution problems in New Mexico. To learn more about watershed-based planning, visit: www.env.nm.gov/swqb/wps/WBP

For a complete list of current and recent 319 and River Stewardship projects, with links to detailed information for each, visit:

www.env.nm.gov/swqb/wps/documents/NMED_319_and_RSP_Project_List.pdf



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River Stewardship Program

New Projects Beginning under New Mexico River Stewardship Program

The 2015 and 2016 New Mexico Legislatures appropriated \$2.5 million in capital outlay funds for the River Stewardship Program “to design and construct projects that improve surface water quality or river habitat statewide and to provide state matching funds required by the terms of any federal grant under the Clean Water Act.” NMED working with the State Purchasing Division conducted a request for proposals in 2016 to direct funding from both years to effective projects that meet this legislative intent. Six subject matter experts from NMED and the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish evaluated the twenty-two submitted proposals. The committee’s recommendations led to selection of fourteen river restoration projects listed below. Agreements with local governments, soil and water conservation districts, non-profit organizations, and for-profit organizations to implement these projects were approved in February 2017, and these projects are now underway.

~ Awarded Projects ~

Upper Rio San Antonio Watershed Restoration to Improve Water Quality

Chimayo Conservation Corps, in partnership with Rocky Mountain Ecology, will reduce temperature and sedimentation within the Upper Rio San Antonio Watershed, north of Tres Piedras. The project includes upland and in-stream erosion/grade control structures, riparian plantings, small fence exclosures, and supplemental upland ungulate/livestock watering sources to reduce grazing of riparian areas.



The Upper Rio San Antonio is wide, shallow, and exposed to the sun. The Upper Rio San Antonio Watershed Restoration project will increase shade and reduce temperature along this reach.

Animas River Restoration Project

The City of Farmington will improve and restore river and riparian habitat in the Animas River. Design solutions include in-stream structures such as habitat rocks, cross vanes, rock deflectors, and native riparian vegetation planting to promote aquatic life, increase bank stability, and encourage public engagement with the river.



The Animas River at Farmington. This restoration work will modify the existing overwide channel form to address the water temperature impairment.

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Enhancing Aquatic Habitat Conditions in the Galisteo Creek, Galisteo, New Mexico

Ecotone is improving aquatic habitat conditions and channel geometry across approximately ten acres of the Galisteo Creek bosque in the Village of Galisteo by increasing stream access across the flood-prone area, reducing excessive stream-bank erosion, removing invasive, exotic trees, and planting willows and cottonwood seedlings.



This segment of Galisteo Creek is incised and a component of this project aims to reconnect the stream to the floodplain.

Gila River Floodplain Restoration

Due to a nearly intact natural flow regime, the Gila River in the Cliff-Gila Valley provides high-quality habitat for several rare and declining riparian obligate and aquatic species. Grant County Soil and Water Conservation District will remove and treat Russian olive within the 53-acre area it occupies between Duck Creek and the Gila River, remove and treat salt cedar in eight acres along a one-mile reach of Duck Creek, and identify and treat scattered salt cedar through a ten-mile reach of the Gila River.



This project will contain and prevent additional establishment of exotic species on the floodplain to protect and enhance existing native plant communities and the stream corridor ecosystem.

Rewinding the Gallinas River in the City of Las Vegas

Hermit's Peak Watershed Alliance will restore ½ mile of the Gallinas River within the City of Las Vegas. As the first phase of a larger effort to create a 20 mile Gallinas River Park and trail, this project will improve urban water quality and stream habitat. It also sets the tone and demonstrates river restoration for the larger area. The project reach is currently straight, ditch-like, and lacks riparian vegetation. It neither functions as a healthy river nor carries the image of one to residents. This highly visible location will yield enormous gains for river restoration.



The project area consists of an urban stretch of the Gallinas River that is the most degraded section of the river as it flows through the nearby rural and urban areas from Montezuma to the Las Vegas National Wildlife Refuge.

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Restoring La Jara Creek from Damage from the Thompson Ridge Fire, Valles Caldera National Preserve

La Jara Creek is a major tributary to the East Fork Jemez River in the Valles Caldera National Preserve. It flows through the Historic Ranch Headquarters area and was severely damaged by the 2013 Thompson Ridge Fire. Los Amigos de Valles Caldera will restore channel and wetland form and function to help protect visitors to the Preserve, restore at least 65 acres of wetland, and reduce loading of nutrients and sediment to the East Fork.



The main course of La Jara Creek, approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile, which is severely gullied, will be treated with a variety of grade control and Induced Meandering treatments such as one-rock dams and baffles to capture sediment and re-create a meandering channel approaching its original grade.

Constructing Diverse Native Bosque Habitat on Two River Bars at the Pueblo of Santa Ana

The Pueblo of Santa Ana will restore 27 acres of river bar by removing exotic trees and shrubs, creating low flow channels through high and dry areas, and planting native trees and shrubs. The objectives of the project are to increase wetted habitat and increase and diversify native vegetation cover and structure in this highly modified bosque ecosystem.



High and dry portions of the river bar such as this area of the project will rely on creative earthwork to cut high flow channels into the dry river bar in specific areas to increase wetted habitat.

Restoration of Sawmill and Foreman Creeks, Comanche Creek Watershed

The Quivira Coalition will restore three creek miles and 72 acres of riparian and slope wetlands in the Foreman and Sawmill Creek sub-watersheds to re-wet former wetland areas and increase base flow of cool water entering Comanche Creek. Stabilization and restoration will be completed using techniques from *Technical Guide 2: Characterization and Restoration of Slope Wetlands in New Mexico: A Guide for Understanding Slope Wetlands, Causes of Degradation and Treatment Options*, available at www.env.nm.gov/swqb/Wetlands/TechnicalGuides/02/SlopeWetlandTechnicalGuide02.pdf.



Downcutting channel below headcut in Sawmill Creek resulting in a loss of acres of floodplain access and with it the inherent capacity of wetland soils to store soil water.

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Valle de Oro National Urban Wildlife Refuge Riparian, Wetland, and Water Quality Improvement

Rio Grande Return will assist in the construction and implementation of riparian and wetland habitat within the newly designated Valle de Oro National Wildlife Refuge. Wetland and riparian vegetation will be planted and seeded to stabilize soils, provide wildlife habitat, and improve water quality in storm water runoff events. Other funding is being used to recontour portions of the project area to restore wetland hydrology.



Site plan outlined of Valle del Oro restoration areas. Drainage meadow in blue, current project area in green and future sites in light green. The Rio Grande is located to the west.

Two Rivers Park Restoration Project

Rocky Mountain Ecology (RME), in partnership with the Village of Ruidoso, will implement measures at Two Rivers Park to reduce temperature and turbidity within the Rio Ruidoso. RME will plant herbaceous species along banks, direct public access to specific areas to allow plants to grow, construct pool habitat in key locations, and remove and replace non-native species such as Siberian elm.



Trampling and extensive use by recreationists has resulted in adjacent banklines and high-use areas devoid of vegetation. This project will address this issue with creative restoration methods.

Bosque del Bernalillo Storm Water Quality and Habitat Enhancement to the Rio Grande Project

The Southern Sandoval County Arroyo Flood Control Authority (SSCAFCA) will construct a meander within an existing arroyo to remove the “first flush” storm flows from the arroyo for treatment, and reintroduce cleaner flows back into the arroyo. This project is a compliance strategy for the watershed-based Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) permit for the middle Rio Grande that will also stabilize the arroyo and improve the arroyo habitat.



Project rendering illustrating improved wildlife corridor with storm water fed wildlife drinking station and pedestrian trail separated by vegetation.

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Post-Tres Lagunas Fire and Flooding Restoration Project for Holy Ghost Canyon, Creek, and Tributaries

The Upper Pecos Watershed Association will address erosion and sedimentation from the post-fire flooding in Holy Ghost Creek and in the four major tributary channels contributing the most sediment and water. This will be accomplished using innovative hand-built erosion control structures (including restoration of each tributary alluvial fan as an appropriate landform for sediment deposition) and riparian vegetation planting.



Three of the four burned tributary channels indicated that these small, 100 to 200 acre watersheds contributed most of the water and sediment to post-fire flooding in Holy Ghost Creek, and are continuing to erode. This project will address erosion and downcutting in tributary channels.

Village of Questa Fishing Park (Reach A) Stream Restoration Project

The Village of Questa will implement stream restoration work within a reach referred to as “Reach A,” located between Eagle Rock Lake and Cabresto Creek. This project seeks to construct fisheries habitat on a reach that is accessible to the public and improve riparian conditions along the banks.



Stream segments such as this in Reach A where historic channel straightening occurred and where the stream has poor access to the floodplain will be target areas for this project.

Upper San Antonio Canyon Water Quality Improvement Project

This project is located on San Antonio Creek in the Jemez Mountains, on the Santa Fe National Forest. WildEarth Guardians will remove and replace degraded fish habitat structures, increase canopy cover via native plant re-establishment, and protect portions of the stream from grazing by elk and livestock. The goal of this project is to increase vegetative shade in the project area to at least 30.1% cover from the existing 13.4%, to help the creek meet its standards for temperature and turbidity.



The lack of riparian vegetation and the resultant absence of shade contribute to the temperature impairment and will be addressed by the project.

For More Information

General updates on the River Stewardship Program are provided at www.env.nm.gov/swqb/RiverStewards. If you are reading this on a screen, you can click on the project titles above to access much more information on each project. A full list of projects, including database links to more information on each project, is available at www.env.nm.gov/swqb/wps/documents/NMED_319_and_RSP_Project_List.pdf. Look for projects with “RSP” in their titles.

For even more information, please contact any NMED staff identified in the project list, or contact Karen Menetrey, the River Stewardship Program coordinator, at 505-827-0194 or Karen.Menetrey@state.nm.us.

Watershed Protection Section Request for Proposals

On March 16, 2017, the Watershed Protection Section (WPS) released a request for proposals (RFP). The RFP solicits proposals to establish a contract through competitive negotiations for the procurement of goods and services to develop a Rapid Assessment Protocol for the inventory and assessment of springs in Ecoregion 23 in southwest New Mexico.

The Wetlands Program of the Surface Water Quality Bureau (SWQB) WPS, as part of the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED), has been developing Rapid Assessment Protocols for wetland types across New Mexico. In 2014, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Region 6 awarded the SWQB Wetlands Program a Clean Water Act (CWA) Section 104(b)(3) Wetland Program Development Grant to expand the current rapid assessments to spring ecosystems, a subclass of slope wetlands. The objective behind the rapid assessment methodology is to be able to quickly assess wetland conditions for biological and physical parameters and prioritize restoration opportunities.

The RFP will be open until **May 4, 2017**

For more information and to view the RFP: bids.scquest.com/apps/Router/PublicEvent?CustomerOrg=StateOfNewMexico&tab=PHX_NAV_SourcingOpenForBid&tmstmp=1467214109161



Reference RFP Name:
Rapid Assessment Method for Springs
in Southwest New Mexico
RFP# 70-667-16-27547

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Kristine Pintado, Non-Discrimination Coordinator
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EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

April

April 14th - 16th - Willcox, AZ. Assess Springs with Sky Island Alliance in the vicinity of the Deer Creek Trailhead in the eastern Galiuro Mountains. At the springs, they will be recording water quality and quantity, taking photographs, making a map of the spring, and documenting the flora and fauna. Contact Sami Hammer with questions at sami@skyislandalliance.org or 520-624-7080, ext. 16 or www.skyislandalliance.org/event/spring-assessments-deer-creek-galiuros/.

April 22nd - Earth Day - YOUR watershed. Volunteer at an event in your area to improve your local watershed. Check for events in your town, city or your local soil and water conservation district!

April 27th - Santa Fe. Northern New Mexico Wetlands Roundtable event presented by NMED. 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at the Toney Anaya Building, 2550 Cerrillos Road, Rio Grande Room (2nd Floor) Santa Fe, NM. For more information, contact Karen Menetrey (Karen.Menetrey@state.nm.us; 505-827-0194).

April 28th - 30th - Cebolla Canyon, SE of Grants, NM. Albuquerque Wildlife Federation volunteer restoration project. For additional details or to sign up: Contact Scial at rioscial@gmail.com or 505-480-2906 or abq.nmwildlife.org/projects.html.

May

May 12th - 14th - Santa Catalina Mountains, Summerhaven, AZ. Assess Springs with Sky Island Alliance on the northeastern side of the Galiuro Mountains. At the springs, they will be recording water quality and quantity, taking photographs, making a map of the spring, and documenting the flora and fauna. Contact Sami Hammer with questions at sami@skyislandalliance.org or 520-624-7080, ext. 16 or www.skyislandalliance.org/event/spring-assessments-catalinas-ne.

May 12th - 14th - Rio Mora National Wildlife Refuge. Albuquerque Wildlife Federation volunteer restoration project in Northeastern New Mexico . For additional details or to sign up: Contact Scial at rioscial@gmail.com or 505-480-2906 or abq.nmwildlife.org/projects.html.

May 16th - Las Cruces. Southern New Mexico Wetlands Roundtable event presented by NMED. 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at the Las Cruces City Hall, 700 North Main Street, Room 2007-B&C (2nd floor), Las Cruces, NM. For more information contact Emile Sawyer (Emile.Sawyer@state.nm.us; 505-827-2827).

May 20th - May 21st - Heron Lake State Park. Join New Mexico Volunteers for the Outdoors for trail re-routing, drainage improvements and a general tune-up to Heron Lake State Park which is located approximately 9 miles west of Tierra Amarilla in northern New Mexico. Heron Lake plays an important part in a system of water courses, infrastructure and reservoirs that support commerce, agriculture, drinking water and ecosystems throughout the state. Contact Leader: Chris Fritzsche, 505-504-3768, fritzsche.christopher@gmail.com to sign up.

Save the DATE

June 20th - 22nd - Farmington. 2nd Annual Conference on Environmental Conditions of the Animas and San Juan Watersheds with Emphasis on Gold King Mine and other Mine Waste Issues. The New Mexico Water Resources Research Institute will host the conference at San Juan College. For more information about this upcoming event visit <https://animas.nmwrri.nmsu.edu/2017/>.