

# Rio Grande Valley State Park maintenance, improvements, and developments

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**Abstract.**—Managing the Rio Grande Valley State Park as a valued riparian-wetland area is very important as it encourages conditions for the growth of vegetation. This growth supports a riparian community consisting of various insects, animals, birds, and fish, as well as other wildlife. Human activity in riparian areas has led to historic use patterns causing erosion, re-location of animals and birds, and a loss of some valued riparian ecosystems. Riparian areas on the urban edge present a unique management challenge and opportunity. All area residents benefit from a properly functioning riparian/wetland environment. This paper deals with the issues of managing riparian areas. Riparian area managers must consider all concerns when balancing uses of riparian habitat from preservation of archaeological and cultural resources to riparian recovery; improvement, and development.

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Managing the Rio Grande Valley State Park as a valued riparian-wetland area is very important as it encourages conditions for the growth of vegetation. This growth supports a riparian community consisting of various insects, animals, birds, and fish, as well as other wildlife. Human activity in riparian areas has led to historic use patterns causing erosion, re-location of animals and birds, and a loss of some valued riparian ecosystems. Riparian areas on the urban edge present a unique management challenge and opportunity. All area residents benefit from a properly functioning riparian/wetland environment.

Often the need for humans to access or traverse riparian areas are prevalent issues. Activists and other special interest groups exercise their interest and participation on their respective adoptive concerns. However, the riparian area managers must consider all concerns. These considerations range from the preservation of archeological and

cultural resources contained within the riparian communities and ecosystems, including historical uses, and riparian recovery improvement and development issues.

American Disabilities Act accommodations should be provided to recreational areas as practical.

A program detailing additional clean up and recovery area by areas should be adopted. Some areas might be targeted as special projects to expedite recovery and stimulate management efforts.

## ENFORCEMENT

Frequent patrols conducted by qualified and certified Law Enforcement personnel benefit recovery efforts. Enforcement serves as an educational tool as well as a deterrent.

The Open Space Division has maintained a law enforcement presence along the boundaries of Rio Grande Valley State Park since the mid 80's. Their on going presence along with the Albuquerque Police Department and Bernalillo County Sheriffs

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Department and other agency co-operators help make access and recreational opportunities safer than ever before.

## MAINTENANCE

Maintenance of riparian areas requires the application of techniques to recover and restore areas affected by roads and other mitigation measures. Appropriate mitigation agreements should include restoration of trees and the desired plant community including a monitoring program. In addition funding should be provided for access improvements to facilitate timely response to wildfire, tree trimming, turn-around areas, and bosque access. Proper mitigation agreements along with sound riparian management practices are the most effective efforts to be considered when establishing multi-use recreational areas. Local governmental agencies as well as community support are vital components to insure necessary funding in and the implementation of riparian management goals for these valued riparian areas. Improvements should be planned by area, giving consideration to historical use patterns, physical and biological management considerations and limited recreational needs.

As areas are approved for improvements such as re-establishing degraded riparian areas and park facility remodeling and maintenance, proper funding should be provided for initial project improvements and on going maintenance, visitor service and law enforcement support. Resource managers and planners are strongly encouraged to review work loads presently being performed by administrative and clerical personnel. Additional services and training may be required. Ideally, given proper training, existing personnel can then be qualified and used for the job requirements. Additional training and salary adjustments are a much easier and cost-effective method of accomplishing riparian management goals and objectives utilizing existing personnel.

## DEVELOPMENT

- A. Developing recreational areas that reduce or filter noise will increase visitor enjoyment and reduce stress on the riparian community.
- B. Designs should not include vehicle access to ditches and the river. Designs should not include areas in the 100 year flood plain.
- C. If possible, design areas should be outside riparian areas and should be accessible for day use only.
- D. Handicap accessibility should be provided where practical.
- E. Mitigation standards should be established with governmental agencies and its co-operators.
- F. Fencing should be installed in sensitive and protected areas.
- G. A reforestation or recovery program should be an integral part of sound management practices. Adequate personnel will be required.
- H. Adoption of an interpretation program should include signage and information centers designed to reduce vandalism and educate visitors to authorized access areas.
- I. Trail and facility use control measures should be established. Activities reducing stress on wild life and other visitors also need to be considered.
- J. Emphasis must be given to a responsive law enforcement section and the required support. Maintenance, improvements, developments and law enforcement all go together for successful management of multiple use riparian areas. If a presence cannot be maintained utilizing proper maintenance and/or law enforcement personnel then development of new sites is not recommended. Existing sites that are not funded or managed properly should be closed until funding, proper management and/or personnel are in place.