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Governor Bill Richardson & Natural Resources Trustee Martin Heinrich announce Rio Grande Bosque Restoration in Valencia County

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Governor Bill Richardson and Martin Heinrich, the State Natural Resources Trustee, today announced a \$200,000 initiative to restore seventy acres of Rio Grande bosque in Valencia County, including several acres adjacent to the Main Street Bridge in Los Lunas.

Funding for this project was acquired as part of a settlement with Sparton Industries stemming from their contamination of the state's groundwater. While the main goal of this restoration is to conserve water by removing water intensive invasive species, other benefits include a reduction in fire danger, improvement of wildlife habitat, and improvement in water quality. The Middle Rio Grande Council of Governments is managing the project for the Office of Natural Resources Trustee.

“New Mexico’s environment will benefit dramatically from this opportunity to remove exotic species along an important stretch of the Rio Grande. In addition, we are dramatically reducing the threat of a catastrophic wildfire during one of the driest years on record,” said Governor Richardson.

“The Rio Grande is New Mexico’s lifeblood. This effort will protect and restore a piece of our precious river and the water that we all rely upon,” said Trustee Martin Heinrich. **“We hope these activities will benefit the people of Los Lunas, Valencia County and all New Mexicans, for generations to come.”**

This week, restoration workers will begin removing exotic species such as Salt Cedar, Russian Olive, and Siberian Elm on 70 acres of bosque in Valencia County. Restoration will continue through April 15, the beginning of bird nesting season.

The Office of the Natural Resources Trustee (ONRT) is charged with the restoration of damaged natural resources, and if that is not possible then for the replacement of, or acquisition of, equivalent natural resources and their services, which were lost or impaired due to releases of hazardous substances. When possible ONRT accomplishes these goals through a cooperative process with the responsible parties as this frequently results in more timely restoration project completion.

Any questions regarding the funding and purpose of this project should be directed to Martin Heinrich with the Office of Natural Resources Trustee.

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