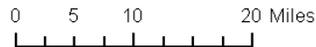
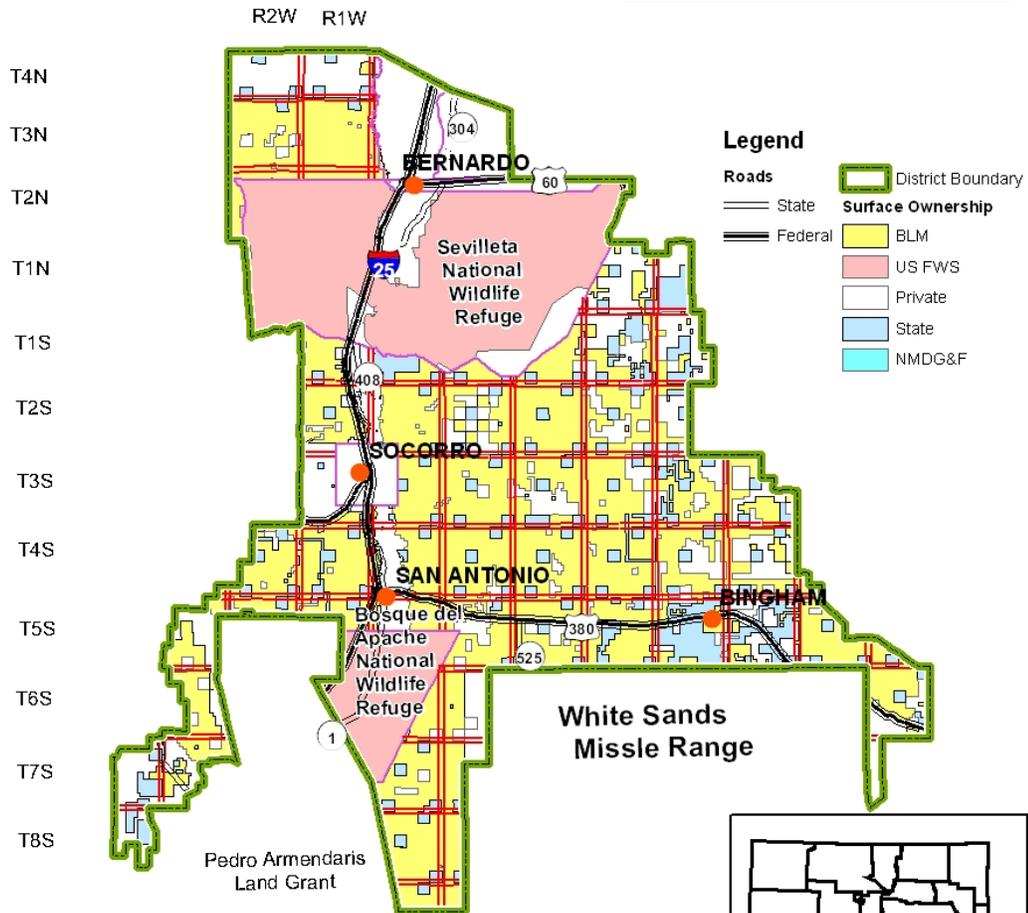


SOCORRO SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT



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Socorro SWCD Annual Report – FY 2010

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Socorro SWCD Board Members:

**Larry Whitefield, Chairman (January 1999 – February 2010)
Virginia Johnson, Secretary/Treasurer (December 1999 – January 2010)
Richard Ritter, Chairman as of March 2010
Corky Herkenhoff, Vice President through February 2010
Eddy Harris, Supervisor
Chris Lopez, Secretary/Treasurer as of March 2010
Dr. Mark Person, Vice-president as of March 2010**

Staff:

**Nyleen Troxel Stowe, Director of Special Projects, Program Manager, Noxious Weed
Coordinator, Lower Rio Grande Salt Cedar Control Project Manager
Will Kolbensschlag, Range Technician, Noxious Weed Specialist
Belle Rehder, Educational Coordinator, Administrative Assistant**

WATER CONSERVATION:

The Socorro Soil & Water Conservation District's Cost Share Program remains the top priority this fiscal year. It is designed to assist landowners implement water conservation measures on their farms, ranches, and urban residences. The following is a summary of the available programs and the combined benefits of the District's multifaceted program.

- Socorro SWCD Cost Share Program-This year \$13,850.95 was funded to assist cooperators in moving 14,679.44 cubic yards of soil for land leveling benefiting 70.39 acres; one livestock well rehabilitation with the installation of a new pump and 300 feet of casing; installation of 553 lineal feet of concrete ditch servicing six acres; one irrigation well rehabilitation with the installation of a new right angle drive; installation of 5,500 feet of livestock pipeline; 8 drip irrigation systems installed with \$1,986.50 in cost share assistance; 1 soil test analysis with cost share assistance in the amount of \$7.80; and replacement of 2 standard toilets with low-flow toilets with \$173.21 in cost share assistance. The Socorro SWCD spent a grand total of \$26,197.57 on cost share with our cooperators.
- 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 benefits of this versatile program has resulted in significant water and soil savings in the Socorro SWCD this fiscal year. Other benefits derived from the application of these conservation practices 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 soil analysis program is implemented with help from our Cooperative Extension Office and our Extension Agent, Mr. Tom Dean. He advises cooperators on the proper fertilizer and crop rotation to improve the soil quality. The drip irrigation cost share program and the low flow water device replacement program offer our urban cooperators an opportunity to implement water savings.

PROJECTS:

This year, Nyleen Troxel-Stowe was able to put together grant money from NM State Forestry—Legislative severance tax funding, the US Fish and Wildlife Service MERES (Management of Exotics for the Recovery of Endangered Species) grant funding, NM Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Division funding, Fiscal Year 2005 NM State Legislative funding for salt cedar removal/revegetation, and Federal funding from the Bureau of Land Management to purchase a Bobcat E35 mini excavator, auger and thumb attachments, and a trailer to transport it.

The Bobcat E35 was purchased for two primary reasons. First, it can be used to mechanically extract salt cedar re-sprouts from previously treated areas. Also, by using the 8 foot auger attachment, the Socorro SWCD is now fully self sufficient with respect to pole planting re-vegetation efforts. We now harvest Rio Grande cottonwood and Gooding's black willow trees ourselves, and are able to plant them ourselves, using the machine for implementing conservation assistance for the cooperators in our District.



Bobcat E35 assisting in revegetation on Sevilleta National Wildlife Refuge

In February 2010, the Bobcat E35 was used to assist in re-vegetating and Salt cedar removal on Sevilleta National Wildlife Refuge. That month, 6,140 Gooding's black willow trees were planted. This particular species of tree is known for attracting the Southwestern willow flycatcher, an endangered species. The District had a contract with a local native species grower who grew these trees for three years before harvesting and delivering to Sevilleta for planting in February. This completed the Socorro SWCD's contract with the US Fish and Wildlife Service for the Management of Exotics for the Recovery of Endangered Species on Sevilleta National Wildlife Refuge.

The Socorro SWCD also harvested and planted 550 Rio Grande cottonwood poles on seven private landowner tracts for revegetation.

This machine was also used to remove salt cedar from several areas, including the site where the Socorro Civil War Group re-enacts the historic Battle of Val Verde in Escondida.

The Socorro SWCD received \$36,558 in Capitol Outlay Funding for Salt cedar treatment and revegetation along the Rio Grande. This year this funding was used to have 73.1 acres of standing dead Salt cedar pushed into piles by a bulldozer. This contract went to ASAP Wildfire Suppression, LLC. This was on two private landowner tracts in La Joya, NM. Both owners were willing to burn the piles and planned to land level and go into crop production after the Salt cedar removal. The Socorro SWCD will return in February of 2011 to plant cottonwoods.



ASAP Wildfire Suppression, LLC working on one of the tracts in La Joya, NM

The Socorro SWCD also completed a \$150,000 grant from NM State Forestry. This was used to pile and burn standing, dead Cottonwoods and extracted Salt cedar on 65 acres on the Rhodes tract in Bosquecito, NM. This burning contract was issued to ASAP Wildfire Suppression, LLC. The District also contracted with Restoration Solutions, LLC for the extraction and mulching of 15.6 acres of live Salt cedar along the Rio Grande on the Rhodes tract. Following this mechanical work, the District contracted with L and J Construction, Inc. to have 5,280 feet of wildlife friendly fence installed.



Pile burning at Rhodes tract by ASAP Wildfire Suppression, LLC



Rhodes tract extraction and mulching by Restoration Solutions, LLC

The Socorro SWCD also received revegetation funding in the amount of \$25,000 from Senator Bingaman. Following NRCS specifications for planting, 11.7 acres was restored on the Tinnin tract near the Ladd S Gordon Refuge complex in Bernardo, NM. This tract contained strips of Salt cedar approximately 75 feet in width between alfalfa and pasture fields. The standing dead Salt cedar was extracted into piles and burned. Natives were left in place. The Socorro SWCD then planted 400 Bighorn skunkbush, 100 Desert false indigo, 300 Jemez Stretchberry, 40 Littleleaf sumac, and 20 Netleaf hackberry in these strips.



Tinnin tract piles prior to burning



Planting of native species on Tinnin Tract in Bosquecito, NM

The Socorro SWCD also entered into a US Fish and Wildlife Service Partners for Fish and Wildlife Service Agreement to be the cooperating manager on the Holmes tract in Pueblito, NM. In February 2010, the Socorro SWCD planted 109 Rio Grande cottonwoods and extracted all the Salt cedar resprouts on 21 acres.



Cottonwood poles on the Holmes tract

EDUCATION:

The Socorro SWCD hosted the Rolling River Water Trailer at Kids, Cows, and More held at the Socorro County Fairgrounds, where over 500 students in the District learned about local watersheds and conservation of natural resources. The Socorro SWCD worked with the Socorro County Extension Office to sponsor this event. The Socorro SWCD hosted an informational booth at the Socorro County Fair to inform the general public about programs including Cost Share assistance for irrigation improvements, brush control, soil testing, noxious weeds, drip irrigation, low flow water device installation, Salt cedar control, monitoring, revegetation and restoration. The Socorro SWCD provided soil stewardship materials for over 1,000 students and teachers of K-5th grades in the District (Parkview Elementary, Zimmerly Elementary, San Antonio Elementary, Midway Elementary, Cottonwood Charter School, and La Promesa Elementary School).

The Socorro SWCD has been assisting Parkview Elementary School with planning, materials and noxious weed control for an outdoor classroom at the school. The Socorro SWCD was able to acquire 50 railroad ties for planter boxes from the National Radio Astronomy Observatory for this project. Salt cedar and Russian olive plants were

extracted and/or removed by chainsaw on the school property. The Socorro SWCD will continue to assist the teachers at Parkview in the development of the outdoor classroom.

NOXIOUS WEED CONTROL:

The Socorro Soil and Water Conservation District had an active year treating noxious weed species. We assisted many of our partner agencies, including helping the Bureau of Land Management treat several small salt cedar infestations in the Quebradas Back Country, some localized Salt cedar trees at Fort Craig, and several dirt tanks that have become overgrown with Salt cedar west of Bernardo. We also sprayed re-sprouting Salt cedar on 60 acres of New Mexico Department of Game & Fish property that previously had been extracted and mulched. Finally, we helped the Sevilleta National Wildlife Refuge begin aggressive treatment to combat a severe infestation of Perennial Pepperweed. Finally, we have continued to help the Cooperative Extension office keep the Socorro County Fairgrounds clear of weeds.

We also treated weeds and other noxious species on multiple tracts of private land. We retreated or assisted with treatment on the conservation easement properties of Gonzales, Conklin, Holmes, Thomas, and Bottomly. Additionally, we treated several stands of Siberian elm, Salt cedar, and Russian olive with herbicide, benefiting 12 landowners.

In cooperation with the local Civil War Re-enactment Club, we cleared salt cedar and underbrush, vastly opening up the space and restoring it to a period-correct Bosque forest on the site where the historic Battle of Val Verde was fought and is re-enacted each spring.

Our Range Technician, Will Kolbenschlag, attended a training conducted by the NM Bureau of Land Management to stay on top the most current GIS technology associated with mapping and treating noxious weed infestations.

STAFF:

In March 2010, the Socorro SWCD became a three person office with the hiring of a new educational coordinator, Belle Rehder. She has been working hard to expand our educational programs, develop new ones, and assist the Socorro Public School System with conservation and natural resource education.

FISCA YEAR 2010 BUDGET:

Item	Amount
Income:	
State funding	9,533
Lower Rio Grande Salt Cedar Control Project	281,728
Mil levy	102,104
Grant Income	86,337
Loan repayment	6,730
Total:	486,432
Expenditures:	
Lower Rio Grande Salt Cedar Control Project	292,219
Staff	122,473
Cost share program	33,683
Office supplies, postage, meetings, dues, telephone, travel	41,046
Auto	10,207
Conservation activities	2,115
Loan repayment to ISC	8,018
Total:	507,861