

**ANIMAS - LA PLATA PROJECT
WETLAND/RIPARIAN MITIGATION
2003 ANNUAL REPORT**



Bureau of Reclamation Mission Statement

"To manage, develop and protect water and related resources in an environmentally and economically sound manner in the interest of the American public."

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the 2003 ALP Project Wetland/Riparian Mitigation and Monitoring Plan (Plan) for the La Plata River Corridor, Reclamation described the detailed goals and objectives to mitigate for wetland/riparian habitat loss in a manner consistent with an 'Ecosystem Management' concept.

The overall goal of Reclamation's Plan is to restore a naturally self-sustaining riparian ecosystem within the Mitigation Area (MA) that supports the best functional conditions that can be practicably established. The objectives outlined in the wetland/riparian mitigation plan (and this progress report) focus on the two management areas containing a total of six factors that are affecting wetland/riparian functional conditions:

- **Hydrology Health:**
 - Monitor to ensure adequate (sufficient to maintain the existing and enhanced areas) hydrologic conditions are maintained within the MA and continue use of water rights associated with the MA.
 - Protect or stabilize eroding streambanks as needed.
 - Restore degraded floodplain within straightened, armored and leveed river reaches.

- **Integrated Vegetation Management:**
 - Remove livestock grazing and the negative affects of livestock grazing.
 - Reduce proliferation of undesirable (noxious weed) plant species and replace with desirable species.
 - Improve the vegetative condition of upland buffers adjoining riparian habitats.

Actions taken by Reclamation in 2001, 2002 and 2003 have produced a solid beginning towards the achievement of the Animas-La Plata (ALP) Project wetland/riparian habitat mitigation goals and objectives. Reclamation made the most progress in weed treatment where nearly 250 acres were treated for the control of Colorado listed noxious weed species to include Russian olive and tamarisk.

Other significant 2003 actions include the planning and design development for the restoration of a segment of the La Plata River as well the next phase of planting and reseeding for the MA (both to occur in 2004). Reclamation also laid the groundwork for fencing the riparian areas of the MA and completed another year of vegetation monitoring.