Stewart Meadows Habitat Assessment & Conceptual Design **Rio Arriba County, New Mexico**

VICINITY MAP New Mexico Principal Meridian Township 30N, Range 8E, Section 6 Rio Arriba County, New Mexico PROJECT AREA: LATITUDE: 36°51'29.43"N I ONGITUDE: 106° 7'45 20"W



Rio San Antonio

SUBMITTED TO



CLIENT: New Mexico Department of Game & Fish 1 Wildlife Way Santa Fe, NM 87507 (505) 476-8000

SUBMITTED BY

RESTORATION DESIGN SPECIALIST & PROJECT PRIME: Watershed Artisans 1000 Cordova Place, #832 Santa Fe, New Mexico (505) 577-9625



CIVIL/ECOLOGICA Oxbow Ecological E 3491 S Gillenwater Flagstaff, AZ 86005 (928) 266-6192

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Engineering, LLC	
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SHEET NUMBER	DRAWING NUMBER	DESCRIPTION
1	CVR01	Cover Sheet
2	AUS01	Upstream Project Are
3	AUS02	Upstream Project Are
4	AUS03	Upstream Project Are
5	AUS04	Upstream Project Are
6	AUS05	Upstream Project Are
7	AUS06	Upstream Project Are
8	AUS07	Upstream Project Are
9	ADS01	Downstream Project A
10	ADS02	Downstream Project A
11	ADS03	Downstream Project A
12	ADS04	Downstream Project A
13	ADS05	Downstream Project A
14	ADS06	Downstream Project A
15	ADS07	Downstream Project A
16	CPT01	Conceptual Plan Over
17	CPT02	Conceptual Plan: Ups
18	CPT03	Conceptual Plan: Dov
19	CPT04	Conceptual Plan: Dov
20	CPT05	Conceptual Plan: Dov
21	CPT06	Conceptual Plan: Dov
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PROJECT NUMBER: NA

PROJECT PHASE: 70% Design Plans

<u>CLIENT:</u> New Mexico Department of Game & Fish 1 Wildlife Way Santa Fe, NM 87507 (505) 476-8000



DRAWN BY: GFC DESIGNED BY: CS & GFC REVIEWED BY: CS & GFC

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06.29.20)22	-	<u>PROJECT #:</u> M-014-1
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	Assessment Summary: Upstream Project Reach
River Setting	The Stewart Meadows Upstream Project Area is located along one of the few laterally unconfined Reaches of the San Antonio River, where the r Tusas Mountains and creates the western boundary of the Taos Plateau Volcanic Field. The geology of the area consists of overlapping volcanic the basaltic formations from the San Antonio Mountain volcano immediately to the east and the thick tuff and compressed ash layers of the Tusas the west. The drainage area of the Rio San Antonio is largely composed of meta-sedimentary volcanic material resulting from ash eruptions of the Volcanic Field. The complex volcanic geology has left much of the Rio San Antonio Watershed with highly erodible, fine textured soils and loosely rock that are highly erosive. The lower slopes of the watershed are dominated by grasslands while many ridgetops are densely forested especial aspects. Small caliber and fine sediments are contributed in abundance to the mainstem channel by most tributary drainages, especially those or west facing aspects, as well as by sparsely vegetated and highly erosive uplands. The arrival of the narrow-gauge railroad to the area in 1880 init land degradation on multiple fronts. The Rio San Antonio watershed has been very heavily grazed, first by sheep, then by cattle starting at the arr railroad. Many areas were logged to support the growing demand of the railroad itself and the expanding communities it supported.
River Behavior	The Upper Project Reach is slightly to moderately entrenched, although historically the reach has been severely entrenched. The current condition from refilling of the entrenched channel and adjacent valley bottom with excess sediments generated upstream. Extensive beaver activity through also contributed to its aggradation. The entire reach is largely depositional with minimal, shallow pool habitat and the frequent formation of deposite features that readily colonize with wetland and riparian plant species. Much of the reach has a high width to depth ratio due to the abundant sedim Formerly, the reach was dominated by Birch Leaf Alder that experienced a regional die off across the Southern Rockies in the past 15 years due pathogen. Deadwood is abundant in the reach; however, Alder wood is extremely soft and has limited utility for restoration structures. Currently, the Narrowleaf Cottonwoods present and while the Alders have been significantly set back, there is amble evidence of new growth from the bases of trees, however, it is unclear whether Alders will remain a significant component of the riparian plant community in the future. Bluestem, Peachlear Willows are present throughout the reach and are pioneer colonizers of many of the depositional features
Trajectory of Change	The channel is likely to continue in its development of an inset floodplain and inner berm features, however its floodplain expansion will be limited of the channel where it lies along the valley edge. The lateral erosion of streambanks will likely lead to increased sinuosity and a reduced channel long term. An active population of beavers, which currently exists, is essential to reducing potential channel downcutting and maximizing the flood sediment storage. This reach is a critical sediment buffer for downstream portions of the Rio San Antonio, which become increasingly confined. The private lands immediately upstream of this reach are the primary sediment source due to poor land management practices including unrestricted, grazing of the riparian corridor, thus it is very likely that this reach will continue to receive excess fine sediment for the foreseeable future. From we along the road, the two miles of private land is moderately to severely entrenched, poorly vegetated and has extensive active bank erosion that is amounts of fine volcanic sediments into the river. The dramatic increase in water turbidity across the private lands. It is likely that woody and he vegetation cover will increase with time due to the recent construction of a livestock exclosure and the abundance of depositional features.
Recovery Potential	The recovery potential for this reach is very high due to the potential of reconnecting floodplains and off channel wetlands over a broad area. Rest have been designed to complement and expand the benefits of the resident beaver population. The combination of a robust beaver dam complex restoration work to reconnect the entire valley bottom with off channel and channel connected wetlands is the best opportunity to reduce the advert impact being generated on upstream reaches of private land. Water quality improvement, especially reducing turbidity and temperature is essentiquality of downstream fisheries along Stewart Meadows. We believe that the restoration of the Upper Stewart Meadows Reach is critical to achieve and substantially improving the water quality and aquatic habitat of the Downstream Project Reach.

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ted by confinement inel gradient in the bodprone area and I. The 2 miles of ed, season-long in what is visible it is releasing large e water quality herbaceous riparian

Restoration activities lex and active dverse water quality ential to enhance the nieving those goals



	Restoration Opportunities: Upstream Project Reach
Design Hypothesis	The restoration of this project area has a critical relationship to the water quality and habitat quality of reaches that are immediately downstream. use earthworks and channel shaping to hydrologically reconnect as much of the valley bottom as possible and create an extensive, sediment tracomplex. This restoration approach is based on the Stream Evolution Model and is Known as Stage 0 restoration. Such a wetland complex woul improved habitat and shelter water for the younger life stages of trout, as well as significantly improved habitat for a wide variety of wetland deperant and species. Alone, this project is unlikely to improve the quality of the angler's experience within the reach, but this is a necessary element of habitat and the angler's experience in downstream reaches.
Restoration Objectives	 Reconnect and create flood channels, channel connected wetlands and backwater habitats wherever possible Redistribute flood energy and sediment deposition across as much of the valley bottom as possible Increase overbank flow at lower flood stages Accelerate floodplain development Reduce future downstream sediment loads by expanding wetlands within this project area
Restoration Approach	The restoration approach for this reach will include the construction of earthen channel plugs and excavated leadout channels to direct base flow and existing flood channel network and adjacent floodplain surfaces. Additionally, channel shaping will be used in flood channels to ensure that r across as much of the valley bottom as possible to reduce the potential for localized channel entrenchment due to excessive flow velocities. Sha will be created to generate fill for the channel plugs and enhance off channel wetland habitats.
Project Reach Length & Area	1.7 miles 36 acres



m. The concept is to trapping wetland buld no doubt provide pendent plant and t of improving fish

ow and floods into It runoff is spread hallow borrow areas







Moderately e minimal shade enched, riffle dominated, ofilm, sparse shallow pools



igh bedload channel, excess fines, rosive banks, minimal pool depth

Well vegetated, low w/d, pools, overhanging banks, good aquatic habitat



Upstream Project Area 1		
		River Character
1	River character	Slightly entrenched, laterally adjusting, riffle dominated with beaver dam return flow
2	River character	Visually over wide, but within regional curve parameters, wetland plants trying to colonize fine sediment deposits
3	River character	Lower w/d, slightly deeper pools, some shading, numerous willow seedlings will encroach on the channel in the absence of livest
4	River character	Low w/d, good bank veg, some shading, Alder and some will, no cottonwood
5	River character	Moderately entrenched, riffle dominated, minimal shade, biofilm, sparse shallow pools
6	River character	Moderately/ highly entrenched, pools, bank veg, good aquatic habitat
7	River character	High w/d, depositional reach, possibly caused by breached dams
8	River character	Breached beaver dam reach, deposition upstream, deep pools, localized scour, old breeches
		Sediment Character
1	Sediment character	Excess hoof sheer on sandy erosive banks, trampling of deposited fines limiting colonization by wetland species, biofilm, high w/
2	Sediment character	High bedload channel, excess fines, erosive banks, minimal pool depth
3	Sediment character	Excess fine sediment load, eroding terrace high bank h=5' l=200'
4	Sediment character	Fining of sediment caliber in a downstream direction
		Reference Condition
1	Reference condition	Woody recruitment on eroding bank, alders and willows
2	Reference condition	Well vegetated, low w/d, pools, overhanging banks, good aquatic habitat

3 Reference condition Inner berm reach



Active beaver dam complex at the top of the reach, immediately downstream from the boundary fence.



trampling of deposited fines limiting colonization by wetland species, biofilm, high w/d ratio





Abandoned channel/active flood channel, well vegetated, with historic beaver activity



Moderately entrenched, partially confined at valley margin

Upstream edge of beaver dam complex backwater



SCALE IN FEET



Upstream Project Area 2		
		River Character
9	River character	Moderately entrenched, partially confined
10	River character	Moderately/ highly entrenched, high w/d, riffle dominated
11	River character	Abandoned channel/active flood channel, well vegetated, historic beaver activity
12	River character	Upstream edge of backwater from beaver complex
		Sediment Character
3	Sediment character	Excess fine sediment load, eroding terrace high bank h=5' l=200'
4	Sediment character	Fining of sediment caliber in a downstream direction
		Reference Condition
4	Reference condition	Large beaver dam breach and channel relocation

5 Reference condition Shallow backwater wetland



4 Breached beaver dam with mid channel depositional bar located near a proposed channel plug and excavated leadout channel location. The low energy geomorphology of this location lends itself well for sending flows onto the adjacent flood channels and floodplain with the use of an earthen channel plug.



nergy el plug.



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Assessment Summar	y: Downstream	Project Reach
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River Setting	The Stewart Meadows Upstream Project Area is located along one of the few laterally unconfined Reaches of the San Antonio River, where the r Tusas Mountains and creates the western boundary of the Taos Plateau Volcanic Field. The geology of the area consists of overlapping volcanic basaltic formations from the San Antonio Mountain volcano immediately to the east and the thick tuff and compressed ash layers of the Tusas more west. The drainage area of the Rio San Antonio is largely composed of meta-sedimentary volcanic material resulting from ash eruptions of the Br Volcanic Field. The complex volcanic geology has left much of the Rio San Antonio Watershed with highly erodible, fine textured soils and loosely rock that are highly erosive. The lower slopes of the watershed are dominated by grasslands while many ridgetops are densely forested especial aspects. Small caliber and fine sediments are contributed in abundance to the mainstem channel by most tributary drainages, especially those or west facing aspects, as well as by sparsely vegetated and highly erosive uplands. The arrival of the narrow-gauge railroad to the area in 1880 init land degradation on multiple fronts. The Rio San Antonio watershed has been very heavily grazed, first by sheep, then by cattle starting at the arrialroad. Many areas were logged to support the growing demand of the railroad itself and the expanding communities it supported. Stewart Meadow was rehydrated waterfowl habitat by an extensive restoration project that featured a public/ private partnership with the USFS, NMED and many other organizatio the project was to spread water across the historic wetland surface with an elaborate system of flow diversions, routing channels, berms, flow spl excavated pothole wetlands. That project is still functioning much as it was designed to and will remain unimpacted by our future restoration activ use changes, active restoration work and recent livestock exclusion fencing, the water quality that enters this reach from upstream is highly turbi
River Behavior	The Downstream Project Reach is notably different than the Upstream Reach since it is moderately to severely entrenched along most of its leng this reach was dramatically altered and relocated to facilitate the former hay growing operation. The river channel flows along the toe of the north in an artificially confined setting resulting from past channel modifications. There are frequent but discontinuous floodplain pockets throughout the channel is prohibited from most lateral movement by the boulder strewn valley edge on the north side and earthen berms on the south side that we protect the wetland project. The channel has a high width to depth ratio for about half of this reach and is also interspersed with frequent sub-reace relatively narrow and deep due to the erratic presence of colluvial boulders along the margins of the channel. The boulders that are in the channer valley edge are responsible for most of the localized habitat diversity, including flow constrictions and forced pools. The boulders tend to capture debris and there are numerous small log jams where boulders are found. Shading is intermittent along the reach and Bluestem, Peachleaf and C are frequent but only offer marginal shade. The lower half of this reach is more laterally active with frequent eroding banks and short radius scroll bends. Much of the lateral erosion can be attributed to a reduction in the contribution of colluvial boulders and the presence of breeched beaver d bank erosion is reworking sediments that were deposited behind now absent beaver dams. There was evidence of beaver feeding in the reach due assessment, but no dam construction. The result of the bank erosion is increased geomorphic complexity and the development of and inset flood
Trajectory of Change	Below the road crossing of Forest Road 87 to approximately midway through the Downstream Project Reach, the river is largely in a state of Arre Under the current flow regime, there is not enough stream power to overcome the boulder armored condition that the channel bed and banks hav artificial valley confinement present throughout most of the reach is inhibiting lateral migration, as well as meander, and floodplain development. floodplain that is present is stable and well vegetated in most places. Riparian vegetation is likely to increase following the recent construction of exclosure fencing. Many of the Alders that died back have some new shoots emerging from their bases, but it is uncertain whether Alders will ren component of this riparian plant community. The willow species present are likely to continue to colonize depositional surfaces in the absence of dense stands of willows along the banks could significantly diminish angler access and their fishing experience. The downstream portion of this re geomorphically active and we expect that condition to persist. Some banks in the lower reach are sparsely vegetated and the sediments deposite former beaver dams are readily available for erosion and transport. Aside from the excess sediment load contribution, the continued lateral migra of the reach will aid in the formation of a lower gradient channel and increased floodprone area.
Recovery Potential	The recovery potential for this reach is moderate to high for improving aquatic habitat. Which species occupy that habitat will likely be a question which is the result of land degradation upstream from the proposed project reach. There is very little that can be done within the reach to effective turbidity. One option includes the aggressive recruitment of herbaceous riparian plant species along the lower banks and inner berm features to fi the suspended sediment. This would have a minor impact on turbidity but could have a greater impact on water temperature by increasing shadin banks. Shade creation is likely the most effective measure that can be taken to improve water quality throughout the reach. The species, proximit shade plantings near the channel will be a large determining factor in the angler's experience. There are numerous opportunities to improve and habitat by increasing the frequency and depth of pools, reducing the width to depth ratio and enhancing the amount and quality of underwater shade near pools and prime feeding reaches. Because water quality improvement, especially reducing turbidity and temperature is essential to enhance fishery along Stewart Meadows, we firmly believe that the upstream project reach is an integral component of any aquatic habitat improvements the downstream reach.

e river exits the ic zones including mountains to the Brazos Cones ely consolidated ially on protected on dry south and nitiated broadscale arrival of the adows was ed to improve tions. The goal of splitters and tivities. Despite land oid and overly ct reach. The water were seen in the

ength. The channel in rth side of the valley the reach and the at were built to eaches that are anel along the north re floating woody I by the Alder die off id Coyote Willows rolling meander er dams. A lot of the a during the bodplain.

rrested Degradation. have in places. The it. The inset of livestock remain a significant of grazing, however, s reach is more sited behind the gration of this portion

on of water quality, tively reduce to filter out some of ding along the mity, and density of and expand in-stream sheltering locations ance the quality of the ts that may occur in



	Restoration Opportunities: Downstream Project Reach
Design Hypothesis	The restoration of the downstream project area is the best opportunity in the immediate vicinity of Stewart Meadows to improve fish habitat for re The poor water quality will no doubt prove to be a challenge to overcome. Instream cover, increased pool frequency and depth, improved width t enhanced food production and increased channel shading are well within the realm of achievable outcomes following structural enhancement of habitat in the project reach. Water quality is not a metric that can be readily improved within the confines of the same reach. Our hypothesis is th physical and ecological improvements to aquatic habitat in the Rio San Antonio within the Downstream Reach, however, to do so will require the extensive channel-connected and backwater wetland complex (Stage 0) in the Upstream Project Area to reduce flow velocity and sediment trans- increasing the contact between stream runoff and herbaceous wetland vegetation that can filter suspended sediments out of the water column.
Restoration Objectives	 Increase hydraulic diversity and shelter habitat for trout Increase pool frequency and depth throughout the project reach Increase frequency of large woody debris jams throughout reach Reduce width to depth ratio wherever possible Increase herbaceous plant cover on stream banks, inner berms and depositional features Increase channel shading with vegetation conducive to a positive angler experience Reduce future downstream sediment loads by restoring wetlands within this project area
Restoration Approach	The restoration approach for this reach will include the construction of log jams and boulder clusters to increase hydraulic diversity, improve cover large woody debris. These structures will be designed to maintain pool scour and increase pool depth. Pools will be excavated to generate fill man construct inner berms that will reduce the channel width to depth ratio and provide depositional surfaces for herbaceous wetland plant species to ultimately narrow the channel at base flow levels. Woody riparian shade plantings will be used to cast shade over as much of the project reach a plantings can consist of Narrowleaf Cottonwoods willow species and Colorado Blue Spruce or similar coniferous trees to maximize the density of provide for easy angler access and ample shade.
Project Reach Length & Area	1.46 miles 39 acres



recreational fishing. In to depth ratio, of the physical that we can make the creation of an insport while

over habitat and add materials to to colonize and as possible. The of shade and



Target W/D ratio, floodplain access slightly entrenched



Partially confined, moderately entrenched, colluvial boulder source, forced pools





Severely entrenched, low vegetated, large caliber b Reach impacted by irrigat



Slightly entrenched, high w/d, low gradient, some boulders, moderate shading



Downstream Project Area 1			
		River Character	
13	River character	Floodplain access, riffle dominated, larger caliber bed material, high w/d, grazing impacted	
14	River character	Highly entrenched, low gradient, well vegetated, large caliber bed material	
15	River character	Partially confined, moderately entrenched, colluvial Boulder source, forced pools	
16	River character	Moderately entrenched, riffle dominated, colluvial boulders, large caliber bed material	
17	River character	Moderately entrenched, low w/d, lots of small woody debris	
18	River character	Slightly to moderately entrenched, riffle pool, frequent constrictions, boulders and log jams	
19	River character	Slightly entrenched, high w/d, low gradient, some boulders, less shading	
20	River character	Slightly entrenched, high w/d, numerous bars, poor shading, small woody debris, former beaver dam backwater	
21	River character	Moderately entrenched, high w/d, riffle dominated, poorly shaded	
22	River character	Moderately entrenched, high w/d, plane bed, biofilm, smaller caliber bed material, poorly shaded	
23	River character	Slightly entrenched, moderate w/d, evolving meanders, unconsolidated alluvial bank material	
		Sediment Character	
5	Sediment character	High yield eroding bank, fine sediments, terrace high	
		Reference Condition	
6	Reference condition	Good w/d, short reach	
7	Reference condition	Boulder assisted log jam, small diameter alder	
0	Deference condition	Natural small diamater lasiam	

- Reference condition Natural small diameter log jam 8
- 9 Reference condition Very deep pool, 4'+



20 Slightly entrenched reach with high w/d ratio, numerous bars, poor shading, small woody debris jams in a former beaver dam backwater







Slightly entrenched, high w/d, deep pools, some erratic boulders, larger caliber bed material, more shade, small woody debris



Moderately entrenched, partially confined by unconsolidated, high yield eroding bank, evolving meanders, sediment caliber fining downstream

oderately entrenched, low w/d, elongated pool, heavily shaded



Intact floodplain, riffle po pools, well vegetated banks , deep forced erratic boulders





Downstream Project Area 2			
		River Character	
24	River character	Moderately entrenched, partially confined by unconsolidated, high yield eroding bank, evolving meanders, sediment caliber fining downwa	
25	River character	Slightly entrenched, high w/d, deep pools, some erratic boulders, larger caliber bed material, more shade, small woody debris, ***large fisl	
26	River character	Partially confined with colluvial boulders, forced pools, woody debris	
27	River character	Slightly entrenched, low w/d, large caliber bed material, well shaded	
28	River character	Moderately entrenched, low w/d, elongated pool, heavily shaded	
29	River character	Floodplain access, inset floodplain, monoplane bed, beaver dam backwater	
30	River character	Beaver dam backwater, large flood prone area, high yield eroding bank 10'+ fine sediment	
31	River character	Moderately entrenched, partially confined, course bed material, intermittent shade	
32	River character	Beaver dam complex	
33	River character	Evolving meanders, beaver dam complex	
34	River character	Evolving meanders, beaver dam complex	
		Sediment Character	
6	Sediment character	8' tall eroding bank, fine sediment	
7	Sediment character	10'+ eroding bank, fine sediment source	
		Reference Condition	
10	Reference condition	Cross channel log jam	
11	Reference condition	Intact floodplain, riffle pool, deep forced pools, decent vegetation, erratic boulders	

- 12 Reference condition Beaver dam with extensive backwater
- 13 Reference condition Spawning gravel deposited below breached beaver dam
- 14 Reference condition Boulder assisted log jam
- Reference condition Beaver dam complex, in partially confined channel with inset floodplain 15
- 16 Reference condition Beaver dam complex



(6) Eight-foot-tall bank eroding into the terrace over its entire height, resulting in a significant sediment source.



(13) Spawning gravel deposited below a breached beaver dam

ward

ish, possibly suckers.



DRAWING #: SHEET #: REVISION #: ADS07 15 OF 21

-Upstream Project Area Conceptual Plan See Sheet 17

> Downstream Project Area 4-Conceptual Plan See Sheet 21

-Downstream Project Area 1 Conceptual Plan See Sheet 18

Downstream Project Area 2-Conceptual Plan See Sheet 19

Conceptual Plan See Sheet 20













