**Greater Rio Grande Watershed Alliance Project Proposal**

**Project name**: La Bajada Ranch Riparian, Wetland, and Pond Restoration

**Project type:** The project is an initial treatment to remove exotic species from Alamo Creek and its tributaries. Alamo Creek is a tributary of the Santa Fe River, near the traditional community of La Cienega.

**Project proponent:** Santa Fe Pojoaque Soil and Water Conservation District

**Project location:** The project is located at the intersection of Santa Fe Canyon Road and the Frontage Road of Interstate 25 near the village of La Cienega, approximately 15 miles southwest of the City of Santa Fe, in Santa Fe County. See Exhibit A (attached) for acreage to be treated.

**Landowner**: The landowner is Santa Fe County. The Open Space and Trails Program will be managing the Project and it has the support of the Board of County Commissioners and the County Manager.

**How is this site accessed**? The site is accessed through one of three locked gates for which the landowner can provide the combination.

**Project objective**: The objective of the project is to restore the riparian corridor and wetlands of Alamo Creek to a healthy condition by removing invasive vegetation such as Salt Cedar, Russian Olive, and Siberian Elm trees. The landowner would also like to see Juniper, a native upland species, removed from the floodway. The landowner is sensitive to the benefits the existing conditions may provide for wildlife and requests that the treatment plan take these benefits into consideration. To this end, a biological inventory of the property will be conducted prior to treatment so that existing conditions can be understood as fully as possible.

**Size of project**: This project proposal is part of a larger plan to treat the full extent of Alamo Creek, from its confluence with La Cienega Creek and the Santa Fe River to its headwaters on the Bonanza Creek Ranch. The total area in this request is approximately 18 acres.

**Current site description:** Alamo Creek is a perennial stream fed by springs. With the exception of storm events, the flow of water in the creek is slow and creates a series of wetlands and ponds along its course. The largest pond is approximately two acres in size and is located near the ranch house. The dominant vegetation along the creek is Russian Olive, Cottonwood, Elm, and Willow, and Salt Cedar, with some Juniper, Sage and Chamisa present in the downstream reach.

A Phase I Environmental Assessment of the site completed by Intera in November 2009 indicates that “The primary aquifer system at the site are the sediments of the Ancha Formation as well as the underlying Galisteo Formation…The Ancha Formation aquifer system primarily receives recharge from the Sangre de Cristo Mountains, direct infiltration of rainfall and snowmelt, and from Cerrillos Hills located south of the site. Discharge from this aquifer is primarily to Alamo Creek, Cienega Creek, Bonanza Creek, and to springs in the vicinity.”

Infrastructure at the site consists of a ranch house, a foreman’s house, a barn, a tack room, and two corrals. Currently, fencing still separates lands previously used as pasture for cattle and horses. A natural gas line and two electric power lines cross the site. The landowner will complete a biological inventory of the site to better understand the diversity of wildlife that the habitat is supporting, including any endangered or threatened species.

**Desired site condition** : After a biological inventory, the landowner will consult with the GRGWA Technical Committee to discuss the desired results for the treatment. A goal of the project is to greatly reduce, or eliminate, the invasive plants. Re-planting with native species in certain areas might be recommended to control creek bank erosion, maximize habitat, and achieve overall aquatic health.

The project has been broken down into four (4) reaches of Alamo Creek (Exhibit A), each reach has different characteristics of existing vegetation. The desired condition after treatment varies with each reach.

*Pond and Perimeter*: Algae, Elm, Salt Cedar, and Russian Olive removal

*Lower Alamo Creek*: Salt Cedar, Russian Olive, Elm, and Juniper removal

*Upper Alamo Creek:* Elm, Salt Cedar, Russian Olive, and Juniper removal

*Southwest Tributary:* Russian Olive, Elm, and Salt Cedar removal

**Justification:** The project is needed to improvethe aquatic health of Alamo Creek for the fish and wildlife that depend on it. The project will also improve erosion control on the creek banks and eliminate invasive species from the riparian corridor, thereby eliminating a seed source for these species from this tributary of the Rio Santa Fe and Rio Grande.

**Is this project adjacent or near previous restoration projects**?

Yes. The County Open Space Program worked with the Santa Fe-Pojoaque Soil and Water Conservation District to remove Russian Olive and Salt Cedar from a County owned property in La Cienega in 2009. That project area is a spring fed wetlands which drains to the Santa Fe River via La Cienega Creek. The Santa Fe-Pojoaque SWCD has also recently completed restoration work nearby on the Santa Fe River, on properties both above and below another project that Santa Fe-Pojoaque SWCD restored in 2006 on County owned land.

**Is there any baseline data (vegetation, ground water monitoring, etc.) available for this site**?

There is no baseline data available for this site.

**How and by whom will the project be maintained?** The project will be monitored, and re-treatment and adjustments to the project will be implemented, by Santa Fe County Open Space and Trails Program, under the direction of the County Public Works Department.

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SWCD board member/representative signature date