

CLEARING THE WATERS

Newsletter

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Making Pecos Canyon State Park a Reality

By Rachel Folk, Upper Pecos Watershed Association, AmeriCorps OSM/VISTA Volunteer

After years of effort, Pecos Canyon State Park was created in early 2009 with broad support from both houses of the New Mexico Legislature and Governor Richardson. The idea for creation of Pecos Canyon State Park had been advocated by several groups as the best solution to the unregulated overuse of the canyon's campgrounds and day-use areas popular with campers, picnickers, and anglers. Most of these Pecos Canyon public areas owned by the New Mexico Department of Game & Fish (NMDG&F) have serious issues including denuded riverbanks, trash, and lack of restroom facilities.

Several stretches of the Pecos River are listed as impaired for degraded water quality according to standards established by the New Mexico Environment Department for turbidity and temperature. Both higher temperatures and increased turbidity are a result of denuded riverbank vegetation and sediment washing into the stream. This warm and turbid water adversely affects habitat for trout and other wildlife.



UPWA directors Max Weber and Frank Adelo stand with signs of support for Pecos Canyon State Park before Governor Richardson announces his support for its formation.

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With the help of former San Miguel County Commissioner Huey Ley, NM Representative Lucky Varela, and NM State Senator Phil Griego, funding for a recreational impact study to document these effects was granted to the NMDG&F, and completed in June 2008. The findings of both the NMDG&F study and a study commissioned by the Upper Pecos Watershed Association (UPWA) advocated formation of a state park as the best solution for enhanced management of recreational uses, decreased environmental impact, and improved visitor experience. UPWA then formed a coalition to lobby for this solution, and urged that management, maintenance, and enforcement be shifted from NMDG&F to New Mexico State Parks. The coalition included groups such as the U.S. Forest Service, San Miguel County, the Village of Pecos, Pecos Community Foundation, Pecos Business Association, and Truchas Chapter of Trout Unlimited.

In September 2008, Governor Richardson formally announced his support for establishing Pecos Canyon State Park. The designation of Pecos Canyon as a State Park made New Mexico's 36th State Park and the 5th designation of a state park under Governor Richardson. "Establishment of Pecos Canyon State Park is a big and very positive step toward ensuring the preservation of one of New Mexico's most beautiful mountain streams and cold water fisheries," says Doug Jeffords, UPWA project coordinator.



At Mora campground (above), the lack of vegetated riparian areas allows excessive sediment to enter the river. Another issue is a lack of trash cans (below) which causes litter at several areas.



An UPWA Stakeholders Meeting in progress.

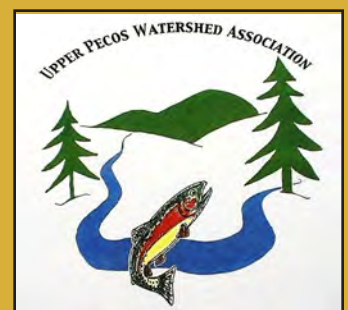
“UPWA has worked hard since its inception not only to provide the background data and information which provided a solid basis for improved management in Pecos Canyon, but also in establishing the Pecos Canyon State Park coalition which lobbied for the Park.”

- Doug Jeffords

UPWA, which was originally formed through a Clean Water Act 319 grant.

The NM Game Commission owns approximately 186 acres in six different locations along 17 miles of Pecos Canyon. While the NM Game Commission would retain ownership of these lands, under a new Joint Powers Agreement, NM State Parks would assume responsibility for management. NM State Parks has already begun to study the needs of the new park; however, until the present budget crisis ends, sufficient funds to hire staff and construct needed improvements to public areas are on hold.

For more information on the progress of Pecos Canyon State Park, please contact the UPWA office at 505-757-3600.



Wetlands Update

Senator Bingaman visits Wetland Restoration Project

By Dave Menzie, SWQB Silver City Field Office

US Senator Jeff Bingaman took a walking tour of a Surface Water Quality Bureau project intended to restore a degraded wetland in Silver City on August 20, 2009. SWQB staff led the tour which included Senator Bingaman, some of his staff, and about a dozen local individuals participating in this and several additional projects along San Vicente Creek.

San Vicente Creek is a small perennial stream that flows through Silver City beginning near the Historic District and flowing south into the Mimbres Basin where it provides significant groundwater recharge. The Cienega de San Vicente Wetland Project is a four-year project that started in March 2009, and will restore 30 acres of floodplain and wetland owned by the Town of Silver City. The project is funded through a CWA Section 104 (b)(3) Wetland Program Development Grant from US EPA Region 6.



Senator Jeff Bingaman listens as Peter Russell with the Town of Silver City along with other stakeholders discuss projects and issues related to San Vicente Creek.

Know Your Watershed Update

Watershed Signs Project

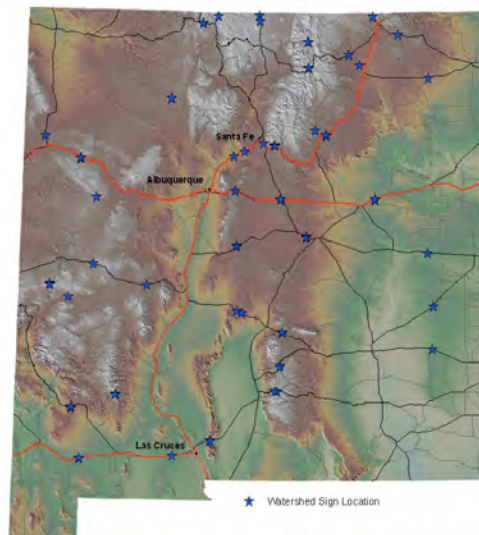
By Jeremy Kruger, EMNRD Forest and Watershed Health Office

Bright blue-and-white signs now greet travelers along major roadways as they enter 23 different New Mexico watersheds. The highway signs are the most visible component of the state's Know Your Watershed Campaign, a public outreach and education project of the New Mexico Forestry Division's Forest and Watershed Health Office. The campaign's goal is to promote awareness that watersheds are the source of the state's rivers, lakes, and groundwater, and that all New Mexicans live in a watershed. Citizens who understand the importance of healthy watersheds will support good land stewardship in their communities.

An important way to raise public awareness of a river and its watershed is by the use of signs that mark the watershed boundaries. These can help the public understand the connection between the watercourses in their area and the land that drains to them. The watershed signs project is a collaborative effort between New Mexico State Forestry, New Mexico Department of Transportation (NMDOT), Santa Fe Watershed Association, and Earthworks. The project expanded a pilot project in Santa Fe County to a statewide initiative with funding for the project from a Bureau of Reclamation grant. The signs are being installed by NMDOT district offices around the state. Look for them in a watershed near you!



Know Your Watershed - Watershed Signs



★ Watershed Sign Location



Watershed Protection Section Update

New Projects to begin in 2010

By Abe Franklin, Program Manager

The Watershed Protection Section and cooperators have completed workplans for six new projects to be funded under Section 319 of the Clean Water Act. These projects were identified through two Requests for Proposals conducted in 2009, and will be funded after EPA's final approval. Here is a summary of each:

Paso del Norte Watershed Based Plan

This project will revise an existing watershed plan for the El Paso-Las Cruces Watershed to address the nine planning elements in EPA's Nonpoint Source Program and Grants Guidelines for States and Territories (<http://www.epa.gov/owow/nps/cwact.html>). The main focus of the planning effort will be to determine how best to implement Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) for E. coli in four reaches of the lower Rio Grande. The New Mexico Department of Agriculture plans to serve as fiscal sponsor for the Paso del Norte Watershed Council, which will implement the project for a combined cost (Section 319 and non-federal match) of \$423,877.



Stormwater Quality Best Management Practices and Monitoring in Bernalillo County, NM

This project has four components: 1) engineering evaluation, prioritization and construction of stormwater management measures, 2) education and enforcement activities to support responsible septage disposal practices, 3) monitoring of precipitation, stormwater flows, water temperatures, and bacteria at strategic locations, and 4) revision of the Rio Grande-Albuquerque watershed plan to address the nine planning elements in EPA's NPS Guidelines. The Ciudad Soil and Water Conservation District will implement the project for a combined cost of \$368,363.



Mill/Scott Prescribed Burn

This project will be implemented on approximately 2,138 acres of ponderosa pine forest within the Sapillo Creek watershed, to partially address a turbidity TMDL in Sapillo Creek. The Gila National Forest will implement the project for a combined cost (Section 319 and non-federal match) of \$58,500, plus significant Forest Service operational funding.



Updated Watershed Based Plan for Cimarron Watershed

This project will revise an existing watershed plan to address the nine planning elements in EPA's Nonpoint Source Program and Grants Guidelines for States and Territories, with emphasis on impaired reaches of Cieneguilla Creek, Middle Ponil Creek, Moreno Creek, North Ponil Creek, Ponil Creek, Rayado Creek, and Sixmile Creek. The Cimarron Watershed Alliance will implement the project for a combined cost of \$115,980.



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Restoring San Antonio Creek

This project will partially address turbidity and temperature impairments within San Antonio Creek, in the Jemez watershed, using a variety of bank stabilization and upland erosion treatments. The project complements another project that is focused on improving drainage and reducing erosion caused by a pipeline road. Los Amigos de Valles Caldera will implement the project for a combined cost of \$344,056.



Respect the Rio: Managing Uplands to Improve Water Quality

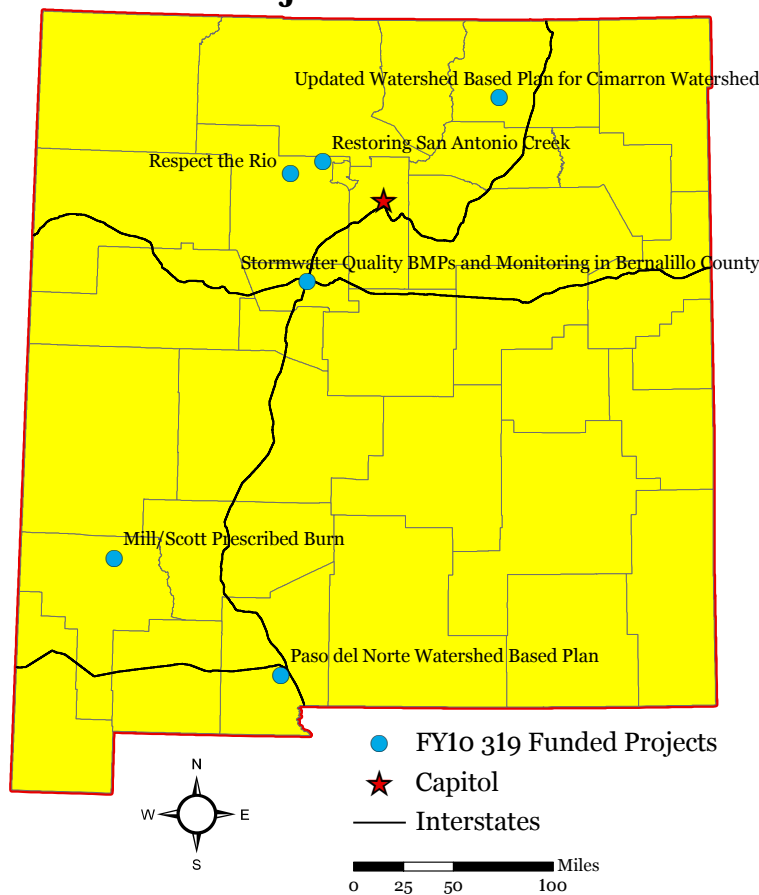
This project will bring new pasture fences, non-riparian water sources, and a riparian enclosure with accompanying meadow restoration to Forest Service allotments within the upper Rio Cebolla, Rio de las Vacas, and lower San Antonio Creek subwatersheds to partially address several TMDLs within the Jemez watershed. The Santa Fe National Forest will implement the project for a combined cost of \$374,973.

Please Note!

While the Watershed Protection Section recognizes the value of each project, and agrees with the cooperators that each represents the appropriate next steps toward addressing nonpoint source pollution in each watershed, three of the projects may not fully meet the planning requirements described in EPA's Nonpoint Source Program and Grants Guidelines for States and Territories. We encourage those with an interest in water quality and future on-the-ground project implementation to review EPA's Guidelines and consider undertaking planning efforts, if necessary, to produce an updated watershed plan with all nine planning elements. Watershed Protection Section staff are available to provide technical support for watershed planning, and can also provide financial support through a Request For Proposals planned for early 2010.

For more information, contact any Section staff or Abe Franklin at 505-827-2793 or abraham.franklin@state.nm.us.

FY10 Section 319 Grant Awards Project Locations



Cooperator Spotlight

Acoma Youth Conservation Corps

By Harry Bruell, President Southwest Conservation Corps



“I will remember working with this fine group of individuals working together to make the community better.”

“AYCC made a huge impact on me! I enjoy working for this program because I learn something new every summer.”

These are quotes from two of the 43 participants in the 2009 Acoma Youth Conservation Corps (AYCC), an eight-week summer conservation program of Acoma Pueblo, the Southwest Conservation Corps (SCC) and the New Mexico Youth Conservation Corps. The AYCC members worked in crews to complete projects for Acoma Pueblo including habitat improvement, stream restoration, weed management, and trail construction. Most importantly, the participants were empowered as leaders in their community by being engaged as paid resources to accomplish significant community projects. In exit surveys, 100% felt they had made a positive impact on the environment and the community, had a better understanding of the environment and would participate again in a similar program. Seventy six percent said that they would ‘definitely’ or ‘most likely’ continue to be active in protecting the environment while only three percent said they would probably not be active. Not surprisingly, these results stem from the program promoting personal growth, experiential learning, life skills development, career development, civic responsibility, and an ethic of natural resource stewardship.

The AYCC came about through a partnership between SCC and Acoma Pueblo. Founded in 1998 to continue the legacy of the 1930s Civilian Conservation Corps, SCC employs and trains a diverse group of young adults, and completes important conservation projects. SCC’s projects are sponsored primarily by land management agencies and municipalities throughout the southwest. The non-profit organization is headquartered in Durango, CO with year-round offices in Salida, CO and Tucson, AZ and a new seasonal office at Acoma Pueblo, NM. In 2009, SCC completed more than 150,000 hours of service on public lands and employed over 600 young people serving a large variety of abilities, skill levels, and age groups from middle school to people with graduate degrees while providing a weekly stipend, an AmeriCorps Education Award, and on-the-job training. SCC operates a variety of programs, based on a step-ladder model that encourages individuals to improve their skills and progress into more challenging programs.

Native American youth (primarily Navajo, Zuni, Hopi and Acoma) have historically



Summer 2009 Acoma Youth Conservation Corps

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comprised approximately one quarter of the corpsmembers enrolled at SCC's Durango office. In 2007, SCC Board Member Cornell Torivio of Acoma Pueblo began advocating for SCC to develop a conservation corps program at his home community to increase the number of youth who have the opportunity to participate in a conservation corps. In partnership with Acoma Pueblo, SCC applied for, and received, funding from the New Mexico Youth Conservation Corps to operate three crews for 14-18 year old local youth in summers of 2008 and 2009. SCC serves as the fiscal agent and program operator while Acoma Pueblo identifies the projects, contributes match funding and provides oversight to the program. All program staff members are Acoma and report regularly to Tribal Council and the Acoma Governor.



Acoma YCC corpmembers on a recreational use improvement project at Acomita Lake.

The program has been highly successful and has become a model for engaging Native American youth, providing jobs for local young adults, and investing resources back in the local community. US Senators Jeff Bingaman and Tom Udall recently introduced the Public Lands Service Corps Act of 2009, which includes a subsection creating an "Indian Youth Service Corps" modeled partly after SCC's Acoma program. SCC will add a Preservation Crew and camping Conservation Corps Crews to its Acoma day crews in 2010. The Preservation Crew will be restoring historic and pre-historic sites for the National Park Service while the Conservation Corps Crews will complete conservation projects on public lands across northwestern New Mexico and southwestern Colorado. Future projects may include trail construction and maintenance, fencing, habitat improvement, wetland rehabilitation, watershed/stream restoration, weed management, hazardous fuel reduction, and revegetation.

In addition, SCC is working with other Tribal communities to develop local programs to engage additional Native American youth. As the AYCC demonstrates, the corps experience is powerful and SCC is committed to providing corps opportunities for as many young people as it can.



A SCC crew installs straw wattles to control erosion.

For more information on the Southwest Conservation Corps, including employment and hiring a crew for your organization, see <http://sccorps.org/>.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

November 12th - NM State Assessment Stakeholder's Meeting.

This is the prioritization meeting for stakeholders for the NM statewide assessment of natural resources. The 8 panels will be presented, discussed and attendees will help prioritize information for developing the final NM State Assessment strategy and plan. Marriott Uptown, Albuquerque. If interested in attending, please contact Kim Kostelnik, State Forestry 505-476-3337.

December 8th - Water Quality Standards Triennial Review.

The New Mexico Water Quality Control Commission (WQCC) will hold a public hearing beginning at 9:00 a.m. on December 8, 2009 and continuing on subsequent days as necessary in Room 309 of the State Capitol Building, 490 Old Santa Fe Trail, Santa Fe, to consider proposed amendments to 20.6.4 NMAC - Standards for Interstate and Intrastate Surface Waters. The hearing is part of the triennial review of surface water quality standards that is required by Section 303(c) of the federal Clean Water Act. For more details, see <ftp://ftp.nmenv.state.nm.us/www/HearingOfficer/TriennialReview/TriennialReview-WQCCPublicNotice07-17-2009.pdf>

December 15th - Paso del Norte Watershed Council Meeting. Doña Ana County Government Center (Rooms 113/117 Multipurpose Room, 845 North Motel Blvd.) in Las Cruces from 3-5PM.

December 15th - Rio Grande Citizens Forum. Doña Ana County Government Center (Rooms 113/117 Multipurpose Room, 845 North Motel Blvd.) in Las Cruces from 6-8PM.

January 2, 2010 - Upper Pecos Watershed Association Stakeholders Meeting. 6:30 PM Location TBD.

February 8 (approximate date) - NMED-issued RFP for watershed planning projects and possible RFP for on-the-ground projects

February 25-26 - 15th International Water Conservation & Xeriscape Conference - Albuquerque
<http://www.xeriscapenm.com/>



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