United States Environmental Protection Agency

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EPA'S TARGETED WATERSHED GRANTS 2005 ANNUAL REPORT

December 2005

2003 Grantee

UPDATE

Rio Puerco

NM

MAJOR ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES

- Excess sediment loss and high erosion rates
- Degraded rangeland
- Multi-year drought
- Altered stream channels and stream instability
- Dirt roads that capture and channel runoff

Jute bag structures help stop erosion and the advance of headcuts.

PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

The Rio Puerco Management Committee is actively addressing these issues through a community-based strategy emphasizing stream restoration, erosion control technology, monitoring, and education. Youth crews were assisted by the New Mexico Youth Conservation Corps and supported by Navajo Chapters. Their accomplishments include:

- Building 25 picket weirs and baffles, as well as 900 "one-rock dams" and other structures to reduce erosion
- Covering 2,600 square feet of ground with lopped branches to check sediments
- Building jute bag structures to stop the advance of headcuts, which entails sewing jute erosion control matting into a long bag filled with wood chips and native soil, then seeding the bags with deep-rooted plant species to hold the slope in place
- Holding two rangeland health workshops and a herding clinic with multiple stake holders to highlight methods to improve grazing lands
- Conducting numerous onsite educational demonstrations for school children and rural residents about the importance of using soil cover to slow erosion
- Demonstrating the effectiveness of goat grazing to control sagebrush and salt cedar

The Rangeland Health Kiosk is used with youth crews to demonstrate the importance of maintaining soil cover to slow erosion.

"Beyond assessing the land's current state, planning a strategy for recovery becomes a priority. In cases where arroyos are removing tons of topsoil, stabilizing the water cycle has to be the priority."

– Grady Grissom
Rancher