

# Healthy Streamside Wetlands

*A guide to good stewardship for  
southwestern bosque and riparian wetlands*



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## 1. INTRODUCTION

This booklet is for you if you have any kind of streamside or wetland area that you want to take care of and understand better. It is a monitoring and maintenance guide for landowners, volunteers, and anyone else who is responsible for small southwestern *riparian* (or streamside) wetlands, woodlands, restoration sites or protected areas.

It begins with a little background information on how river systems, and the riparian wetlands, woodlands, and meadows on their banks, work in the southwestern United States. There are also some relatively simple, easy, and inexpensive techniques to understand how healthy a riparian area or wetland is, and what to do to help keep it that way, or make it more healthy, functional, and beautiful. It is not a guide for initial, major restoration work—that is a subject far too big, varied, and complex to cover here. Rather, it offers suggestions for how to maintain and manage a riparian area or wetland that is already in reasonably good condition ecologically—in other words, it is not dominated by invasive, non-native trees like Russian olive or salt cedar, and the soil still gets good and wet for at least some of the year. In many cases, this would mean that your area has already benefited from ecological restoration of some kind, like removing invasive trees, perhaps re-planting native plants along bare stream banks, or earthwork to enhance stream meandering.

In this booklet, as in the Spanish spoken in the southwest, the word *bosque* means a streamside or riparian woodland, historically dominated by cottonwood trees and periodically flooded. It is a very useful word, and we will use it interchangeably with “riparian area,” as a kind of shorthand term for riverside wetland or woodland that includes any or all riparian communities: giant cottonwoods, dense willow thickets, marshland full of cattails and sedges, grassy meadows, and other streamside plant communities.



1.a] Mature bosque composed of diverse riparian communities