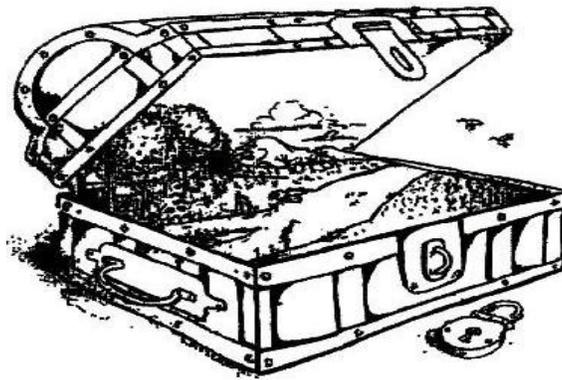


# **SAVE OUR BOSQUE TASK FORCE**

## **ACTION PLAN**



**March 2003**

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## **I. INTRODUCTION:**

The riparian forest (the Bosque) and the Rio Grande have been the center of the Southwest region's human settlement. Humans have utilized the Bosque for centuries, using its wood for fuel, construction of tools, and shelter. The riparian and aquatic flora and fauna have also been used, and, in some cases, abused. Compounding man's impact to the bosque is changing river dynamics; aging stands of trees; and invasion of non-native species of plants.

The direct tributary drainage for the Middle Rio Grande Valley comprises 12,800 square miles. The Middle Rio Grande is eight percent of the river's total length. The Middle Rio Grande Valley extends from Cochiti Dam to San Marcial (160 miles). The river flows through the Great Basin Grassland, Semi-desert Grassland, and Chihuahuan Desert shrub biotic communities.

There are portions of the river that do not have any surface water during dry periods. There are numerous irrigation water diversion structures on the Rio Grande and flood control levees. Irrigated agriculture is the dominant active land use in the Rio Grande floodplain in Socorro County. There are approximately 12,000 acres of irrigated land in Socorro County. Farther north in Valencia, Bernalillo and Sandoval counties urban uses are quickly replacing the more traditional agricultural uses. Areas in close proximity to the Bosque are becoming urbanized at an alarming rate, increasing the threats of fire and flooding to the adjacent development and to the public. In addition, increased public awareness and recreational uses have increased impacts to the Bosque, particularly the incidence of wildfire. Major human-caused problems consist of: off road vehicle use, trash and garbage dumping, illegal firewood cutting, and wildfires that result in habitat degradation and public safety issues.

Temperatures increase and precipitation decreases from north to south. Annual average temperature is 86 degrees Fahrenheit in July and a temperature of 40 degrees Fahrenheit in January. Average annual precipitation is 7.9 inches in the valley.

## **II. MISSION STATEMENT:**

The SOCORRO SAVE OUR BOSQUE TASK FORCE works to preserve, protect, and enhance the Rio Grande river and its adjoining riparian area (bosque, wetlands, grasslands) while respecting the customs and cultures of the residents of Socorro County to provide for public recreation, allow for historical resource use, and plan for public safety, all within the confines of current infrastructure and political limitations.

The task force is composed of but not limited to:

New Mexico State Forestry  
Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District  
County of Socorro  
City of Socorro  
Natural Resources Conservation Service  
U.S. Bureau of Reclamation  
U.S. Bureau of Land Management  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service:  
    Sevilleta NWR  
    Bosque del Apache NWR  
Socorro Soil & Water Conservation District  
Socorro Chamber of Commerce

With assistance from:

New Mexico State Police  
New Mexico Department of Game and Fish  
New Mexico Youth Conservation Corp.  
New Mexico Institute of Mining & Technology  
Bosque Improvement Group  
Boy Scouts-USA  
Jornada RC&D  
Tree New Mexico  
Dia del Rio  
Bank of America  
NRAO  
EMRTC

**III. VISION STATEMENT:**

A riparian ecosystem that functions as natural as possible within the confines of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century infrastructure and political limitations while respecting the traditional customs and cultures of the citizens of Socorro County.

**IV. PROGRAM AREAS:**

The Socorro Save Our Bosque Task Force will identify committees as needed to develop projects and coordinate activities in the following areas. These committees will also address issues that are relevant to the mission and vision of the Save Our Bosque Task Force. The major program areas will be: Public Access and Maintenance; Community Outreach and Environmental Education; Habitat Protection and Restoration; Enforcement; and Funding.

## **A. Public Access and Maintenance:**

The Save Our Bosque Task Force recognizes that the Bosque and adjacent water adjacent facilities and roads are used as a common recreation area. Public access control will entail the development of a plan to provide for all types of non-destructive public access within the River and Bosque ecosystem. A balance of controlled vehicular and non-vehicular access into the Bosque and the River will be developed to accommodate recreational uses while preventing habitat degradation.

Goals:

- ❖ Develop recreation access points and facilities in designated areas (Riverine and Riverside Parks, Fuel breaks, trails)
- ❖ Designate areas for motor vehicle access and restrict unauthorized access (signs, gates, fences)
- ❖ Develop map of Riverine Parks, Riverside Parks, Trails for emergency access (infrastructure access plan)
- ❖ Coordinate maintenance and management of existing facilities (replacement of table, grills, fences, signs)
- ❖ Facilitate waste removal (adopt-a-park program, scheduling of appropriate crews and equipment, coordinate appropriate disposal of materials, work to extend the hours of operation at landfills and decrease fees charged at the City and County landfills and increase the number of free days)

## **B. Community Outreach and Environmental Education:**

It is the goal of the Save Our Bosque Task Force to develop an environmental education program that will promote awareness and benefits of the Rio Grande Bosque ecosystem.

Goals:

- ❖ Develop an environmental education center within the Bosque (Socorro Nature Area)
- ❖ Develop publication and presentations that explain the general activities of the Task Force (brochures)
- ❖ Develop Media relationships (press releases to publicize Task Force activities)

- ❖ Develop Web site for the Save Our Bosque Task Force
- ❖ Promote membership from the non-governmental sector
- ❖ Establish demonstration sites for habitat restoration
- ❖ Develop experiential environmental program (Sleeping with Rio Grande)
- ❖ Participate in local community activities (Bosque Conservation Day, Socorro County Fair, Earth Day, Ag Day, Sevilleta Career Day, Dia del Rio, Catron County Conservation Day)

### **C. Habitat Protection and Restoration:**

One of the most important program areas is habitat protection, restoration, and improvement. The Save Our Bosque Task Force will coordinate the overall planning for analysis and rehabilitation of degraded areas. The Bosque Biological Management Plan and other management plans relevant to this area will be referenced when planning yearly work schedules

#### Goals:

- ❖ Protect and enhance native vegetation communities (exotic species treatment and removal, hazardous fuels reduction, re-establishment of native plants)
- ❖ Rehabilitate burned and disturbed areas (re-vegetation, management of exotic species, hazardous fuels reduction)
- ❖ Restore natural river processes (planning, coordination with water management agencies, education, outreach)
- ❖ Protect and enhance wildlife habitat (management of exotic species, designate public access, protect sensitive areas)
- ❖ Develop protocol for research and monitoring (collaboration, prescriptions, contracts)
- ❖ Develop capacity of local businesses and create ancillary benefits to the community

The Task Force is producing a Conceptual Restoration Plan for the Active Floodplain from San Acacia to San Marcial, New Mexico. This long-term plan identifies current vegetation, potential for flooding, habitat restoration options, and develops implementation strategies. Scientific studies will guide these strategies. The plan also takes into consideration social, political, and environmental issues affecting this reach of the river. The Task Force will work to implement the plan by cooperating with water management agencies, local land managers, and private landowners to restore sites designated as priorities.

#### **D. Enforcement:**

One of the primary responsibilities of the law enforcement activity is the coordination of law enforcement efforts to curb illegal activities within the Bosque. There are three primary law enforcement agencies and five land management agencies with law enforcement authority in the Socorro area. All agencies need to coordinate efforts to be effective and efficient in patrolling the Bosque to prevent illegal actions and to catch violators. The Socorro Police Department, Socorro County Sheriff Office, and NM State Police personnel patrol lands and roads under their jurisdiction and also assist other agencies with their law enforcement duties. The land management agencies of the MRGCD, Bureau of Land Management, US Fish and Wildlife Service, NM State Forestry, and New Mexico Department of Game and Fish patrol their lands and neighboring lands.

The Federal, State, County and City governmental agencies must review their laws to ensure that their regulations are current with issues facing the Bosque. Efforts must be made to update and modernize laws to facilitate and assist law enforcement personnel in doing their jobs.

Goals:

- ❖ Increase law enforcement agency coordination to protect the Bosque (cross-commission, joint patrols, information sharing)
- ❖ Work with local and district court system to support the law enforcement activities of the Task Force (appropriate prosecution of illegal activities)
- ❖ Develop policies and regulations to assist law enforcement efforts (Bosque access policy for cooperating land management agencies, fuel wood permits)
- ❖ Improve cooperative response for emergencies and closures (bosque closures, wildfires).

#### **F. Funding:**

The amount of work accomplished by the Task Force each year is dependent on funding and support from participating agencies, local communities and other sources. All signatory agencies are currently funding some of the Save Our Bosque Task Force's projects with in-kind contributions or program funds. As of December, 2002 the Task Force spent approximately \$500,000 for projects and program activities. Additional funding is needed to continue efforts. Grants and cost share monies are the major sources

of income for the Task Force.

Goals:

- ❖ Continue to request funding from public agency budgets and grant programs to support Task Force activities (Bosque Initiative-BIG funds; USFWS; BLM; BOR; NM Youth Conservation Corps; Socorro SWCD; State Legislature).
- ❖ Continue to request funding from private foundations and individual donors (World Wildlife Fund, Turner Foundation, Ducks Unlimited, McCune Foundation).
- ❖ Develop on-line solicitation and donations as part of the SOBTF web site.

**V. RECOMMENDATIONS:**

The following organizational recommendations are intended to aid management of the Task Force:

- ❖ Conduct an annual review of completed projects and/or ongoing projects at the end of each year.
- ❖ Develop an Annual Work Plan comprised of a list of projects to be initiated, continued and/or completed in the coming year (late summer/early fall) and identify funding opportunities or sources.
- ❖ Draft a budget for the Annual Work Plan (by December).
- ❖ Integrate Task Force activities with other related management efforts.
- ❖ Assign Task Force members responsibility for program areas and project oversight.

## Appendix \_\_\_\_

### SAVE OUR BOSQUE ACTION PLAN PROGRAM ASSIGNMENTS:

<b>PROGRAM</b>	<b>CONTACT</b>	<b>MEMBERS</b>
<b>Public Access and Maintenance</b>	Doug Boykin	Johnny Mounyo; Paul Bauer
<b>Community Outreach and Environmental Education</b>	Wes Anderson	Bev Junger, Nick Smokovich, Nyleen Stowe, Ruth White
<b>Habitat Protection and Restoration</b>	Yasmeen Najmi	Gina Dello Russo
<b>Enforcement</b>	Robert Miller	Matt Wohlberg, Jim Gutierrez
<b>Funding</b>	Emmy Stanzione	Bev Junger

**VII. SIGNATORY PAGE:**

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New Mexico State Forestry

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Middle Rio Grande Conservancy

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County of Socorro

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City of Socorro

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U.S. Bureau of Reclamation

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U.S. Bureau of Land Management

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U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

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Socorro SWCD

**VII. MAPS:**

**VIII. Appendix**

- Element 1: Socorro Nature Area-(established Fall, 1996)
- Element 2: Socorro Riverine Parks-Island, Sandbar, Bosque (the Stumps), Confluence; Riverside Parks-(established October, 1997)
- Element 3: Escondida Lake Rehabilitation-(completed Fall, 1998)
- Element 4: Construct bike/walk trail from Socorro Nature Area to Socorro Riverine Park. Improve vehicle access on established roads
- Element 5: Brown Arroyo Riverside Park-(completed Summer 1999)
- Element 6: San Antonio Riverside Park-(completed, June 1998)
- Element 7: Establish bike/walk trail from Sevilleta NWR to Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge **Looking for funding.**
- Element 8: San Acacia, Cottonwood Grove, Beaver, Old Corral, Bosquecito Crossing Riverside Parks-(completed Summer, 1999)
- Element 9: Polvadera Riverside Park-(completed 1999)
- Element 10: Otero, Otero Plus, and Polvadera Plus Riverside Parks-(completed 2000)
- Element 11: The Tubes and Escondida Bridge-(completed 2001); Otero Plus removed (2001)

Attached is a map of completed Riverine and Riverside Parks.

## Appendix A

- Element 1: San Pedro Wildfire Rehabilitation Project
- Element 2: Fuel breaks and fuels reduction in and around old growth cottonwood/willow stands within the Bosque (San Acacia to US. Hwy. 380) . Riverine parks have had fuels reduction work completed. Fuel breaks established north and south of Escondida Bridge (Pueblito crossing), Socorro North Diversion channel, Otero St., Socorro Nature Area , and arroyo fuel breaks on NM Tech land on the east side of the river at Arroyo Tio del Bartolo, Presilla and Tajo
- Element 3: Planned funding for stand north of The Tubes Riverside Park using BIG money for 2002
- Element 4: NAWCA grant-NM Tech Land on the east side of the River. (Start work 5/03)
- Element 5: Retreat Riverine and Riverside Parks and the Socorro Nature Area using BIG funds for 2003
- Element 6: Conservation easements for floodplain protection and restoration
- Element 7: Treatment of noxious weeds present in Bosque. Herbaceous species are beginning to establish populations in the Bosque, sometimes under the Salt cedar infestations. Eradication of new infestations is the primary goal. Larger infestations will be managed and controlled as much as possible.

## 2003 SOBTF Program Targets

1. Complete Phase II of the SOBTF Conceptual Restoration Plan and secure funding for Phases III, IV and V.
2. Use YCC Program to repair and upgrade Socorro Nature Area facilities, Socorro Riverine and Riverside Parks and assist repair and upgrade work at Escondida Lake.
3. Treat resprouts at all fuels reduction/fuel break sites treated through the SOBTF.
4. Complete fuels reduction on:
  - a) West 5 stand, units 7 – 12 (pending funding)
  - b) Mitchell and Conklin properties
  - c) NM Tech. Hilton Ranch site
5. Initiate and look for funding sources for the sandbar monitoring program
6. Initiate data collection and monitoring on SOBTF projects such as revegetation, fuels reduction, fuel breaks and public access areas.
7. Submit proposals for the following grants or foundations:
  - a) Frost Foundation (bosque bike and hike)
  - b) EPA Environmental Education Grant Program (Socorro Nature Center experiential learning)
  - c) Bank of America and Jimmy Buffet Singing for Change Foundation (SNC exp. Learning)
  - d) North America Commission on Env. Change (Sandbar monitoring)
  - e) 5 Star Restoration Challenge Grant (surface trails between Island and Confluence Parks).
  - f) Submit grant for 2004 YCC Program
  - g) Submit grant for 2004 BIG funds
  - h) Resubmit EPA Environmental Justice Grant
  - i) Keep NM Beautiful Grant for Arbor Day plantings
  - j) Apply to Dia del Rio for Bosque Conservation Day
8. Complete Bosque Access Policy for consideration by managing agencies.
9. Increase media coverage of SOBTF activities
10. Plan 20 year anniversary of Bosque Conservation Day

