

## **Press Release: Governor Bill Richardson Announces Historic \$2.8 Million to Improve New Mexico Rivers**

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Isleta Pueblo, NM –Governor Bill Richardson today announced the 15 recipients of \$2.8 million in capital outlay funding to help restore and improve the health of New Mexico’s river ecosystems. Projects receiving money are located throughout the state in many of the major watersheds.

This is the second year of Governor Richardson’s historic River Ecosystem Restoration Initiative. In 2007, 12 projects received \$2.5 million, the first time in New Mexico’s history that state funds have been used to protect and restore our rivers and streams.

“Over the past two years, our river restoration projects have touched every corner of the state – from Cimarron to the Gila and from the San Juan to the Lower Pecos,” Governor Richardson said. “The funding I awarded today will help maintain the health of river ecosystems to protect water quality, agriculture, fishing and the recharge of our aquifers.”

This year’s recipients include:

- Isleta Pueblo -Cimarron Watershed Alliance
- Upper Pecos Watershed Association -City of Santa Fe
- U.S. Bureau of Reclamation -Santa Fe Watershed Association
- Rio Puerco Alliance -Los Amigos de Valles
- The Nature Conservancy -Claunch-Pinto Soil & Water Conservation District
- Wild Earth Guardians -The Quivira Coalition
- Southwest Environmental Center -La Jencia Ranch
- Earthworks Institute

“This historic funding will mean cleaner water and better recreation opportunities for New Mexicans,” said New Mexico Environment Department Secretary Ron Curry. “I am proud of the work we have done on a collaborative basis with tribes, nonprofits, municipalities and soil and water conservation districts to create healthier rivers and watersheds.”

Many conditions impact the health of New Mexico’s rivers, including development and the presence of non-native vegetation. These conditions have left the state’s systems in disrepair both physically and ecologically. This initiative will help restore New Mexico’s rivers to sustain the ecological, economic and social benefits they provide for the state. The projects will also help improve the state’s biodiversity, bosque health, recreation and ecotourism opportunities.

Along with representing diverse interests, these projects will also employ creative means, including

having volunteers who will be future stewards of their watersheds oversee the work. Many projects also involve restoring streams to more natural conditions and better habitat for native fish and animals.

The projects were selected through a competitive Request for Proposals process. The recipients will begin developing final work plans -- detailing the restoration process -- with the Environment Department.