

Rio Grande River Revitalization Initiative



Office of the County Judge
Veronica Escobar

Rio Grande Basin Stakeholders Meeting
December 4, 2012

El Paso County Eco-Tourism Committee



Strategic Planning Process:

1. Develop economically sustainable activities while preserving activities
2. Inventory local sites
3. Marketing – well funded branding and image campaign
4. Identify and preserve wildlife habitat to protect before lost
5. Identify funding sources
6. Show investment in quality of life is economic development/create private sector buy in



Importance of Waterways



- Contributes to the economic vitality of the region
- Quality of life amenity for underutilized communities
- Increases property values
- Attracts investment that leads to new jobs
- Improved natural environment/restores river to a functional ecosystem
- Increases tourism
- Improves overall health of a community



Alarming Research

- 4th most endangered river in the world.
-World Wildlife Fund 2012
- Has been listed as one of the most endangered rivers in the United States.
- American Rivers – National Conservation Group 2000
- 1 of 8 rivers run dry by overuse in the world.
- National Geographic 2012
- 126 endangered and threatened plant and animal species in the Texas portion of the Rio Grande.
- Texas Cooperative Extension: Texas A&M University System



San Antonio River in San Antonio, Texas

- Work initiated in 1998
- Completion scheduled for 2013
- Goal: restore 13 miles of the river channel
- \$400 million investment
- Projects include:
 - continuous trails for hiking and cycling, art enhancements, pedestrian bridges, picnic tables, benches, shade structures, drinking fountains, planting of 20,000 native trees, and hundreds of acres of native grasses and wildflowers.
- San Antonio River Oversight Committee and San Antonio River Foundation created to manage projects and raise funds.



L.A. River in Los Angeles, California

- Work initiated in 1992
- Goal: Improvements along 51 miles
- 50 year blueprint for development and management.
- Over 240 projects which included:
 - restoring the ecological function of the river, providing public access to the river, provide more open space, beautifying concrete channels, create continuous trails, bike paths, pedestrian bridges, sports fields and parks along the river.
- Created the Los Angeles City Council Ad Hoc Committee and Los Angeles River Cooperation Committee to manage projects and raise funds.



Goals and Recommendations



Goal: Restore a functional riparian ecosystem

- Habitat for birds, mammals, amphibians, reptiles, invertebrates and fish within the river
- Improve water quality



Goal: Connect Neighborhoods to the River

- Increase visual access to the river
- Create routes between the river and cultural institutions, parks, civic institutions, transit-oriented development, schools, transit hubs, and commercial and employment centers



Goal: Improve Public Perception of the Rio Grande

- Create attractive river front
- Encourage activity along the river
- Introduce art along the river
- Highlight history of the river and the unique culture of El Paso



Goal: Extend open space, recreational use and greenways

- Opportunities for continuous and uninterrupted movement along the river
- Extend open space
- Bike paths, and multi-use trails
- Interconnected parks
- Recreational fields
- Outdoor classrooms
- Promotes healthy lifestyle



Next Steps

- Convene a stakeholders meeting
- Need a “master planner”
 - Intergovernmental Personnel Act Program
 - Hire consultant
- Creation of a River Master Plan
 - Include all jurisdictions
- Actively seek out funding via various avenues



Rio Grande River Revitalization Initiative



Office of the County Judge
Veronica Escobar

Rio Grande Basin Stakeholders Meeting
December 4, 2012