



RIO BOSQUE NEWS

A newsletter reporting on events at Rio Bosque Wetlands Park

Center for Environmental Resource Management
The University of Texas at El Paso



No. 47

October 2013

WATER WATCH

It has been another challenging year at Rio Bosque. Water deliveries ended Feb 3 and are not expected to resume until November. For 11 straight years now, little or no water has been available to the park during the growing season. Over the past 3 years, reduced groundwater recharge and increased groundwater pumping have lowered the water table. This summer, groundwater levels at our monitoring wells dropped 7-15 feet below levels needed for sustaining riparian vegetation. Despite another year of hauling water nonstop by truck and trailer to water trees, we lost additional cottonwoods and willows in 2013.

A challenging year. Still, momentum for a better water future at Rio Bosque continues to build:

- Once again, the park's well is putting a small flow of water in 2,200 feet of the 2-mile-long former river bend that winds through the park. Cottonwoods planted along this reach in 2010 continue to thrive.
- In September, El Paso Water Utilities (EPWU) had a new well installed near the park's visitor center. It replaces the problematic and trouble-prone test well at this location that has been out of service since March 2008. Thanks, EPWU!
- The park's 2 new windmills are performing well. Thanks to water from one, a stand of Goodding



First spotted at Rio Bosque in 2010, bobcats, including this one, are now well established at the park.
Photo: Blanca Ramirez, June 9, 2013.

willows is rebounding. The other is supporting a mini-wetland.

- With 2013 the worst year ever for availability of Rio Grande Project water for irrigation, none was available to Rio Bosque. Still, the new turnout from the Riverside Canal is in place to deliver irrigation water in future years, if we can find water-rights holders willing to assign water to the park.
- Finally, there has been progress on another important project central to ensuring year-round water for Rio Bosque. Read on... ✂



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., Oct 17

Thurs., Nov 21

6:30 - 7:30 p.m.

209-A Burges Hall
UTEP

Info: 915-747-8663

IN THE PIPELINE

In March, El Paso's Public Service Board passed a resolution asking EPWU to "pursue design and construction of a pipeline...for conveying either treated effluent or reclaimed water from the Roberto Bustamante Wastewater Treatment Plant to Rio Bosque." The design work is now largely complete. The next steps: put the project out to bid, then build the pipeline.

EPWU has designed a pipeline that will greatly improve water management at Rio Bosque. It will make possible delivery of water from the Bustamante Plant during the growing season. It will also, during low-flow conditions, enable direct delivery of water to the park's wetland cells – the large, shallow

basins we flood when water is available. Today, water destined for the cells must travel 1.5-2 miles in unlined channels before reaching the cells. Under low-flow conditions, the water seeps into the ground long before it reaches the cells.

Finally, in the first mile of the former river bend within the park, the pipeline will allow us to manage flows better for restoring riparian habitat. Today in this reach, we back up a lot of water in fall/winter to fully flood the channel. Why? The high water level is needed to move water into Wetland Cell 1. Unfortunately, any riparian vegetation that gets started in the channel in summer under low-flow conditions gets wiped out by the prolonged flooding. We could avoid this loss if only we had another way to put water in Cell 1. Soon, we hope we will. ✕



Center for Environmental
Resource Management
The University of Texas at El Paso
500 West University Ave.
El Paso, TX 79968-0684

Return Service Requested

RIO BOSQUE CALENDAR

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

<u>OCTOBER</u>			<u>NOVEMBER</u>			<u>DECEMBER</u>		
12 (Sat.)	Bird Tour	8 a.m.	10 (Sun.)	Introductory Tour	3 p.m.	8 (Sun.)	Bird Tour	3 p.m.
19 (Sat.)	Workday	9 a.m.	16 (Sat.)	Workday	9 a.m.	14 (Sat.)	Introductory Tour	9 a.m.
20 (Sun.)	Introductory Tour	4 p.m.	23 (Sat.)	Bird Tour	8 a.m.			
23 (Wed.)	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.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

www.riobosque.org

John Sproul 915-747-8663 jsproul@utep.edu

Want to help us save postage and paper by receiving this newsletter only via e-mail? Let John know.

Printing courtesy of Epson El Paso