

Protecting Colorado's Legendary Rio Grande River



May 2007, Vol. II

The Rio Grande Initiative

Our Purpose:

To protect as much private land as possible along the Rio Grande corridor in Colorado, through voluntary, incentive based means, in partnership with landowners, communities, agencies and conservation organizations—while we have the chance!

The Initiative Enjoys Strong Local Government Support

In preparation for our first major fundraising efforts, the *Initiative* is garnering tremendous support from San Luis Valley counties and local governmental agencies.

We are very pleased to have received support from the following :

- Alamosa County
- Conejos County
- Mineral County
- Rio Grande County
- Rio Grande Water Conservation District
- Rio Grande Interbasin Roundtable
- Colorado State Land Board
- Rio Grande Watershed Association of Conservation Districts

The Rio Grande Water Conservation District wrote “..the Initiative will help to conserve the Valley’s important agricultural productivity and historic water uses, enhance the natural characteristics and healthy functioning of the rivers, maintain the scenic beauty and support important wildlife habitat.”



Ducks Unlimited's Great Work

Since 1996, Ducks Unlimited (DU) has had a major conservation presence in the San Luis Valley (SLV), through conservation easements, wetlands restoration and management and bringing much needed funding into our region. Due to the high quality and quantity of wetlands in the SLV, in 2003, DU set a 10-year goal to protect 25,000 acres of wetlands in the SLV. Now only four years later, they’ve protected 15,000 acres of private land with conservation easements. Much of that impressive number has occurred on the Rio Grande corridor between Monte Vista and Alamosa. In fact, on that reach alone, they have closed on seven projects protecting more than 3,500 acres. Their hard work and efforts have laid a solid foundation for the overall *Rio Grande Initiative*.

DU is very excited to partner with RiGHT and The Nature Conservancy on the *Rio Grande Initiative* and looks forward to many upcoming land protection opportunities.



The Rio Grande, looking north at the Sangre de Cristo mountains, from near the Colorado- New Mexico border.

The New Rio Grande Natural Area

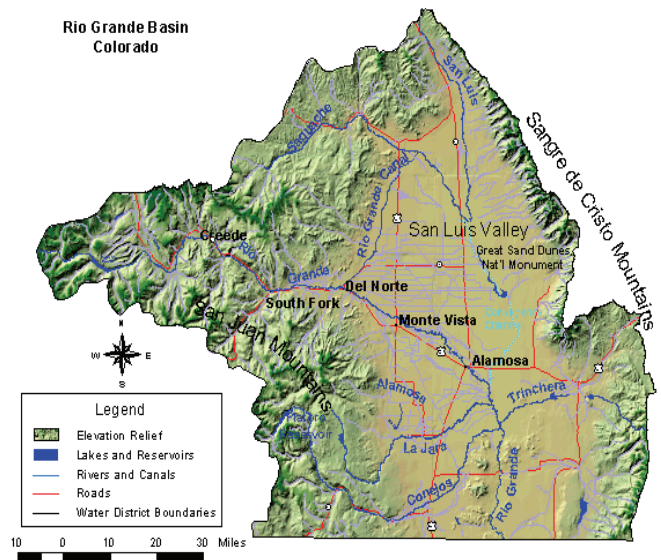
In October of 2006, President Bush signed “The Rio Grande Natural Area Act” into law. This act creates a federal designation to conserve, restore, and protect the natural, historic, cultural, scientific, scenic, wildlife, and recreational resources of the Rio Grande corridor a 1/4 mile on either side of the bank of the river. It spans from south of the Alamosa National Wildlife Refuge to the New Mexico. This act showcases the investment and concern for protecting the Rio Grande at the national level and creates more tools for us to do so at the local level.

2006 Accomplishments

In 2006, 1,191 acres of private land along the Rio Grande were protected, bringing the total number of permanently protected acres to 6,616.

Of that Ducks Unlimited closed on two conservation easements, one in Rio Grande County and the other in Alamosa County for a total of 785 acres. RiGHT closed on one project in Alamosa County for 143 acres and the National Resources Conservation Service, Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) closed on one conservation easement in Rio Grande County for 263 acres.

Thank you to all the landowners for their generosity.



More Thank You's:

RiGHT would like to thank and acknowledge those organizations that believe in and have provided additional funding for the **Rio Grande Initiative** through planning or direct land protection grants since our Fall 2006 Newsletter:

- The SLV Regional Council of the El Pomar Foundation
- The Colorado Division of Wildlife: Wetlands Initiative Program
- The Colorado Division of Wildlife: Habitat Partnership Program
- The Ruth H. Brown Foundation.