

Share with Wildlife Final Report 2020
Creating the Next Generation of Riparian Habitat Stewards



by  *RiverSource*

for
New Mexico Department of Game and Fish
and
Truchas Chapter of Trout Unlimited



Creating the Next Generation of Riparian Habitat Stewards project increases awareness of the need for healthy riparian habitat and good land management along rivers for the benefit of the wildlife dependent on them. Youth develop stewardship ethics and knowledge about riparian areas through repeat field experiences involving hands-on data collection, research on Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) and sharing their findings in public presentations.

The immediate closure of schools in mid-March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic led River Source to propose a revised workplan, which was rapidly approved. River Source worked with students and teachers at three schools in northern New Mexico, plus students in other parts of the state, via activities that we created with the approved plan. River Source began (pre-COVID-19) by doing classroom presentations and field trips with students at Santa Fe Indian School. Then restrictions and closures associated with COVID-19 required that they quickly modify their plans for providing environmental educational experiences for students at two other schools in northern New Mexico. From that point on, both online resources and “grab and go” activities were provided to teachers and students.

River Source normally gives students an opportunity to explore and survey riparian areas and wetlands firsthand through a series of field trips. Students learn to look for, identify, and record information on wildlife; collect data on a number of measures of riparian habitat and water quality; and some participate in a competition for the best paper on a SGCN found in New Mexico. In response to direct face-to-face activities being shut down, River Source created several online resource for teachers and students.

1. [New Mexico Wildlife Challenge: https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1100085717042174](https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1100085717042174)
2. [Three minute YouTube video: https://youtu.be/E-KEmBGHHf8](https://youtu.be/E-KEmBGHHf8)
3. [10 minute video: https://youtu.be/t8_YsGc0qDQ](https://youtu.be/t8_YsGc0qDQ)

To ensure that students could still receive environmental education when they were sent home, River Source held a half month long New Mexico Wildlife Challenge for which students were encouraged to record as many observations of wildlife in their backyards and neighborhoods as possible using the mobile app iNaturalist. River Source also created two videos related to the information that they would normally deliver to students during classroom visits and field trips. In particular, they created a three minute YouTube video describing what riparian areas are and why they are important. They then created a 10 minute video describing how to measure several of the indicators of riparian health that they normally measure in the field with students. Facebook Live and Zoom events were organized as a part of virtual field trips to teachers without live students but a pressing need to provide distance learning. Finally, in early June, River Source announced the three winners of the SGCN paper competition. Winning papers focused on the yellow-billed cuckoo, Jemez Mountains salamander, and peregrine falcon.



Due to the unique challenges posed by the COVID pandemic, our traditional assessment method of comparing pre- and post -test results did not get broadly implemented. The several students at El Dorado School did complete pre- and post- tests but they have not been evaluated yet. We anticipate having the pre-post analysis of these few students by mid-July.

<i>Date</i>	<i>Activity description</i>	<i># participants</i>
1/13/20	In-class presentation at Santa Fe Indian School	21
3/11/20	Santa Fe Indian School field trip to Santa Fe River	9
3/12/20	Santa Fe Indian School field trip to Santa Fe River	11
4/14/20	New Mexico Wildlife Challenge with iNaturalist initiated	n/a- estimate 50
5/5/20	Release of 2 videos “Why Are Riparian Areas Important?” and “How to Measure the Health of Riparian Areas?”	n/a
5/15/20	Cesar Chavez 5th grade virtual field trip & video presentation	60
5/20/20	May School for Learning virtual field trip & video presentation	38
6/9/20	Announcement of Wildlife Research Competition winners	n/a

