

RIO GRANDE WATER TRANSACTIONS PROGRAM

USIBWC Canalization Project Reach

OBJECTIVE:

To develop and implement a cooperative, market-based environmental water transaction program to acquire or lease water rights from willing sellers to benefit riparian, wetland and meadow habitat on up to 30 restoration sites totaling over 500 acres within the USIBWC Rio Grande Canalization Project in Doña Ana County and Sierra County. The program will be developed in cooperation with local irrigation districts and willing water rights holders, and will address environmental water needs associated with supplemental irrigation and/or increased evapotranspiration at priority restoration sites while exploring water acquisition approaches for a periodic environmental peak release to enhance the health of the river ecosystem.

FUNDING:

This program is made possible through funding from the USIBWC provided to the USFWS, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Audubon New Mexico, and cooperating irrigation districts.

KEY ATTRIBUTES OF THE PROGRAM

- Collaborative: Developed in consultation with irrigation districts and governmental agencies.
- Voluntary: Environmental water will be donated, leased or acquired in fee from willing water rights holders.
- Market-based: Price will be determined based on laws of supply and demand via appraisal, reverse auction, or other appropriate means.
- Irrigation District Board Approved Transfers: Rio Grande Project water will be transferred through a EBID or EP#1 board approved leasing, voluntary suspension and transfer or reclassification process
- Shared Water Shortages: Restoration sites will receive an equitable allocation of Project water, sharing equally on a percentage basis during times of water shortage.

ACTIVITIES AND CONSERVATION OUTCOMES:

January-June 2012:

- Identification of Program Objectives and Targets for Environmental Water
- Prioritization of Restoration Sites
- Water Market Research and Price Forecast
- Strategic Planning and Generation of a Logic Model

July-December 2012:

- Identification of Program Parameters for Transaction Framework
- Memorandum of Understanding signed by USIBWC, Reclamation, EBID
- Assessment of Transactional Approaches
- Earned Media and Other Communications

January-August 2013:

- Outreach to Water Rights Holders, Processing Of Bids, And Negotiation of Option Agreements
- Due Diligence Investigation of Water Rights under Option
- Irrigation District Board Hearings Requesting Voluntary Suspension and Transfer
- USIBWC Approval and Funding of Water Rights Acquisition

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION CONTACT:

National Fish and Wildlife Foundation:

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that preserves and restores our nation's native wildlife species and habitats. Created by Congress in 1984, NFWF directs public conservation dollars to the most pressing environmental needs and matches those investments with private funds. Under its Western Water Program, the Foundation will be responsible for administering USIBWC program funding and will provide oversight and technical assistance to the development of the Rio Grande Water Transactions Program.

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Audubon New Mexico

Audubon New Mexico is a 501(c)(3) non-profit dedicated to conserving and restoring natural ecosystems, focusing on birds, other wildlife and their habitats for the benefit of humanity and the earth's biological diversity. Audubon is the local organization responsible for planning, development and implementation of the Rio Grande Water Transactions Program.

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Ecosystem Economics is a firm specializing in application of economics to ecosystem management and restoration. Ecosystem Economics will provide expertise in water transactional analysis including design of water transaction approaches, marketing of offers and processing of bids, and economic analysis of water markets including price forecasting, and strategic planning.

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