



Colorado River Restoration Demonstration Site

Restoration efforts by the Sonoran Institute, Pronatura, and AEURHYC have been ongoing since 2007 with a focus on achieving similar ecological conditions to those of the original Colorado River riparian habitat. A total of 100 acres have been restored through re-vegetation with native species, removal of non-native species, and recovery of natural river channels.

The Colorado River Restoration Demonstration Site (4400 acres) is a system of two main lagoons (Laguna Grande and Laguna Larga) and several small, intermittent lakes (Laguna Roja), remnants of the original path of the Colorado River. The area contains significant patches of native riparian vegetation (cottonwoods, willows and mesquite) that act as ecologically functioning reservoirs of flora and fauna. These areas of native vegetation and healthy bodies of water are the basic element for restoration design, serving as models of original habitat.



Laguna Larga view from the shore of the restoration site

Since 2007, restoration activities in the demonstration site have focused on: 1) conducting research on the hydrology, wildlife, and vegetation dynamics; 2) establishment of riparian vegetation with appropriate species for each zone and elimination of non-native species; 3) securing water flows for base flow and seasonal pulses; 4) conservation of riparian corridors through the designation of critical reforestation areas; 5) continuous monitoring to adjust and modify activities and restoration efforts as necessary.



Restoration field worker and young cottonwood tree at Laguna Grande

Successes Up-to-Date

- Secured legal rights to 1100 acres of the total 4400 acres of the demonstration site for restoration purposes.
- Restored a total of 100 acres of riparian habitat in two restoration sites in the demonstration site.
- Planted more than 5,000 native trees.
- Secured 480 acre-feet of water for restoration purposes at this site.
- Reached out to over 5,000 students, farmers, community members, fishermen, and U.S. and Mexican government officials with 25% participating in restoration activities at Laguna Grande.

2011-2013 Objectives

- Plant 40 acres of cottonwood and willow trees as part of a bi-national restoration project with support from CILA/IBWC.
- Initiate seeding pilot project at Laguna Roja to promote genetic diversity and health of native tree species.
- Secure additional water rights for restoration efforts in the demonstration site.
- Work to secure additional funding to restore a total of 200 acres by 2013.
- Develop the design of a 500-acre restoration area in Colorado River Restoration Demonstration Site.

