



State of New Mexico

Office of the Governor

Bill Richardson
Governor

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Governor Richardson & Natural Resources Trustee Restore Rio Grande Nature Center State Park

SANTA FE -- Governor Bill Richardson and Natural Resources Trustee Jim Baca have provided funding to conserve groundwater in the Rio Grande Nature Center State Park located in Albuquerque.

"This is a further commitment of my administration to protecting our water, endangered species and landscapes for future New Mexicans," Governor Bill Richardson said.

More than 2,000 high-water use non-native plants are being removed from 10 acres of land at the Nature Center. These invasive species are being replaced with more than 450 native plants and grasses. Trustee Baca said, "There will be a net reduction in water consumption resulting in groundwater conservation while restoring a valuable wildlife habitat."

Trustee Baca pointed out that invasive plants are to be removed manually to minimize disturbance to the birds and other wildlife at the Nature Center. State Park Superintendent, Beth Dillingham, directed Steve Cox, wildlife biologist who has studied bird populations at the Nature Center State Park for more than 20 years, to oversee the project to ensure protection of the birds and their habitat. Not all of the non-native plants will be removed immediately. Some will remain until the new plants mature. At that time the Park's staff will remove the few remaining invasive plants.

“This project will show that water conservation, fire protection, and wildlife habitat enhancement are compatible goals,” said Dave Simon, Director of State Parks. “The end result will be a richer more diverse bosque that supports abundant wildlife and provides a wonderful place for the public to enjoy.”

The Office of Natural Resources Trustee is funding this effort - at a cost of \$605,000 -- from a natural resource damage settlement earmarked for groundwater restoration in the middle Rio Grande. Planning and implementation of this and more than 450 acres of bosque restoration are the result of coordination among the NM Office of Natural Resources Trustee, the Mid-Region Council of Governments, Ciudad Soil and Water Conservation District and NM State Parks.

The Nature Center restoration project will not only conserve water but will also re-create a healthy bosque environment for birds and other wildlife. The restoration is scheduled to start on March 9th and it is expected to continue through the end of the month.

Any questions regarding the funding and purpose of this project should be directed to Jim Baca or Rebecca Neri Zagal (phone #243-8087) with the Office of Natural Resources Trustee. Questions specific or concerning habitat and wildlife should be directed to the Nature Center (phone # 505-344- 7240).

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