



Socorro SWCD Annual Report – FY 2007

Socorro Soil & Water Conservation District
103 Neel Ave.
Socorro, NM 87801
(505) 838-0078
(505) 838-0978 (fax)
Email: sswcd@sdc.org
Website: www.socorrowswcd.com

Socorro SWCD Board Members:

John Carangelo, Chairman
Larry Whitefield, Vice-Chairman
Virginia Johnson, Secretary/Treasurer
Keith Banks, Supervisor (7/06 – 12/06)
Richard Ritter, Supervisor (3/07 – current)
Rob Bowman, Supervisor
Corky Herkenhoff, Supervisor
Robert Shannon, Supervisor

Staff:

**Nyleen Troxel Stowe, Director of Special Projects, Program Manager, Noxious Weed
Coordinator, Lower Rio Grande Salt Cedar Control Project Manager**
Will Kolbenschlager, Range Technician

The Socorro Soil & Water Conservation District's Conservation Program is the top priority again this fiscal year. It is designed to compliment and enhance existing USDA programs that are available to Socorro SWCD cooperators throughout the District. The following is a summary of the available programs and the combined benefits of the District and USDA's multifaceted program.

- Socorro SWCD Cost Share Program-This year \$19,282 was funded for cooperators to move 13,689 cubic yards of soil for land leveling benefiting 86.95 acres; installation of 1,140 feet of 12" irrigation pipeline benefiting 12.19 acres; installation of 475 feet of concrete ditch; 1 water storage unit for 10,744 gallons on one ranch; 2 drip irrigation systems for 120 grapevines and 40 trees, shrubs, and flowerbeds. Our first cost share on low-flow water devices was completed with the installation of two low flow toilets.

- EQIP-This USDA program is being widely utilized by cooperators in the District. Summary of practices installed this fiscal year under EQIP contracts are listed below:
 - 8,271 feet of concrete lined ditch
 - 43 acres of subsurface drip irrigation
 - 1,800 feet of irrigation pipeline
 - 196 acres were Land Leveled
 - 667 acres of Land Leveling under ECP
 - 83 structures for water control
 - 1 lined waste storage facility
 - 1,869 lineal feet of fencing
 - 4 solar pumps were installed
 - 5,397 acres of brush control
 - 20 acres of Critical Area Planting for WHIP

Twelve Conservation Plans for EQIP were signed this year totaling approximately \$475,137 in cost share assistance and 1 WHIP Contract for \$66,689 in cost share assistance.

- Conservation Technical Assistance with numerous other individuals resulted in many practices being applied on the agricultural land within our District.

The application of resource management systems in conjunction with the combined benefits of this multifaceted program has resulted in water and soil savings in the Socorro SWCD this fiscal year. Other benefits derived from the application of these conservation systems include improved water quality in the irrigated valley as well as the grazing lands in the District, improved wildlife habitat, improved watershed health and an overall improvement in the quality of life for the residents in our area.

The Socorro SWCD developed a Brush Management Cost Share Program. With this program, the Socorro SWCD provides the herbicide Velpar and the cooperator provides the labor to apply the herbicide on nuisance brush species such as juniper. The Socorro SWCD sold 15 gallons of Velpar to the Salado SWCD so that they could start their own program for juniper control this year.

The Socorro SWCD hosted the Rolling Rivers Water Trailer at the La Joya/Sevilleta National Wildlife Refuge Open House on October and at the Kids, Kows, and More day held at the Socorro County Fairgrounds. The Salado SWCD staff helped with Kids, Kows, and More as many students from the Salado SWCD area attended this event. The District was a sponsor of Kids, Kows, and More. The District paid for the buses and the drivers to bring the school kids to the event. The District worked with the Socorro County Extension Office to host and sponsor this event. This will be an annual event. The District hosted an informational booth at the Socorro County Fair to inform the general public about their programs including Cost Share assistance for irrigation improvements, brush control, soil testing, noxious weeds, Salt cedar control, monitoring, revegetation and restoration. The District provided soil stewardship materials for the K-5th grades in Socorro (Parkview Elementary, Zimmerly Elementary, San Antonio Elementary, Midway Elementary, and Cottonwood Charter School).

The Socorro SWCD continued project management for the Lower Rio Grande Salt Cedar Control Project for FY 2006. The project completed the mechanical contract with Restoration Solutions, Inc. on 36.6 acres by extraction and cut stump. One acre of cut stump remains to be treated along the Rio Grande to finish the FY 2006 funding from the New Mexico State Legislature. The Socorro and Sierra SWCD staff will complete this acreage after November 1, 2007 when the flow in the Rio Grande has reduced. NM Department of Agriculture gave us an extension until December 2007 to complete this final project. Jornada Experimental Station also completed their contract for the use of goats on Salt cedar control for \$47,500. Their work was completed in the Lemitar area in Socorro County. Dr. Sandy Tartowski was the project manager for this project.

The Socorro SWCD also received funding from the Bureau of Land Management in the amount of \$50,000 for aerial treatment along the Rio Salado (Socorro Field Office); \$40,000 for aerial treatment along the Rio Puerco (Albuquerque Field Office); \$50,000 for aerial treatment on the Tularosa Watershed (Las Cruces Field Office); \$30,000 from Sevilleta National Wildlife Refuge for aerial treatment on the Rio Salado; \$99,000 from the Bureau of Reclamation for aerial treatment at Caballo reservoir; \$60,000 from the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish for aerial treatment on the Quagmire unit of the Ladd S. Gordon Refuge in Bernardo; \$200,000 from the Department of Defense, Holloman Air Force Base for aerial on that base; and the Claunch-Pinto SWCD, Valencia SWCD, and McKinley SWCD added acreage for aerial treatment on our contract. A total of 2,926.02 acres were treated. Our contract was continued from the previous year with North Star Helicopters, Inc. The Socorro SWCD staff and North Star Helicopters, Inc. staff met with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Ecological Services to discuss the project and to work around the nesting sites of the endangered species the Southwestern Willow Flycatcher.

The Socorro SWCD also completed 228 acres of root plowing and raking on an area that was aerielly treated in September of 2003 and then burned in a wildfire in April of 2005. Five sets of revegetation plots were planted and seeded and maintained. This year was a spectacular year for mustard and kochia.

The Socorro SWCD worked in partnership with Seville National Wildlife Refuge who submitted a grant for \$140,000 for Southwestern willow flycatcher habitat restoration. The Socorro SWCD is the fiscal agent for this project and provided 1000 Gooding's Black Willow poles that were planted along the Rio Grande on the Refuge in February 2007. The Refuge has a team of volunteers from the Sierra Club who planted the poles.

The Socorro SWCD website – www.socorroswcd.com is updated on a regular basis. All District program information and forms are on line in PDF format-such as the Cost Share Application, Brush Management Cost Share Application, Lower Rio Grande Salt Cedar Control Project Plan, Socorro/Sierra Regional Water Plan fact sheets, the Socorro SWCD Long-Range Plan, the Socorro SWCD annual reports, and the Noxious Weed Treatment form.

A quarterly newsletter is sent to all of our cooperators. It comes out in January, April, July, and October. We offer new program information, water conservation tips, website information, etc. in this newsletter.

The Socorro SWCDs Noxious Weed Program continues to treat noxious weeds on the canals within our County and on private land. The Socorro SWCD staff treated 1 acre of Hoary cress, 14 acres of Silver leaf nightshade, 4.5 acres of Western whorled milkweed, 12 acres of Kochia and Mustard, 1 acre of Puncture vine, 2 acres of Russian olive, 1.8 acres of Russian knapweed, 2 acres of Skeleton weed, 8 acres of Siberian elm, 3 acres of Russian thistle, and 423 acres of Salt cedar.

Socorro Soil and Water Receives 2006 QVM[®] Project Habitat[™] Award for Responsible Vegetation Management

Socorro Soil and Water Conservation District has been named as a winner in the 2006 QVM Project Habitat Awards, announced at the first annual awards banquet on Thursday, January 25, 2007 in Orlando, FL. Partners who worked on the project were also recognized at the banquet and include QVM Certified Applicator North Star Helicopters, Inc.

The QVM Project Habitat Awards is an annual awards program designed to honor quality vegetation management programs across the U.S. It rewards vegetation management professionals that uphold high standards of vegetation management and work by the QVM Principles and Practices.

Entrants had to explain how their project exemplified the QVM Principles and Practices and how they achieved the following:

QVM Principles & Practices

- Restore and improve plant, animal and human habitats
- Seek out and support professional certification and technical training

- Strive to always make a positive environmental change
- Apply herbicide responsibly, using the appropriate amount to achieve the desired results
- Protect threatened and endangered species
- Support industry research and development
- Follow label recommendations

Salt Cedar can use up to 200 gallons of water per day. The Lower Rio Grand Salt Cedar Control Project was designed to control invasive salt cedar and restore habitat around the endangered Southwestern Willow Flycatcher. After four years, the Socorro Soil and Water Conservation District have achieved 90 percent control. Socorro Soil and Water was a winner in the Invasive Vegetation Management on Government or Non-Profit Lands category.

“Socorro Soil and Water Conservation District is a great example of a company that is able to make a positive environmental change through their daily work. By simply making a commitment to maintain a higher standard, they are showing the rest of the industry how you can be successful and responsible at the same time,” said Amie Dunn, communications manager for BASF Professional Vegetation Management. “We are so excited to give this award to Socorro Soil and Water Conservation District for their QVM project!”

In June of 2007, district staff Will Kolbensschlag and Nyleen Troxel-Stowe installed a fully automated drip irrigation system at the Cottonwood Valley Charter School in Socorro. A member of the Cottonwood staff approached the District inquiring about the possibility of cost share on a system, and the District Board saw a great opportunity. Part of the Socorro SWCD’s mission is education and installing an efficient irrigation system at a local school certainly helps fulfill this mission. Furthermore, the District needed a demonstration area where landowners could be shown the proper way to install the components. A representative of the school attended the April board meeting and gave a presentation about the organic vegetable garden that the school uses for agricultural education. She also explained that the school had just received a grant from Keep New Mexico Beautiful to install xeriscape landscaping. District employee Will Kolbensschlag presented a proposed budget and materials list and the Board approved the project. The system was installed in ten days.

FY 2007

Item	Amount
Income:	
State funding	22,631.60
Lower Rio Grande Salt Cedar Control Project	601,280.12
Mill levy	81,827.54
Sevilleta Restoration Grant	17,904.35
Miscellaneous	3,495.63
Loan repayment	8,892.63
Total:	736,031.87
Expenditures:	
Lower Rio Grande Salt Cedar Control Project	751,553.68
Program manager	48,341.67
Range Technician	34,024.55
Program Assistant/Monitoring Specialist	10,495.52
Cost share program	20,578.82
Office supplies, postage, meetings, dues, telephone, travel	32,439.82
Auto	37,478.32
Conservation activities	22,093.63
Loan repayment to ISC	9,222.31
Total:	966,228.32