

RIO BOSQUE NEWS

A newsletter reporting on events at Rio Bosque Wetlands Park

Center for Environmental Resource Management
University of Texas at El Paso



No. 43

July 2012

THE TWO RIO BOSQUES

Before it was channelized in the mid-1930s, a 2-mile-long bend of the Rio Grande wound through the land that is now Rio Bosque Wetlands Park. That old river bend was rebuilt in 1997 as part of the wetland project at Rio Bosque. It serves as the main delivery channel when the park receives water. Not surprisingly, our efforts to restore riparian habitat at the park have focused on this former river bend.

If you visit Rio Bosque and enter at the Wetland Trailhead, you'll be at the midpoint of the old river bend. This time of year, the channel is bone dry. Turn left, and you'll head downstream. Turn right, you'll head upstream. Either way, as you walk along the dry channel, you'll encounter scattered cottonwoods and willows. With the temperature rising and the water table dropping, they're showing signs of stress. They are kept alive with water we truck to them throughout the growing season.

After maybe half a mile, you'll start to see changes. If you are walking downstream, the cottonwoods and willows will become much less frequent. Many will be dead. The few living trees will be in obvious decline. Just two years ago, these trees were lush and green, but the ongoing drought is hitting the southern part of the park – and the downstream end of the old river bend – especially hard.



Cottonwoods planted three winters ago at Rio Bosque are thriving along the portion of the old river bend kept wet with water from our well. Photo: May 17, 2012.

If you are walking upstream, the changes after that half mile will be altogether different. First, you'll notice dampness in the channel, then a narrow ribbon of water that becomes more substantial as you continue upstream. You're now walking along the portion of the channel kept wet during the growing season with water from the park's well. Healthy cottonwoods and willows line the banks, nourished by the water. A riparian ecosystem is developing. A little water makes a big difference.

Friends of the Rio Bosque Membership Application

Name: _____

Address: _____

E-mail: _____

- Bosque Buddy (12 and under) \$6
- Student or Senior (62+)..... \$10
- Individual \$15
- Family \$20
- Bosque Booster \$50
- Cottonwood Commando \$75-\$249
- Restoration Patron \$250-\$499
- Wetlands Society \$500-\$999
- Life Member \$1,000

Please make checks payable to *Friends of the Rio Bosque* and mail to: Friends of the Rio Bosque, CERM-UTEP, 500 W. University Ave., El Paso, TX 79968-0684.



Next Meetings

Thurs., Jul 26

Thurs., Aug 23

Thurs., Sep 27

6:30 - 7:30 p.m.

209-A Burges Hall
UTEP

Info: 915-747-8663

The upstream and downstream ends of the old river bend show, in stark contrast, two possible futures for riparian habitat at Rio Bosque Wetlands Park. We prefer the upstream future, and we continue to put all our energy into securing water for the park during the growing season to ensure it is realized. ✖

TURNOUT PROJECT UPDATE

The most immediate opportunity to bring additional water to Rio Bosque during the growing season is via the planned turnout connecting the Riverside Canal with the park. El Paso County Water Improvement District No. 1 (El Paso #1) expects to install this facility in September, after the irrigation season ends. Funding for the turnout comes from the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS).

This project has two other key elements. The U.S. Section of the International Boundary and Water Commission (USIBWC) will be building a short channel to connect the turnout with the old river bend within the park, and the Friends of the Rio Bosque will be building a footbridge over this channel at the point where it will cross the park's Tornillo Trail.

Thanks go to El Paso #1, the USFWS, the USIBWC, and the Friends for making this project possible. Thanks also go to all of the donors who have made recent contributions to help pay for any water delivered via the turnout. The turnout will make deliveries of irrigation water to Rio Bosque possible, but those deliveries will only happen if we have agreements in place with water-rights holders willing to assign water to the park and if we have funds to pay for that water. ✖

FOR MORE INFORMATION

www.riobosque.org

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RIO BOSQUE CALENDAR

Join us at the park for a free walking tour or to help with habitat management, park maintenance or faunal monitoring. Coming up:

JULY

Sat., July 7	Introductory Tour	8 a.m.
Sat., July 14	Bird Tour	7 a.m.
Sat., July 21	Community Workday	8 a.m.
Sat., July 28	Faunal Monitoring	7 a.m.

AUGUST

Sun., Aug 5	Bird Tour	8 a.m.
Sat., Aug 18	Community Workday	8 a.m.
Sun., Aug 19	Introductory Tour	8 a.m.
Sat., Aug 25	Faunal Monitoring	7 a.m.

SEPTEMBER

Sat., Sep 8	Bird Tour	8 a.m.
Sat., Sep 15	Community Workday	8 a.m.
Sun., Sep 16	Introductory Tour	8 a.m.
Sat., Sep 22	Faunal Monitoring	8 a.m.

Meeting place for all activities is a bridge crossing the Riverside Canal. From I-10, take Americas Ave. (Loop 375) to Pan American Dr., turn left onto Pan American and travel 1.5 miles to the bridge. Please be prompt.

Return Service Requested

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