

**Las Huertas Watershed Project**  
**EPA/NMED Section 319(h) Grant - Year 2005 - Contract No. 05-667-5000-0008**  
**Watershed Group Formation**  
**Year 2005 Annual Report**  
**December 15, 2005**

This 2005 Annual Report has been prepared to provide both a current project status report for work on the above-referenced grant project, and an annual overview/summary of project activities, accomplishments, and task progress and completion status relative to overall grant funding.

**I. Summary and Overview**

A brief bullet point summary of major task activities and accomplishments for 2005 includes:

- Creation of a collaborative watershed group;
- Preparation of a Watershed Restoration Action Strategy (WRAS) for the Las Huertas Creek watershed according to U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) guidelines;
- Conduct of 9 public workshops and education forums, including a day-long, area-wide stakeholder workshop attended by 68 people (January 2005).
- Installation of a poster and set of documents regarding the Las Huertas Creek Watershed Project in the Placitas Community Library.
- Completed a pilot on-the-ground restoration project in Upper Las Huertas Canyon, including public outreach, agency permitting and installation, in cooperation with the U.S. Forest Service and NM Department of Transportation.
- Upgrading the water use classification/regulatory status of perennial reaches of Las Huertas Creek to High Quality Aquatic Fishery.
- Implementation of a volunteer water quality monitoring program for perennial reaches of Las Huertas Creek with the assistance of NMED SWQCB, compiling data on flow rate, pH, temperature, electrical conductivity, dissolved oxygen and turbidity.
- Collaborating with NMED SWQCB in designing and implementing a monthly water quality monitoring program that will be used as a basis for evaluating Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) limits for selected water quality constituents.
- Researching and pursuing funding opportunities for watershed restoration activities.
- Preparation of quarterly project reports to NMED according to the project workplan.

Following is a summary of task completion status as of December 15, 2005.

## II. Project Task Completion Status

<b>Task</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Per Cent Complete</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>Develop Watershed Group</b>	
1.1	Formulate Public Outreach and Education Program	85
1.1.1	Form Volunteer Task Force	85
1.1.2	Information Dissemination and Stakeholder Engagement	85
1.1.3	Create Watershed Library	95
1.1.4	Conduct Workshops, Retreats and Tours	80
1.2	Identify Preliminary Key Technical Issues	100
<b>2</b>	<b>Develop Watershed Restoration Action Strategy</b>	
2.1	Summarize Public Outreach	95
2.2	Prepare Watershed Baseline Assessment and Inventory	90
2.3	Conduct Watershed Monitoring and Evaluation	75
2.4	Define Specific Water Quality Problems and Goals	95
2.5	Define Actions to Obtain Water Quality Goals	95
2.6	Prepare Implementation Schedule	95
2.7	Define Funding Mechanisms	90
<b>3</b>	<b>Project Reporting and Administration</b>	
3.1	Prepare Quarterly Reports	80
3.2	Prepare Annual Report	100
3.3	Prepare Final Project Report	45
3.4	Project Administration (Ongoing)	70

## III. Status Summary and Accomplishments Highlights

Project task and project progress and accomplishments during 2005 are briefly described as follows.

## **Task 1 Public Outreach and Education Program**

Public outreach and education has been accomplished via the following primary mechanisms:

1. Formation of an open Las Huertas Watershed Project (LHWP) group. The group meets monthly to report on project progress and formulate next steps for fulfilling on the 319(h) project workplan and additional work conducted outside of the 319(h) process. A Volunteer Task Force has been created listing contact and source information for community volunteers in participating in Las Huertas Watershed Restoration activities.
2. Conduct of public educational forums and workshops on various watershed science, management and restoration issues. Programs conducted during 2005 included:
  - a) Las Huertas Watershed stakeholders meeting and restoration forum: January
  - b) Drought gardening/xeriscaping workshop: March
  - c) Las Huertas Watershed acequias: small-scale community farming & irrigation: April
  - d) Las Huertas Watershed stream ecology assessment hands-on workshop: May
  - d). Water well chemical quality testing and septic tank design workshop: July
  - f). Diamondtail Ranch stream restoration and wetlands tour: August
  - g). Public water quality survey demonstration: August
  - h). Las Huertas Creek restoration and Creek Cleanup day: September
  - i). Water harvesting workshop: October

These workshops were accompanied by articles in the local Sandoval Signpost newspaper advertising and describing the events in advance. Details of event attendance, content and accomplishments are provided in previous 319(h) grant quarterly reports.

3. Compilation of Las Huertas Watershed science and management documents into an informational project library. This exhibit is maintained in a dedicated section of the Placitas Community Library.
4. Project web site. A section of the Las Placitas Association web site is dedicated to the LHWP (<http://www.lasplacitas.org/watershed>). The web site provides project description and background; posts selected watershed project documents (e.g. workplan, WRAS), lists project stakeholders and key project contacts; describes project library; posts upcoming events and meetings; and describes previous events.
5. LHWP participation in community forums and groups. LHWP members and staff are represented in numerous other community resource management forums. These individuals represent the interests of the LHWP to these groups, as well as represent the interests and extend the resources of these groups to the LHWP. These groups include:

- Middle Rio Grande Water Assembly
- Middle Rio Grande Watershed Group
- New Mexico Riparian Council
- New Mexico Native Plants Society
- Las Placitas Earth Care Committee
- East Mountain Fire Protection Association
- Junior Optimists Club of Placitas
- River Network

- Placitas Community Library
- Friends of Placitas
- Citizens for Safe Pipelines
- Quivira Coalition
- New Mexico Acequia Association

Public outreach activities are ongoing and evolving. New members are recruited via the public events and focussed outreach to specific groups and individuals.

### **Preliminary Technical Issues**

A preliminary list of key technical issues for watershed restoration was compiled and summarized in a technical memorandum (February 2005). Input for this memorandum was compiled from:

- a). Watershed background science and history documents;
- b). Specific feedback from stakeholders at public forums;
- c). Input from technical experts within the LHWP, including Bill Zeedyk, Zeedyk Ecological Services; Tony Lucero, Coronado Soil and Water Conservation District; Alex Puglisi, Sandia Pueblo Environment Department; Jennifer Nelson, Middle Rio Grande Watershed Coordinator; NMED SWQCB (various staff); Beverly deGruyter, Cibola National Forest; Jeff Fredine, NM Department of Transportation; Danny Randall, Bureau of Land Management; Jay Evans and Jodi Hedderig, City of Albuquerque Open Space Division; and Reid Bandeen, Las Huertas Watershed Coordinator.

### **Task 2: Develop Watershed Restoration Action Strategy (WRAS)**

The WRAS is one of the major project deliverables for the 319(h) Watershed Group Formation project. As specified in the workplan, a first draft was completed and provided to NMED by June 30, 2005. A revised draft (Version 2.0) that incorporates feedback from various stakeholder reviewers was completed by September 30, 2005. Additional subsequent revisions were made to finalize Version 2.0 during October 2005.

The WRAS addresses the essential nine issues outlined by the U.S. EPA in their Clean Water Act watershed restoration guidelines. The current version of the WRAS serves as the basis of a work plan under preparation for NMED and EPA for on-the-ground restoration projects proposed for 2006-2009. The WRAS is posted in a downloadable PDF format on the LHWP web site.

### **Task 3**

Work proceeded during 2005 on the various administrative and reporting tasks commensurate with the project schedule and milestones described in the Project Workplan.

## **IV. Problems/Obstacles Encountered**

A. Public Resistance Some resistance to specific proposed LHWP projects has been encountered. This resistance has come from the two acequia associations that irrigate from the two perennial reaches of Las Huertas Creek. These Associations' concerns are based in the perception that stream and riparian area restoration activities will diminish surface waters available for agricultural diversions. These concerns have been addressed via:

- 1) Outreach meetings to hear and address concerns;

- 2) Public outreach processes built in to the permitting process for any projects subject to federal or state cooperation;
- 3). Educational forums in the form of workshops and seminars to clarify the effects of proposed restoration activities to concerned citizens, including presentation of results of other projects that have actually increased surface waters available for agricultural diversion.

B. Agency Cooperation The LHWP's experience during 2005 with respect to cooperation from Partner state and federal agencies has been mixed. Intentions for cooperation and providing non-federal match resources have been excellent. Excessive demands on the staff and resources of some cooperating agencies have sometimes prevented follow-through in a timely manner consistent with the project schedule, though these commitments have been met eventually. LHWP will continue to maintain strong contacts with cooperating agencies, provide as much scheduling notice as possible, and provide flexibility in project activities and priorities to the extent possible.

**V. Key Personnel Changes**

No key personnel assignments as outlined in the Workplan have changed during the current quarter.

**VI. Annual Budget Drawdown**

Total FY 2006 federal funds project budget is \$16,069.95, based on a revised negotiated budget with NMED during May 2005. Expenditures as of September 30, 2005 totaled **\$5,735.17**, for a drawdown of **35.69%** of the total FY06 budget.

Total grant match funds project budget is \$29,655.00. Total match expenditures as of November 30, 2005 are **\$43,459.44**.

**VIII. Grant Fund Drawdown**

Total budget federal and match drawdowns as summarized in the current reimbursement request are summarized in the following table.

<b>Project budget drawdowns as of November 30, 2005</b>			
	<b>Federal</b>	<b>Match</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Current Reimbursement Request (Nov. 2005)</b>	<b>\$1,229.55</b>	<b>\$795.00</b>	<b>\$2,024.55</b>
<b>Cumulative Total to Date</b>	<b>\$26,050.22</b>	<b>\$43,459.44</b>	<b>\$69,509.66</b>
<b>Grant Total</b>	\$36,385.00	\$29,655.00	\$66,040.00