



Socorro SWCD
Annual Report - FY 2003

Socorro Soil & Water Conservation District

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John Carangelo, Chairman

Larry Whitefield, Vice-Chairman

Virginia Johnson, Secretary/Treasurer

Ernest Cordova, Supervisor

Rafael Carrillo, Supervisor

Rob Bowman, Supervisor

Leo Lovato, Supervisor (1/02 thru 12/02)

Corky Herkenhoff (1/03 thru present)

Staff:

Nyleen Troxel Stowe, Program Manager & Noxious Weed Coordinator

Stu McFarland, Range Technician & Noxious Weed Specialist

Brian Mertz, Range Technician & Noxious Weed Specialist

The Socorro Soil & Water Conservation District's Conservation Program continues to grow each year. It has been 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 Irrigation Works Loan Program-This program is funded by money borrowed from the Interstate Stream Commission at a very low interest rate that we are able to pass on to the cooperators within our District. One loan was made this year. The loan was for \$50,000 to install 2,560 feet of 18" irrigation pipeline, with 12 valves, and 10,842 cubic yards of soil were moved for land leveling benefiting 121 acres.
- Socorro SWCD Cost Share Program-This year \$18,801.97 was funded for cooperators to move 14,639 cubic yards of soil for land leveling benefiting 156 acres; installation of 33 field ditch turnouts benefiting 26 acres; installation of 962 feet of concrete ditch with 20 turnouts and one check gate benefiting 345 acres; installation of 950 feet of 15" irrigation pipeline with 7 valves benefiting 32 acres; installation of 2 livestock wells totaling 393 feet benefiting 47,500 acres; 72.8 acres of brush control benefiting 14,000 acres; and installation of one irrigation well of 90 feet benefiting 53 acres.
- Urban Conservation Program-This program continues-several applicants are in the process of installing their systems
- EQIP-This USDA program is being widely utilized by cooperators in the District. Practices applied this fiscal year include brush control, concrete ditch, irrigation pipeline, and dairy waste management.
- Conservation Technical Assistance with numerous other individuals resulting 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 an estimated savings of 16,000 acre-inches of water and substantial 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 watersheds and an overall improvement in the quality of life for all of the residents in our area.

The Socorro SWCD continues to work under its contract with the ISC to complete the Socorro/Sierra Regional Water Plan. The Steering Committee has met several times to develop the alternatives. The alternatives list was streamlined-physically impossible tasks or tasks too expensive to be feasible were removed from the list. Alternatives such as water conservation practices and vegetation control topped our list. The draft Socorro/Sierra Regional Water Plan is due out in September of 2003 thanks to the hard work of the Steering Committee and our Contractor-Daniel B. Stephens & Associates. The NM State Legislature through the Interstate Stream Commission, funds this contract. Completion of the plan is scheduled for December 2004.

The Socorro SWCD continues its work with several Environmental groups (Río Grande Restoration, Sierra Club, Amigos Bravos, and NM Public Interest Research Group) as well as the MRGCD Assessment Payers Association to protest the City of Albuquerque's San Juan Chama Drinking Water Project's Point of Diversion proposal before the Office of the State Engineer. The City of Albuquerque has water rights for 47,000 acre-feet of San Juan Chama water but has proposed diverting 103,000 acre-ft of water from the Río Grande potentially causing a severe decrease in native Río Grande water, a severe decrease in water quality, and detriment to the Bosque within the City limits of Albuquerque. The Socorro SWCD has spent many hours working with these groups, providing comments and testimony to the NM Office of the State Engineer. The hearing concluded in the spring of 2003 and is now before the State Engineer. This Coalition has also met with John Stomp of the City of Albuquerque and with Mayor Martín Chavez to discuss their concerns.

The District hosted a Food, Land, & People training for the Socorro Public School System Teachers in August. The Socorro SWCD Board purchased four FLP manuals for the teachers that attended the training. The Socorro SWCD also hosted a Rolling Rivers Water Trailer demonstration for the teachers in August. The Socorro SWCD held Rolling Rivers Water Trailer demonstrations for Bosque Days and the Sevilleta NWR/La Joya Open House. The District provided soil stewardship materials for the K-5th grades in Socorro

(Parkview Elementary, San Antonio Elementary, Midway Elementary and Cottonwood Charter School). The District also sponsored five savings bonds for science fair projects on conservation at the Sarracino Middle School Science Fair.



The Socorro SWCD partnered with Sierra SWCD, Caballo SWCD, and La Union SWCD to submit a proposal to NMDA for the Lower Río Grande Salt Cedar Control Project for \$1.25 million. A Joint powers Agreement was signed by four Districts. Each SWCD appointed a supervisor from their District to sit on the Steering Committee. The Steering Committee developed a plan and a budget for treatment of approximately 200 acres by cut-stump and 4,800 acres by aerial application. The Project Manager is Nyleen Troxel Stowe. She met with the USFWS in regards to the presence of the Southwestern willow flycatcher. A ¼ mile buffer will be left around these sites when treatment begins in September of 2003. Both the Sierra SWCD and the La Union SWCD managed cut-stump treatments this past winter. Approximately 38 acres was treated in the La Union SWCD and 30 acres were treated in the Sierra SWCD. The Socorro, Sierra, and Caballo SWCDs have signed up landowners with a total of 9100 acres of Salt cedar infestation for aerial treatment. Each District has hosted two sets of public meetings regarding this project. The Socorro SWCD advertised a RFP for the aerial treatment in April of 2003. This contract was awarded to North Star Helicopter, Inc. This company will take the GIS files of the Southwestern willow flycatcher nesting sites and other areas of avoidance and upload these into an onboard GPS unit that will automatically cease treatment when these areas are

reached. The Socorro, Sierra, and Caballo SWCDs continue to meet with individual landowners to sign up for this program.

The Socorro SWCD also received a grant for \$29,940.00 for a Geonics EM 38 Soil Salinity meter, new computer and associated software. This salinity meter measures soil salinity both vertically and horizontally. We are going to use this meter to help us in the restoration phase, after the Salt cedar has been removed. We will be able to help landowners determine the variety of native species to replant with. We will also offer this service to our cooperators, i.e. if they have a portion of a field that is not producing well, we will do a salinity survey to determine if high salinity is the cause.



EM 38 Soil Salinity Meter



Vermeer Chipper

The Sierra SWCD received a Resources for Community Collaboration; Collective Forest Restoration Grant - part of this grant money was used to purchase a chipper. This chipper will be used in conjunction with the remainder of their cut-stump project through the town of T or C.

The Socorro SWCD is also establishing a new Task Order Agreement with the Bureau of Land Management-Socorro Field Office for \$150,000 to treat approximately 800 acres of Salt cedar on the Rio Salado.

The Socorro SWCD website - www.socorroswcd.com has been updated. The cost share application, loan 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, the noxious weed

treatment form, and the 2003 NMACD Directory are all available in PDF format on our web page.

The following programs were funded through the Socorro SWCD by Federal grants:

The Socorro SWCD's Noxious Weed Program continues to grow. Socorro County has been mapped for the presence of noxious weeds. Species found to date include Perennial pepperweed, Russian knapweed, Camelthorn, Bull thistle, Malta starthistle, Yellow toadflax, Hoary cress, and Parrotfeather. The Socorro SWCD has developed and adopted a Noxious Weed Eradication Assistance Program. The Socorro SWCD treats noxious weeds on private land at no cost to cooperators that apply for the program. The Socorro SWCD has employed a Range Technician/Noxious Weed Specialist for over a year now without any interruption. Our Range Technician continues to add to our herbarium. The Program Manager attended National Invasive weed Awareness Week IV in Washington DC, representing Socorro SWCD and the Socorro County Noxious Weed Management Area. Our noxious weed program is funded by grants from the Bureau of Land Management, US Fish & Wildlife Service-National Wildlife Refuge System and the Bosque Initiative, and the National Fish & Wildlife Foundation. Russian knapweed was treated on several tracts of private land last fall. Herbicide treatments began this spring on Perennial pepperweed and Russian knapweed along the conveyance channels. Glyphomate 41 was used. This herbicide has an aquatic surfactant and aquatic label and is registered for use along canals. Noxious weeds were spot treated. This treatment will continue into the fall of 2003.



The Socorro SWCD worked in partnership with NM State Forestry-Socorro Division Office with the Youth Conservation Corp. during the summer of 2002. The Socorro SWCD Range Technician supervised the YCC for two weeks. The YCC hand grubbed the noxious weed Camelthorn. The YCC also removed the slash from this treatment. They also cut the seed heads off of Perennial pepperweed that was dangling over the canal system in several areas. Their help in our noxious weed control program was greatly appreciated.

The Socorro SWCD concluded its demonstration project on alfalfa using drip irrigation. This past year, 16 acre-inches of water was applied to the alfalfa through the drip system with one initial flood irrigation of 4.5 acre-inches. There were fewer leaks caused by gophers this past year due primarily to gopher control work done by the landowner. Production of the alfalfa was equal to or slightly higher than the adjacent field's production. This project remained in operation until mid-July when water was no longer present in the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District operations. This project is funded by a grant from the Bureau of Reclamation.

The Socorro SWCD concluded its Salt cedar removal project, funded by the US Fish and Wildlife Service-Bosque Initiative. The treatment area was on land owned by New Mexico Tech. They used their heavy equipment training class to do the initial treatment-bull dozing of Salt cedar. Three arroyos were selected to have the Salt cedar removed. Root plowing and root raking was contracted out. The piles were then burned this past winter. Herbicide spot retreatment will conclude fall of 2003.

The Program Manager donated her time to administer these projects.

FY 2003

Item	Amount
Income	
Grants	84,959.93
State funding	10,193.26
Lower Rio Grande Salt Cedar Control Project	203,521.42
Mill levy	74,052.65
Valve/PVC sales	2,670.59
Miscellaneous	2,705.00
Total	378,102.85
Expenditures	
BOR grant, Fuel break grant	8,025.11
Lower Rio Grande Salt Cedar Control Project	176,489.43
Program manager	35,766.88
Range Technician	28,248.98
Cost share program	18,801.97
Office supplies, postage, meetings, dues, telephone, travel	18,327.73
Equipment	53,389.34
Auto	3,311.63
Conservation activities	21,956.41
Total	364,317.48
Regional Water Plan:	
Income	52,603.08
Expenditures:	46,567.84
Loan Account:	
Income	60,390.01
Expenditures:	71,917.97