Buckman Direct Diversion Project

A joint regional project of the City of Santa Fe and Santa Fe County to build a reliable and sustainable water supply.

MEMORANDUM

Date: January 25, 2013

To: Buckman Direct Diversion Board

From: Rick Carpenter, BDD Project Manager RC
Todd Caplan, GeoSystems, Inc. RC for TC

Subject: **Update on Required Habitat Restoration Efforts for the BDD Project Near the Rio Grande**

BACKGROUND

The BDD Project is required to perform certain environmental mitigation measures pursuant to the Project's NEPA Environmental Impact Statement. Generally, the BDD is required to remove certain non-native vegetation, re-vegetate the areas with native riparian and upland species, and maintain the newly restored habitat until it becomes naturally self-sufficient. The BDD Project is required to restore approximately 7 acres of habitat. In addition to BDD project efforts, the New Mexico Wildlife Federation (NMWF) is also in the early stages of habitat restoration on an adjacent piece of riparian lands. The two projects are very similar in nature and scope; therefore, project planners and ecologists expect that collaboration can result in mutual benefits and synergistic effects, in addition to possible saving on costs to both projects.

The first stage of restoration efforts will consist of implementing forestry treatments to approximately a total of 18 acres of non-native forest dominated by saltcedar, Russian olive and Siberian elm (7 acres on the BDD Project site and 11 acres on the abutting NMWF site). The purpose of this work is to prepare the site for follow-up seeding and revegetation with native plants at a later time. Forestry treatments will be implemented in a manner that minimizes soil disturbance, minimizes damage to existing native plants within the project area, and minimizes the need for follow-up herbicide applications to non-native tree root-sprouts.

In addition to the forestry work, the project involves excavating a small backwater channel and floodplain depression that will eventually be planted with native willows and cottonwoods. This current effort, however, does not include revegetation support services, which will occur at a later time as appropriate given seasonality and levels of precipitation.

Unfortunately, NEPA environmental documentation for the NMWF project was the subject of a recent legal appeal and is therefore on indefinite hold what the appeal process is conducted. However, BDD Project-related work will continue as appropriate, to include the following:

- Work with the USFS, BLM and the Caja del Rio Livestock Association to erect fencing around the mitigation area to exclude livestock and ORV's from the mitigation site, and establish alternative livestock water sources to protect the river and the restoration work.
- Completing forestry plans and specs for non-native removal in the floodplain.
- Collaborating and contracting with NRCS Los Lunas Plant Materials Center to custom grown and install native plant material.
- Collaborating with the NMWF to expand habitat restoration management and maintenance, and to improve the overall recreational and ecological value of the Buckman area.
- Forestry restoration work is scheduled to begin this winter/spring and will continue through next winter (2014).