Water Quality Protection in the Lower Rio Grande in New Mexico

Presentation to the Rio Grande Citizen's Forum

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Brian Hanson,
Watershed Coordinator, 319(h) Grant
NM Department of Agriculture, Las Cruces

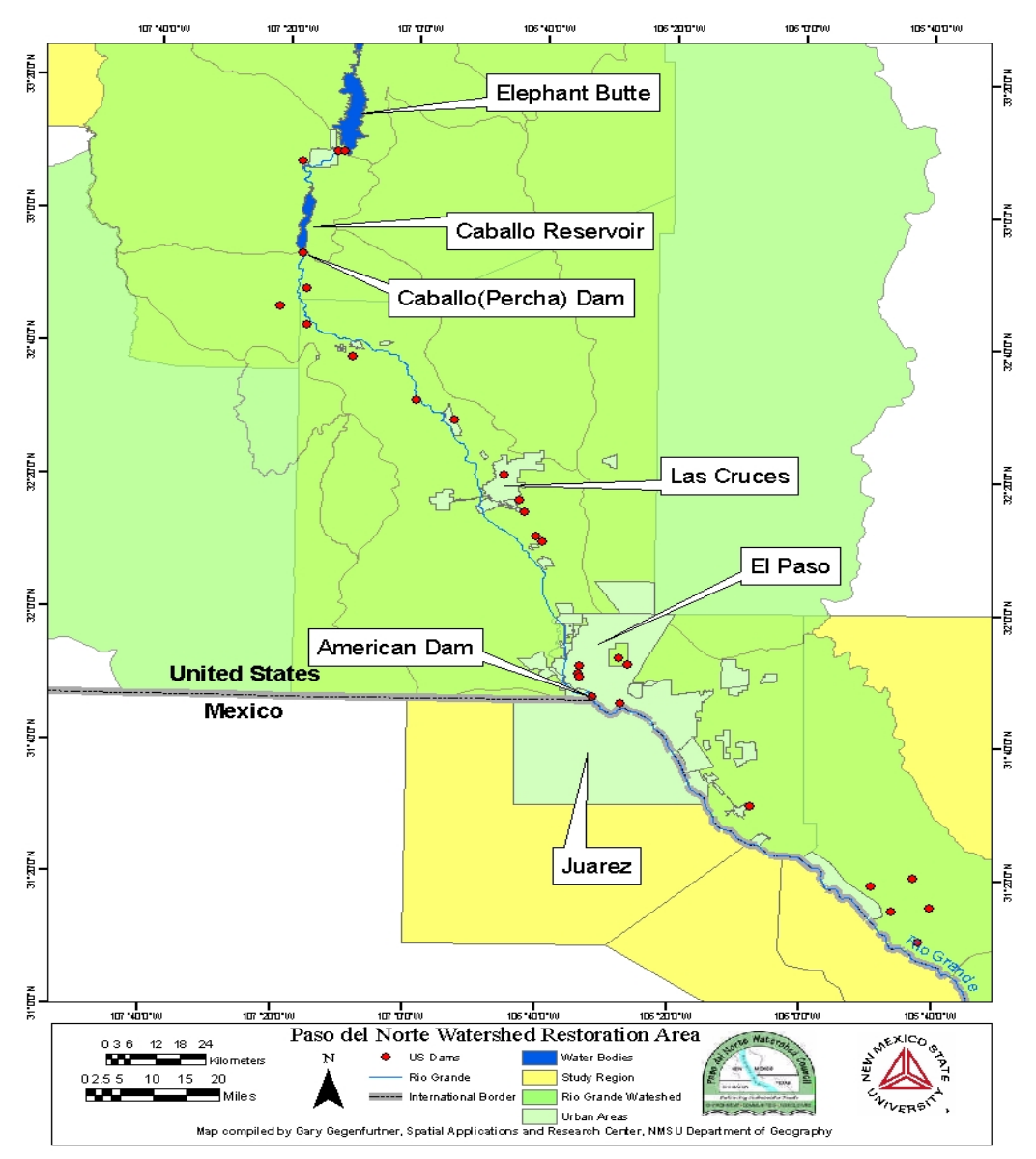
Paso del Norte Watershed Council
www.pdnwc.org

Chris Canavan,
319(h) Project Officer
NM Environment Department, Las Cruces

The Paso del Norte Watershed Council (Council)

Mission: The Council addresses issues related to the establishment and maintenance of a viable watershed, which includes promotion of projects to improve water quality and quantity, ecosystem integrity, the quality of life, and economic sustainability in the Paso del Norte watershed.

The Paso del Norte Watershed



The Council's scope spans the Rio Grande basin from Elephant Butte Reservoir in southern New Mexico to the confluence of the Rio Conchas in Presidio, Texas.

Council Membership

- Members include private citizens, non-governmental organizations, representatives from local, state, & federal government agencies, water utilities, & universities in the New Mexico, Texas and Chihuahua, exico.
- Members represent diverse regional interests and provide interdisciplinary expertise in aspects of watershed and natural resource management.

Background

PHASE I

The Council received a 319(h) grant in 2006 to address *E. coli* bacteria pollution in the lower 100 miles of the Rio Grande in New Mexico.

This was a stakeholder-driven process to produce a watershed based plan that would include recommendations for the mitigation of *E. coli* pollution.

Background

PHASE I

Nine Elements of a Watershed Based Plan

A Identification of causes and sources of impairment.

B An estimate of load reductions expected.

C Description of pollution management measures.

D An estimate of resources needed.

Background

PHASE I

Nine Elements of a Watershed Based Plan (Cont.)

E Outreach component.

F Schedule of events including implementation.

G A Description of interim measurable milestones.

H Criteria to determine progress and load reductions are being achieved.

I A monitoring component.

Background

PHASE I

Completed in 2007.

Conclusion- there was insufficient data to properly determine the sources of *E. coli* impairment in the watershed.

Recommendation- Design and implement a targeted study to determine the spatial and temporal distribution of *E. coli* in the watershed.

Phase II of 319(h) Project
(began February 2010)

Goal: determine the cause of *E. coli*:

Monthly sampling for *E. coli* in the Rio Grande

Targeted sampling for sources of *E. coli* in drains and during storm runoff
in the arroyos

Bacterial source
tracking study

Phase II Outreach Program

Maintain and build stakeholder relationships, host community outreach events to promote education about healthy watersheds.

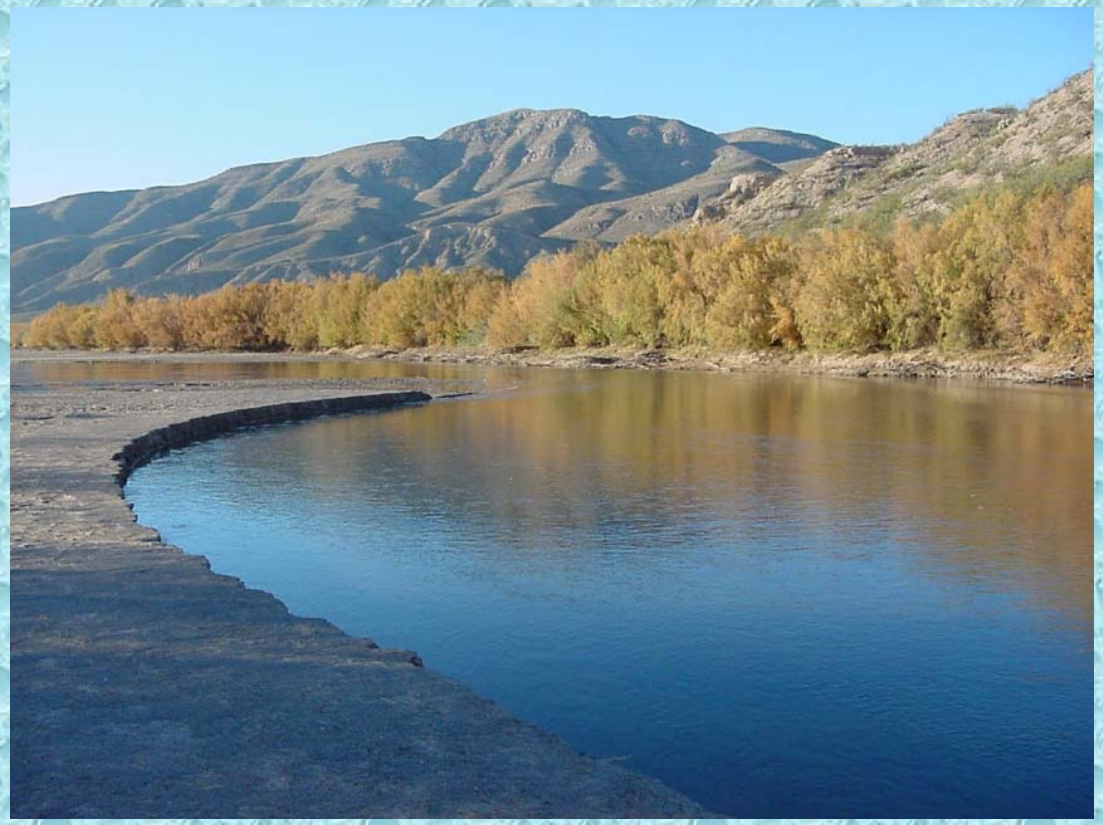
Phase II Planning

Identify Best Management Practices using technical experts and stakeholders for practical and efficient implementation advise.

Develop a plan for long-term monitoring.

Lower Rio Grande 319(h) Future

Identify funding needed for future water quality improvement activities in the watershed.



319(h) grants provide resources for solving water quality problems through regional collaboration