Ecosystem Restoration along the Rio Grande and Tributaries, Espanola, NM

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The Rio Grande and Rio Chama have been affected by severe channel degradation resulting in loss of riparian "bosque" habitat. Both features have profound importance to indigenous people's way of life, considered integral to cultural identity, with their health fundamentally intertwined in significant cultural practices. For most indigenous people, the landscape is an essential part of constructing social identity and the transmission and survival of historical and cultural knowledge and practice. People define themselves in relation to the landscape, and the landscape is an interface where the past gives meaning and context to the present. Loss of the bosque is more than simply loss of plants and animals; it presents a real threat to customs, beliefs, and practices essential to the cultural identity and continuity of the Tribes in the United States.

About 70 percent of bird species in the arid Southwest are riparian-dependent during some part of their life cycles. The riparian habitat along the Rio Grande Flyway is a critical corridor between wild and scenic river areas, multiple state and national wildlife refuges, and links Central and South America to North America. The project will directly improve and restore ecological function to nearly 1,000 acres of critical wildlife habitat. The project will indirectly benefit the entire Espanola Valley, the Middle Rio Grande region, and Flyway providing benefits on an international scale.

This project represents strengthening restoration through collaboration in partnerships the United States Army Corps of Engineers has developed with local Tribes, how we incorporate indigenous knowledge that our tribal partners offer, in respect we show for tribal sovereignty, and in thoughtful planning, design, and construction of projects aimed at reducing uncertainty in the restoration process so that our tribal partners are able to realize high survival rates in plantings and maintain them for years to come.

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