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RESTORATION PREFERENCES AND MANAGEMENT FOR THE MIDDLE RIO GRANDE

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River restoration efforts typically receive broad public support. However, standing questions include whether restoration efforts are worth it in the sense that benefits outweigh the costs, whether some types of restoration are more beneficial than others, and how restoration efforts were ultimately received by the public they serve. This research identifies restoration metrics to quantify physical changes that will actually take place, and uses econometric methodology to determine how human well-being will be improved from these changes. Restoration decisions have much to gain from improved information; funding is strong with more than \$10 billion spent nationally on over 35,000 such projects (NRRSS, 2005).

Ongoing restoration by the US Army Corps of Engineers in the Albuquerque reach of the Middle Rio Grande Bosque is used as a vehicle to investigate public restoration values. A mail survey conducted in 2005-2006 explores visitation statistics and potential recreation improvements. The survey also partitions use and non-use values for the ecosystem as a whole. Restoration valuation focuses on four key restoration attributes identified by focus groups: Fish and Wildlife Habitat; Vegetation Density; Tree Type; and Natural River Processes. A choice model is used to decompose the value of these restoration attributes in both a relative and absolute (dollar) sense. Results are applicable to other southwestern riparian areas with qualifications for site-specific factors.

The long-range goal associated with this work is to address data needs for a dynamic simulation model of Total Riparian Value. This Total Riparian Value model is itself a component of a larger watershed decision support tool, being developed by a Sandia National Laboratories-directed team.

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