

## A Changing Outlook

Historically, the wetlands and riverside woodlands of the Rio Grande valley were the biologically richest habitats in the El Paso-Juárez region. Today, they are virtually gone. Past land- and water-management practices did not accommodate the needs of native ecosystems, and a vital part of our natural heritage gradually disappeared.

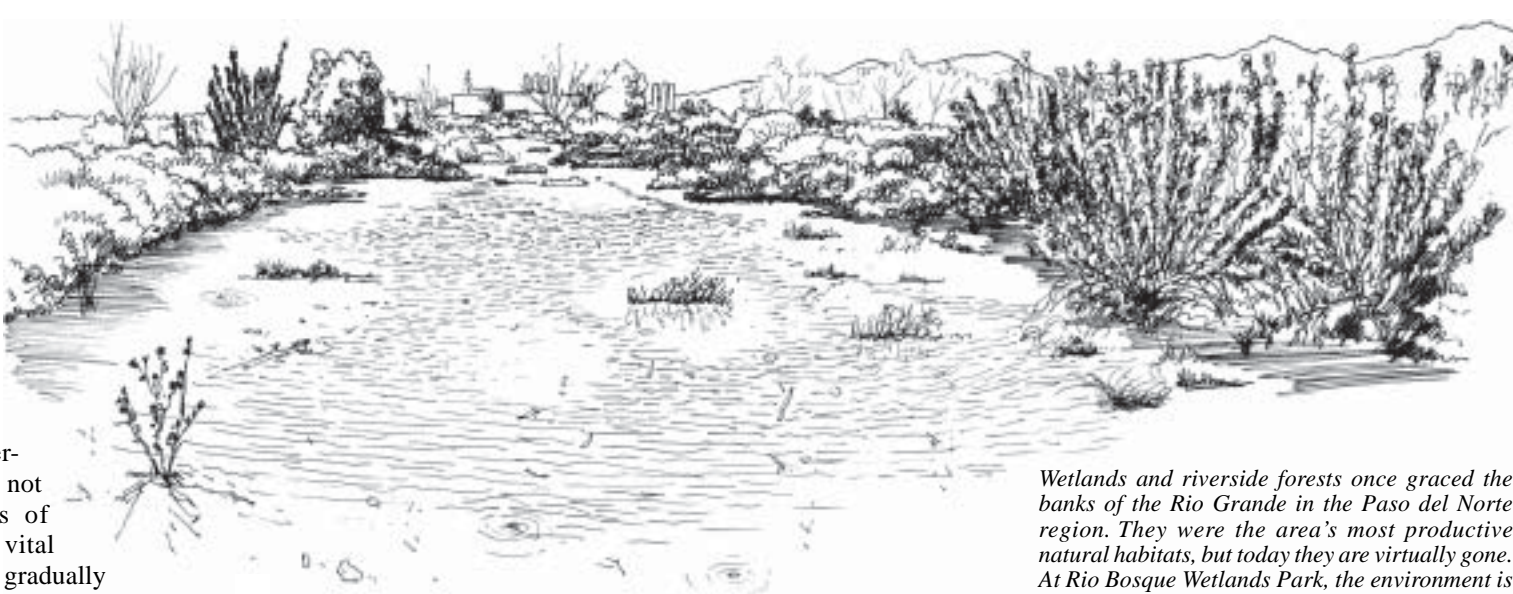
Over time, many people began to realize the importance of these river-valley habitats and became committed to reversing their loss. Rio Bosque Wetlands Park is a living example of that commitment.

## The Rio Bosque Takes Shape

Before it was channelized in the 1930s, the Rio Grande flowed through what is today Rio Bosque Wetlands Park. Much of the land now in the park was in Mexico. With channelization, the land became U.S. territory. In 1973 the federal government transferred this land to the City of El Paso for use as a park. The City later added surrounding parcels to bring the park to its current size of 372 acres.

The wetlands project at Rio Bosque was built in 1997 through the cooperative efforts of many entities: the City of El Paso, the International Boundary and Water Commission, the Rio Grande Compact Commission, Ducks Unlimited, El Paso Water Utilities, El Paso County Water Improvement District No. 1, the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Meadows Foundation, UTEP, and more.

Habitat restoration involved rebuilding the old channel of the Rio Grande where it once meandered through the park and creating a system where water flowing through this channel can be diverted to a series of large, shallow wetland cells.



## Recycling Water

Any wetland restoration effort in an arid region faces a great challenge: how to integrate ecosystem health with the many competing demands for water from urban, agricultural and industrial users. The way a community allocates a vital but scarce resource reflects the values and relative interests of its members.

At Rio Bosque, water, without which a wetland habitat can't endure, is supplied in the form of treated wastewater from the nearby Roberto Bustamante Wastewater Treatment Plant. By putting this water to use a second time as it nourishes the park, water managers have found a way to balance the needs of humans with those of native wildlife.



*Wetlands and riverside forests once graced the banks of the Rio Grande in the Paso del Norte region. They were the area's most productive natural habitats, but today they are virtually gone. At Rio Bosque Wetlands Park, the environment is still changing, but in a new way. Here, a diverse partnership is working to bring back meaningful examples of the unique and valuable ecosystems once found in our river valley.*

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RIO BOSQUE: JUST ADD WATER

Rio Bosque Wetlands Park

El Paso, Texas



# Rio Bosque Wetlands Park: Recycled Water Creates an Urban Wildlife Sanctuary

The dashed lines indicate the flow of treated wastewater through the park's waterways and wetland cells.

