

## FUNDING STRATEGIES

# Developing and Diversifying Funding for Riparian Restoration in the Southwest



Rivers are the lifeblood of communities throughout the southwestern United States, but invasive plants can deteriorate the health of these rivers and the quality of life in the communities that depend on them. There has been an increasing push to restore riparian areas through a combination of non-native plant removal and planting of native plants. This work requires collaboration across jurisdictions, upfront restoration costs, and long-term maintenance costs. The RiversEdge West (REW) Funding Program is working with practitioners to procure funding that will support the full life cycle of riparian restoration.



*A Southwestern Desert River/Jake Frank*

## KEY ISSUES ADDRESSED

One of the most challenging aspects of conducting restoration work can be acquiring and maintaining adequate funding to support on-the-ground restoration efforts. Restoration partnerships and practitioners tend to depend on public funding to support the bulk of their work; however, this funding is often competitive, unreliable, and restricted. To help address this challenge, REW's Funding Program focuses on working with practitioners to develop diversified funding portfolios, which include public, private, and fee-for-service funding sources. Private fundraising can present challenges when practitioners and partnerships do not have adequate capacity or know-how. REW works to overcome these challenges by supplying capacity or supporting capacity-building, along with training for practitioners in fundraising strategies.

## PROJECT GOALS

- Provide support and tools for restoration practitioners and partnerships to diversify funding portfolios
- Promote awareness about the importance of riparian restoration among policy-makers to increase the amount of public funding for this work

## INCENTIVIZING RESTORATION ON PRIVATE LANDS

The Purgatoire Watershed Weed Management Collaborative in Las Animas County, CO used funding from the Moore Charitable Foundation to establish a cost-share program with local landowners to help fund restoration on private lands.



Blue Heron Nesting in a Cottonwood along the Colorado River/REW

## PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

**Fundraising Support:** REW directly engages in fundraising with partnerships by heading Funding Subcommittees, developing budgets, and writing fundraising plans. Over the past five years, REW's engagement in partnership fundraising has helped bring in millions of dollars for riparian restoration.

**Sharing Funding Opportunities:** Gathering and sharing relevant restoration grant opportunities through the Restoration Funding Database.

**Building Connections:** Building donor and foundation relationships to build up private funding opportunities for partnerships through the Restore Our Rivers initiative. Nearly \$1M in private funding was raised for restoration, and the nine participating partnerships raised nearly \$600K in private funding to be spent on capacity, planning, monitoring, and maintenance activities.

**Outreach and Awareness:** Conducting outreach to public and private funders to share the importance of riparian restoration, and encourage them to sustain and create funding programs that support this work. Through these efforts, REW has helped connect funders with restoration projects throughout the West.

## Collaborators and Funding Partners

- See online for full list of collaborators and funding partners

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## LESSONS LEARNED

Diversifying funding to include private foundations, businesses, and individuals is critical to program sustainability. Public funding tends to support initial on-the-ground work, but not monitoring, planning, fundraising, project management, and coordination. Garnering new and diverse funding sources requires educating the public and funders about the importance of riparian restoration. Additionally, restoration partnerships and organizations must prioritize expanding fundraising capacity by recruiting and training staff and board members. Funders often want to measure the impact of their dollars. Restoration partnerships should establish metrics and evaluation methods in advance. Funders also like to see their dollars leveraged to bring in more funding and support work that benefits their local community. Building relationships and alliances locally can garner this key financial support.

## NEXT STEPS

- Continue building funder awareness on the importance of riparian restoration at the federal level and with states in the Southwest
- Provide direct fundraising support to at least twelve restoration partnerships/organizations
- Continue to train practitioners in fundraising best practices and connect them with funding networks and opportunities

## PROJECT RESOURCES

For more information on this project, contact Kristen Jespersen: [kjerspersen@riversedgewest.org](mailto:kjerspersen@riversedgewest.org)

For additional project resources and case studies, visit the Collaborative Conservation and Adaptation Strategy Toolbox: [WWW.DESERTLCC.ORG/RESOURCE/CCAST](http://WWW.DESERTLCC.ORG/RESOURCE/CCAST)



Floating the Colorado River with Project Supporters/REW