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**Governor Richardson & Natural Resources Trustee
Partner with Mid Region Council of Governments for
Bosque Restoration Project**

\$800,000 project to restore groundwater natural resources in the Bosque

State Capitol, Santa Fe Governor Bill Richardson and New Mexico Natural Resources Trustee Jim Baca today announced a partnership with the Mid Region Council of Governments (MRCOG) to implement an \$800,000 Rio Grande Bosque restoration project.

"I am committed to protecting ground water and restoring the Rio Grande bosque to its pristine state," Governor Bill Richardson said. "We're accomplishing both goals as a result of the hard-earned settlement that is directly benefiting New Mexico and its environment."

The bosque natural resource restoration project will cut consumption of river water by eliminating salt cedar and other invasive non-native vegetation from the banks of the Rio Grande within Bernalillo County. The project will focus on heavily infested areas within the Rio Grande Nature Center State Park and stretches south of Avenida Cesar Chavez. The project will also restore several areas in the bosque that were burned by wildfires last June.

Trustee Baca said the \$800,000 became available as a result of the Sparton Industry Groundwater Natural Resource Damage settlement that specified that settlement funds be used to compensate for the company's injury of groundwater resources. "I am pleased to be able to direct these settlement funds to be used to preserve groundwater resources for critical needs. This is a good example of what the State's Natural Resource Assessment and Restoration Program is supposed to do."

MRCOG Executive Director, Lawrence Rael, praised Governor Richardson's administration saying this was the first step in implementing the regional water plan. "Last year, the Mid Region Council of Governments completed a multi-year effort to develop a long range water plan for the Middle Rio Grande Region. One of the key recommendations of that plan was this type of bosque restoration - - conserving water by eliminating invasive, non-native plant species from the banks of the Rio Grande. By doing this, we can make water available for other priority uses," he said.

MRCOG will work with all the local governments and organizations with jurisdiction over the bosque to coordinate the state's effort with ongoing bosque restoration projects. The work is expected to begin within 30 days.