

# CLEARING THE WATERS

## Newsletter

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Guest Editors:  
Chris Canavan  
Dave Menzie  
Matt Schultz

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## Western Hardrock Watershed Team Expands Into New Mexico

By Katrina Dahlman, WHWT Recruiting Coordinator

The Western Hardrock Watershed Team (WHWT) is an innovative initiative between the United States Office of Surface Mining and AmeriCorps VISTA programs that pairs college-educated volunteers with community groups for a year in areas of Colorado and New Mexico impacted by economic decline and environmental degradation. These volunteers, called OSM/VISTAs, center their work around WHWT's core goals: building community capacity; supporting watershed research, water-quality monitoring and clean water initiatives; encouraging environmental education and awareness; and developing economic sustainability within the community/watershed. Founded by Dr. T Allan Comp in Colorado, the flourishing program seeks to improve the quality of life and water within communities.

This summer 12 new volunteers will join the Team, bringing the total to 30 full-time, year-long volunteers and 20 VISTA Summer Associate volunteers. Two of those volunteers will begin work in New Mexico, marking the Team's first efforts toward expansion.



Torie Bowman, VISTA Leader for the WHWT, expresses enthusiasm about working with New Mexican community/watershed groups. She

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**NMED Surface Water Quality Bureau's Watershed Protection Section**

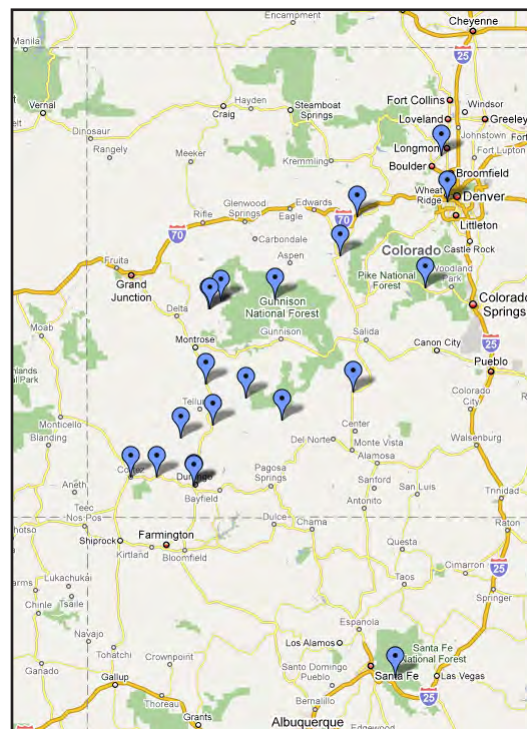
[www.nmenv.state.nm.us/swqb/wps](http://www.nmenv.state.nm.us/swqb/wps)

## ***TEAM continued from page 1***

states, “The Hardrock Team is excited because this expansion allows us to move forward with our mission to create a well-supported regional network of watershed groups working on historic mining issues. We believe many of the issues and challenges facing these communities can be solved easier and faster once networks and partnerships expand and we can all work together.”

The key to the Western Hardrock Watershed Team’s success is skilled, determined volunteers working locally. The result is a sustainable model that reaches rural areas where lack of jobs, training, and funding results in a dwindling population and local economy. The first New Mexican WHWT OSM/VISTA arrived in Pecos, NM, in July to work with the Upper Pecos Watershed Association. For the Team, this is only the beginning of a regional expansion that it hopes will bring sustainable, community based watershed management to rural communities.

The work that OSM/VISTAs do often translates into great success. Former OSM/VISTA Camille Richard came onto the Team to build the capacity of Lake Fork Watershed Stakeholders (LFWS), a watershed group in her hometown of Lake City, Colorado. In a year of service, Camille wrote a grant which now funds her own new full-time job (think job creation in small communities), all the while assuring that LFWS will continue to grow and promote watershed sustainability. Since the Team started in 2007, 23 OSM/VISTAs with the WHWT have generated over 3,000 hours of community service, over \$260,000 in-kind donations, and over \$300,000 in grants and other cash donations in Colorado.



*Current Western Hardrock Watershed Team volunteer locations (blue pushpins) cover a wide area of watersheds, ranging from the Denver area over to the Western Slope of Colorado, and down to Pecos, New Mexico (map courtesy of Google Earth).*



*OSM/VISTA Amy Weinfurter and local volunteers test for water quality and flow.*

As the Team expands into New Mexico in collaboration with the New Mexico Abandoned Mine Land Program and the New Mexico Environment Department, more community/watershed organizations are needed to host year-long volunteers. WHWT is looking for watershed groups interested in pursuing the core goals of the WHWT: capacity building, water monitoring, environmental education and awareness building, and economic development.

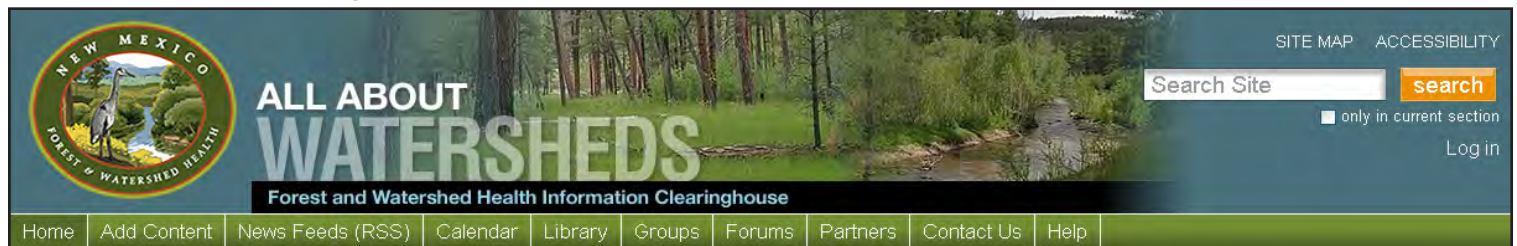
### **Calling all watershed/community groups!**

If you know of a group that could use a year-long, full-time volunteer, please contact Katrina Dahlman at [co@hardrockteam.org](mailto:co@hardrockteam.org) or call (970)-403-0317. Find the Team online at <http://www.hardrockteam.org>.

# Technology Update

## New Online Watershed Resource for New Mexico

The Forest and Watershed Health Information Clearinghouse “All About Watersheds” ([www.allaboutwatersheds.org](http://www.allaboutwatersheds.org)) provides centralized access to ecological, socio-cultural, and economic information related to stewardship and restoration of New Mexico forests and watersheds. The Clearinghouse functions as a library as well as a shared workspace. Content can be uploaded, organized topically, and searched by clearinghouse users. Shared workspace will also enhance collaboration, training, and knowledge among those involved in restoration, particularly groups without the capacity for their own website development. The Clearinghouse is a joint project of New Mexico State Forestry and the New Mexico Forest and Watershed Restoration Institute (NMFWR I), pursuant to the state’s Forest and Watershed Health Plan. The Clearinghouse is currently operational, but still in an early stage of development. In the future, this accessible and usable information will help facilitate all aspects of ecological restoration including coordinating efforts, disseminating information, and sharing successes.



## Cooperator Spotlight



**The New Mexico Riparian Council is an organization dedicated to “the continued survival, maintenance and enhancement of riparian systems in New Mexico for further benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations.”**

The New Mexico Riparian Council was established in 1991 with the goal of exchanging information on the status, ecology, management, and enhancement of riparian systems and their contributing watersheds in New Mexico. The Council provides an information clearinghouse among agencies, organizations, and individuals involved with riparian systems, and functions in an advisory capacity on questions relating to the management, conservation, and enhancement of riparian systems. The Council establishes programs to increase public awareness of the importance, proper management, and enhancement of riparian systems by sponsoring symposia, workshops, and related meetings to present up-to-date information regarding riparian systems. Moreover, the Council annually commends outstanding action by those supporting these goals. Awards include the Taylor Lifetime Achievement Award, Partnership Award, Research Award, Habitat Enhancement Awards, and the Public Awareness & Education Award.

For more information including how to join the New Mexico Riparian Council, or to nominate someone for an award, see [www.ripariancouncil.org](http://www.ripariancouncil.org).

# Funding Program Update

## River Ecosystem Restoration Initiative

By Karen Menetrey, RERI Coordinator

Two years after Governor Richardson announced his 2007 “Year of Water” River Ecosystem Restoration Initiative (RERI), the projects funded through the initiative are gaining momentum, leveraging other government and private funding, and restoring river ecosystems. On the Pecos River at the Bitter Lake National Wildlife Refuge, the US Fish and Wildlife Service has re-directed the river to a historic oxbow, reconnecting the river to its floodplain and enhancing important habitat for native fish and birds. At Bottomless Lakes State Park, salt cedar has been cleared to make way for the restoration of a 43-acre wetland that will include interpretive nature trails. On the Rio Puerco near Cuba, New Mexico, the Wild Earth Guardians and their Stream Team of volunteers have removed non-native vegetation and planted 15,000 willow whips, 2,000 cottonwood poles, 250 other riparian plants, and 400 pounds of grass seed, then enclosed the plants in elk-proof fences to help ensure establishment and survivorship. On the lower Rio Grande, the Elephant Butte Irrigation District has re-contoured a weed-choked agricultural drain for conversion into lush wildlife habitat.

These are just a few of the 27 RERI projects across the state. To date the state legislature has appropriated \$6.9 million in RERI funding. There are RERI projects in nearly all the major river basins of New Mexico: Rio Grande, San Juan, Pecos, Gila, Canadian, and Dry Cimarron. This initiative complements the Clean Water Act 319 and Wetlands programs administered by the NMED Surface Water Quality Bureau, but the emphasis of RERI is on enhancing native flora and fauna and river functioning as well as improving surface water quality. The project objectives are diverse, ranging from reducing bank erosion and recreating a healthy riparian bosque to preserving specific populations of threatened and endangered plants and animals, such as the Pecos sunflower, Mexican tetra, Pecos pupfish, Pecos River muskrat, Southwest willow flycatcher and Chiricahua leopard frog. Projects are implemented by a variety of contractors including local, state, federal, and tribal agencies; non-profit organizations; local watershed groups; and soil and water conservation districts. Projects are also being implemented using a diverse restoration toolbox: some projects use local volunteers who will become future stewards of their watersheds; some use natural materials to redirect streams to a more natural condition; some address long-term inundation of invasive species by restoring native vegetation; and some conserve floodplain areas threatened by development.

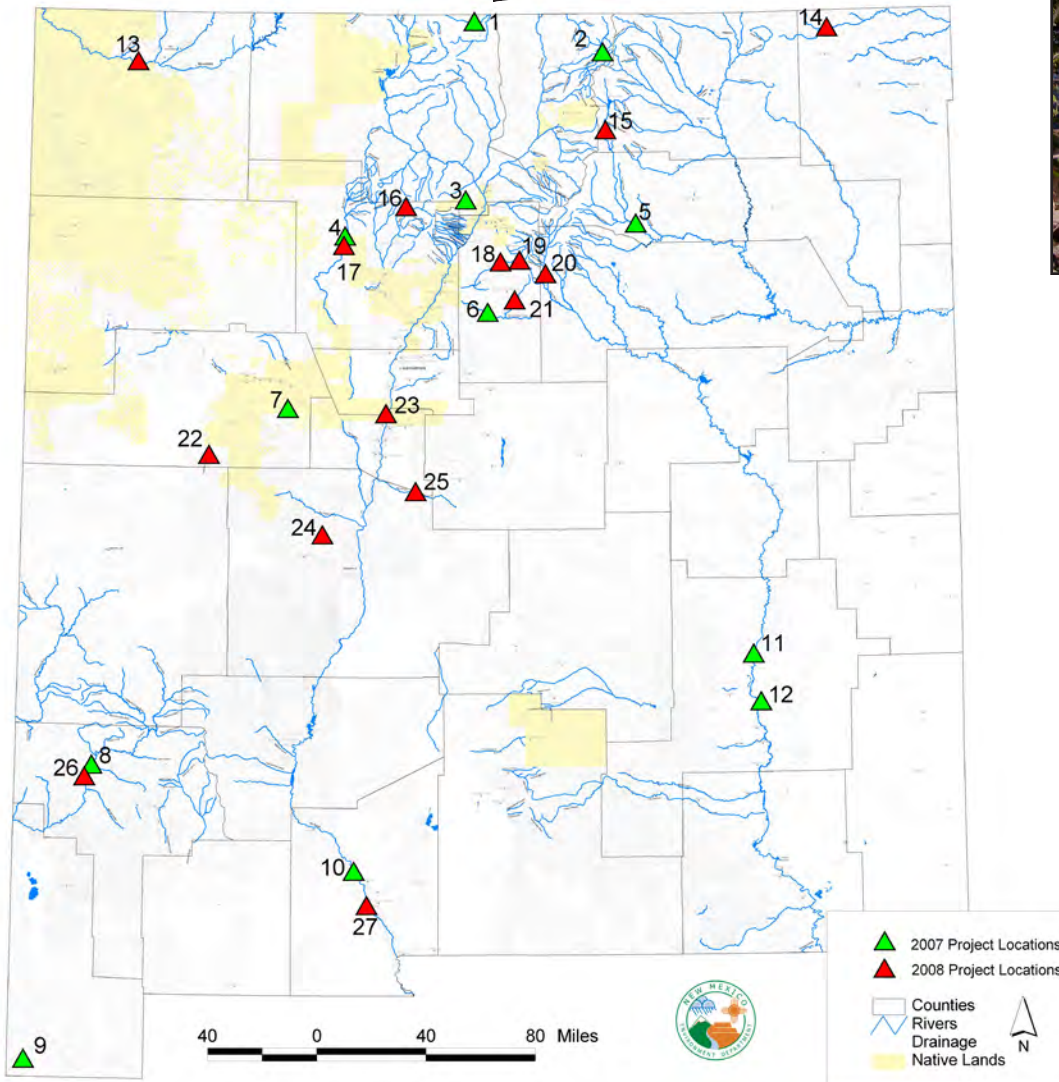


*Roswell Venture Scouts and 4-H members assist the USFWS collect baseline data on the Pecos River. Hydrologic data will be used to evaluate the benefits of a river restoration project on the Bitter Lake National Wildlife Refuge. Photo credit: Ken Stinnett Photography.*

**Continued on page 5**

In 2009, the legislature appropriated \$1.5 million for RERI. Proposals for the current funding cycle were recently due August 10, 2009. Proposals must have been for a physical project that restores instream ecosystem function and watershed health. Evaluation criteria for the proposals emphasize the important aspects of the initiative including: technical feasibility, sustainability, conservation of biological diversity, collaboration, education, link to a local or state planning document, and long-term stewardship. Proposals are ranked by a multi-agency evaluation committee with final approval by the Governor's Office.

**For more information on the River Ecosystem Restoration Initiative, please see <http://www.nmenv.state.nm.us/swqb/neri/>.**



*Stretches of the Rio de los Pinos have suffered from severe soil erosion, loss of riparian vegetation, elevated water temperature, and channel widening. The Rio de los Pinos restoration project is aimed at stabilizing stream banks, increasing canopy cover, and decreasing the width/depth ratio. The pictured cross vane is a grade control structure that decreases bank shear stress, velocity and stream power, but increases the energy in the center of the channel. These structures will establish grade control, reduce bank erosion, create a stable width/depth ratio, maintain channel capacity, while maintaining sediment transport. Photo credit: Marcel Reynolds*

*Locations of the 2007-2008 RERI projects across the state.*

## 319 Project Spotlight

### Taos County Land Project uses multiple grants for water project By: David Manzanares, RC&D Coordinator, Northern Rio Grande RC&D Council

The Taos County Land Project (TCLP) Livestock Grazing Allotment on the Carson National Forest has been collaborating with the US Forest Service, New Mexico Environment Department, Natural Resources Conservation Service and the Northern Rio Grande RC&D Council to develop, fund, and implement a Coordinated Resource Management Plan. Developed through a stakeholder consensus decision-making process, the Coordinated Resource Management Plan identified soil deposition into the Rio Grande as a major resource concern. The Rio Grande from non-pueblo Santa Clara to Embudo Creek is currently in non-attainment of New Mexico Water Quality Standards for its designated uses as marginal coldwater and warmwater fisheries. One of the probable causes of impairment has been identified in the 2008-2010 State of New Mexico Integrated Clean Water Act §303(d)/§305(b) Report as turbidity.

Addressing the resource issues required seeking and securing financial assistance to implement the Best Management Practices (BMPs) outlined in the plan. The grazing association learned from the Northern Rio Grande RC&D of a potential funding source administered by the New Mexico Environment Department called “319 Grant.” This grant program is designed to improve water quality on perennial streams that do not meet State Water Quality Standards. The Northern Rio Grande RC&D invited the New Mexico Environment Department to a meeting with the group to discuss 319 program specifics. After some discussion the group decided to develop and submit a funding proposal to the next 319 Request For Proposals.



*Installation of the pipeline, which will improve livestock distribution on the allotment by offering multiple watering sources throughout the area rather than a single source that tends to concentrate grazing.*

The goal of TCLP’s 319 proposal was to modify their current management and develop several range improvements to improve water quality and reduce nonpoint source pollution. With the BMPs of a planned water development and pasture fence to better distribute livestock grazing, they would be able to provide critical rest to pastures. Brush control and range seeding would further improve herbaceous ground cover, increase forage production, promote infiltration, and reduce erosion. The ultimate goal is to fully implement a planned grazing system that will reduce nonpoint source pollution and improve plant communities for many generations. After the proposal was submitted, the New Mexico Environment Department convened a committee of proposal reviewers and decided to fund the project for \$227,986 with some stipulations.

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The grazing association had to complete the project within three years, and match the grant with 40% cash/in-kind services towards the total cost of the project.

The 8-mile livestock pipeline was installed in May 2009. The permittees are in the process of ordering materials to build the planned livestock holding pens and are waiting for the U.S. Forest Service to complete the required Environmental Assessment to continue with implementation of the remainder of the plan, which also includes funding from the NRCS Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). Many community members have reservations about using these types of grants due to the challenge of providing the required match. This project demonstrates that with grant funds, real and lasting solutions to erosion can be implemented, and that, with some creativity, matching contributions can be achieved. The livestock grazing association was extremely happy to see their livestock pipeline in the ground. They still need to install pipeline laterals, drinking troughs, and a water storage tank, but are well on their way to completion of the conservation plan. The goal of these activities is to build awareness of available funding programs to the greater community, and showcase the good things that can occur when community members work together towards a common goal.

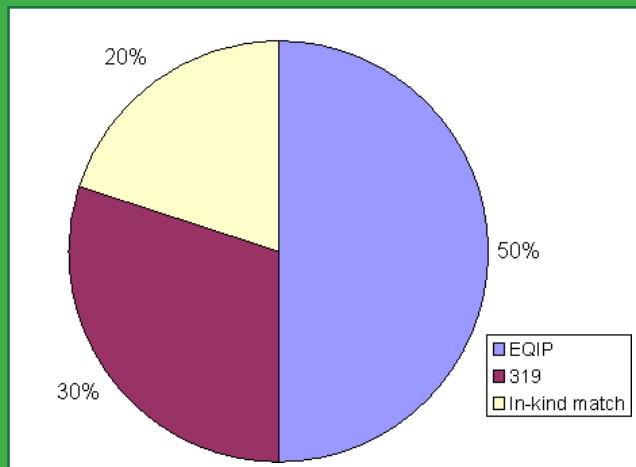
## **EQIP and 319 grant programs can be used together**

Two grant funds can be used together (i.e. leveraged) to assist agricultural producers while improving surface water quality. Money from the Section 319 and Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), administered by the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) respectively, can be used together to reduce the financial burden of undertaking voluntary conservation projects. Enabling these programs to work cooperatively seems like a natural combination for producers that could implement best management practices benefiting their operations adjacent to perennial rivers that are listed by NMED as having water quality impairments due to nonpoint source pollution. Best management practices are generally designed to conserve soils, improve soil moisture storage, and sustain vegetative cover in order to improve water quality by preventing or reducing runoff of sediment, nutrients, and other pollutants from the land to waterbodies.

**The typical formula for EQIP/319 leveraged projects is:**  
**(Total expenses including match - NRCS EQIP payments) X 60% = 319 reimbursement**

This formula works in a variety of situations since the EQIP program tends to have variable standard rates and cost shares so it's much easier to calculate the 319 reimbursement after the EQIP reimbursement is determined to arrive at actual numbers based on costs and reimbursements. The remaining 40% from the formula is considered the in-kind non-federal match. Both EQIP and Section 319 have as a general principle that an applicant should contribute something to funded projects, in either cash or in-kind labor. Examples of acceptable match include hourly salaries of personnel paid from non-federal sources, a projection of the fair market value of time donated to project related activities, and fair market value for utilization of privately owned equipment.

For more information, contact Abe Franklin, Watershed Protection Section Program Manager, at (505)-827-2793 or [abraham.franklin@state.nm.us](mailto:abraham.franklin@state.nm.us).



*For example, if the total cost of the BMP installation was \$10,000 and the NRCS cost share was 50%, then NRCS would reimburse the producer \$5,000 and the 319 program would reimburse \$3,000 with the remaining \$2,000 serving as the cooperator contributed in-kind match*

# ANNOUNCEMENTS

**August 21-23rd** - Quivira Coalition, Comanche Creek Restoration Workshop.

Register Online: [http://quiviracoalition.org/Workshops\\_\\_\\_Events/index.html](http://quiviracoalition.org/Workshops___Events/index.html)

**September 12th** - Earthworks Institute, Wetland restoration work day at Cerro Pelon Ranch (RERI project). Volunteers welcome. Contact [Kina@earthworksinstitute.org](mailto:Kina@earthworksinstitute.org) for more information. <http://earthworksinstitute.org/>

**September 18-20th** - Albuquerque Wildlife Federation, Aldo Leopold Centennial Celebration at Steward Meadows (Carson National Forest) Habitat Restoration Project (EPA Wetlands Project). Volunteers welcome. For more information see <http://abq.nmwildlife.org/index.html> or <http://www.leopoldcelebration.org/events.html>.

**September 17-20th** - Fifth Annual Gila River Festival "Celebrating 100 Years of Aldo Leopold's Legacy in the Southwest." <http://www.gilaconservation.org/5thannualgrf.shtml>

**September 27th** - Gully Rehabilitation Workshop (319 project) in the Mimbres Valley in southern NM. Contact Rebecca Benevidez at the Grant Soil and Water Conservation District 575-388-1416 to sign up and receive more details.

**October 14-16th** - 54th Annual New Mexico Water Conference "Water Planning in a Time of Uncertainty." Isleta Casino and Resort. <http://wri.nmsu.edu/conf/conf09/conf.html>

**October 16-18th** - Albuquerque Wildlife Federation, Cebolla Canyon Restoration Project (EPA Wetlands Project). Volunteers welcome. For more information see <http://abq.nmwildlife.org/index.html>

**October 28-31st** - Chihuahua Section of the Asociación Mexicana de Profesionales Forestales (AMPF) and the Southwest Section of the Society of American Foresters (SAF) Biennial Reunion with the theme "Ecosystem Restoration." Albuquerque, NM. To register, contact Kent Reid at [rkreid@nmhu.edu](mailto:rkreid@nmhu.edu) or 505-426-2145.



New Mexico Environment Department  
Surface Water Quality Bureau  
Watershed Protection Section  
Harold Runnels Building  
P.O. Box 5469  
1190 St. Francis Drive  
Santa Fe, NM 87502-5469