The Rio Grande sustained life in the desert for centuries, but now it is one of the most endangered rivers in the world.

During the last century, there have been increasing pressures put on the Rio Grande habitat from the building of Elephant Butte Dam to the widespread development of irrigation systems to current water practices.

- Regulation of water flow in the river has not only impacted the organisms that live in the water, but has also changed the mosaic of vegetation types once present in the valley.
- Wetlands, once common in the floodplain, have been greatly reduced and the cottonwood forests are dying out.
- Non-native plants and animals have spread throughout the valley, often displacing the native species; without changes in current water-management practices, nonnative trees and shrubs will soon dominate the bosque.

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Current State of the Rio Grande

River ecosystems have been greatly altered and depleted due to dam-flow regulation and water over-extraction. In New Mexico and other arid regions, the water supply in many rivers has been over-allocated for human uses so that in climatically dry periods, rivers go completely dry while the adjacent irrigation systems may have all the available water. One of the greatest problems for the fish of the Rio Grande Basin is the dewatering of the river channel, which occurs when the irrigation season coincides with periods of drought.
### Act Now

You can help protect the Rio Grande!

You can call or write Interior Secretary Sally Jewell along with US Senators Heinrich and Udall to tell them that protecting Rio Grande is important to you.

Urge them to take action to protect the Rio Grande!

### Write and Call

#### Interior Secretary Sally Jewell

1849 C. Street, NW  
Washington DC 20510  
(202) 208-3100  
feedback@ios.doi.gov

#### US Senator Martin Heinrich

703 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington DC 20510  
(800) 443-8658  
www.heinrich.senate.gov

#### US Senator Tom Udall

B40D Dirksen Office Building  
Washington DC 20510  
(202) 224-6621  
www.tomudall.senate.gov

### Donate or Volunteer

Southwest Environmental Center

275 N. Main Street  
Las Cruces, NM 88001  
(575) 522-552  
www.wildmesquite.org

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### How to Save the River

- **Get Water** - We believe the river could be restored to ecological health, but it will require dedicating approximately 10 percent of its current annual flow for this purpose. Currently, the river has no legal rights to its own water. This water could be acquired from willing sellers through existing mechanisms.

- **Restore Habitat** - SWEC has been restoring habitat through a series of on-the-ground projects, including the Picacho Wetlands, La Mancha Wetlands, and the Mesilla Valley Bosque State Park.

- **Build Public Support** - To be successful, restoration efforts must have broad public support. We are working to raise awareness of the river in various ways, including our annual Raft the Rio raft race, a Rio Grande Oral History project, Back by Noon outings, school programs, door-to-door outreach, and our On the River, For the River annual fundraiser.

- **Defend the River** - SWEC serves as a tireless advocate for the river, encouraging agencies, elected officials, and other water users to adopt river-friendly practices and policies, and speaking out against damaging proposals.