

## Section 1 - Introduction

The Rio Grande Headwaters Restoration Project (RGHRP) was conducted by the Montgomery Watson Harza (MWH) Americas, Inc. Project Team under the guidance of the San Luis Valley Water Conservancy District's Rio Grande Restoration Project Enterprise Technical Advisory Committee (TAC). The Project was undertaken to analyze and prescribe a plan to restore historical functions of the river. An interactive approach with the general public, landowners, Project beneficiaries and governmental agencies was used to develop the analysis and recommendations contained herein. Funding was provided by the Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB).

### 1.1 Project Overview and Background

The primary purposes of this Project are to analyze and develop a restoration master plan for the Rio Grande from the upstream corporate limit of the Town of South Fork, Colorado to the Alamosa-Conejos County line (see **Figure 1-1**). The study assesses and presents a plan to enhance the adequacy of the Rio Grande to fulfill the following historical functions:

- Maintenance of channel capacity and overbank capacity.
- Protection of channel and floodplain from damage by flooding.
- Maintenance of riparian habitat.
- Delivery of Rio Grande Compact commitments
- Access to river for water diversion.

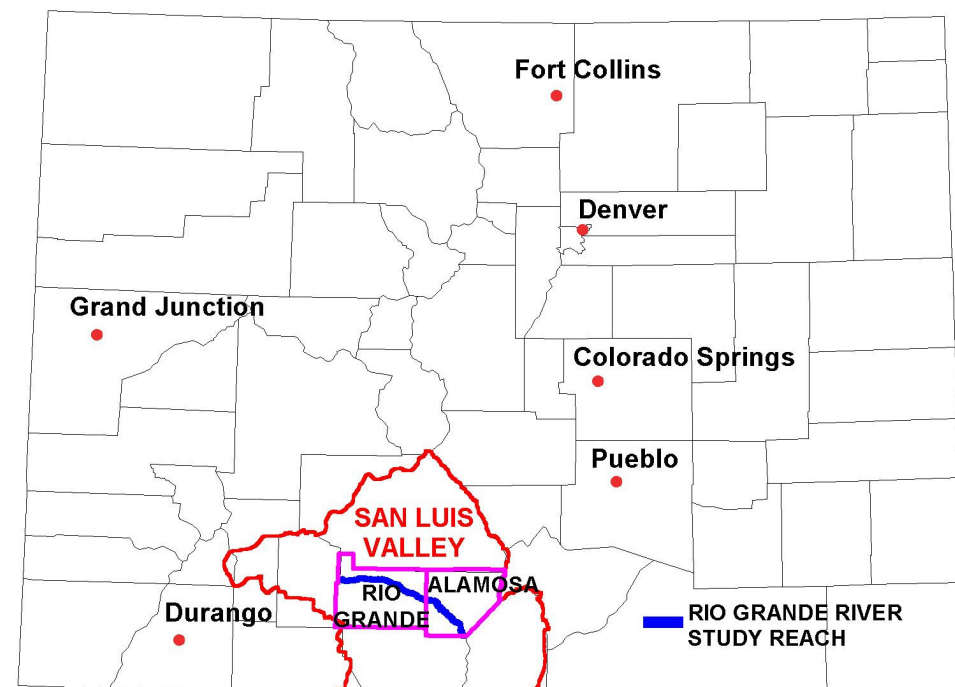


Figure 1-1. RGHRP Location Map

This Project is one step in a program started several years ago by local property owners and agencies to improve conditions in the Rio Grande Corridor. The comprehensive RGHRP master plan provides a blueprint for restoring the river functions listed above in a balanced, interdisciplinary manner.

### 1.2 Project Objectives

The following Project Objectives guided work by the consultants and the Technical Advisory Committee and serve as the overall guidance for the Project.

1. The primary objective of the Project is to develop a prioritized list of river corridor enhancement projects which can be implemented as future funding is acquired.
2. All aspects of this Project are important. However, the emphasis of the Project is on the solution and recommendation phase; less emphasis is placed on the study and analysis phases.
3. Recommended high-priority improvements are described and evaluated at the feasibility level; low-priority improvements are described and evaluated at the conceptual level.

### 1.3 Coordination

The work contained herein would not have been possible without the help of many people. The consulting team wishes to acknowledge the following individuals and groups for their participation in the study effort.

#### 1.3.1 Technical Advisory Committee

The Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) provided assistance, guidance and review of the work. The input and guidance from the TAC was key to a successful project. The RGHRP TAC was comprised of the following individuals:

- Mike Blakeman, U.S. Forest Service, Landowner
- Mike Blenden, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- Doug Davie, Silva Ditch, Landowner
- Allen Davey, Davis Engineering
- Kate Booth Doyle, San Luis Valley Ecosystem Council/Rio Bravo Coalition
- Brian Hyde, Colorado Water Conservation Board
- Dennis Felmlee, San Luis Valley Water Conservancy District
- Robert Felmlee, San Luis Valley Water Conservancy District
- Jeff Johnson, Colorado Division of Wildlife
- Pete Magee, SLV GIS/GPS Authority
- D.H. McFadden, Geological Consultant, Retired Division Engineer
- Doug Messick, San Luis Valley Water Conservancy District
- Randall Palmgren, San Luis Valley Water Conservancy District
- Steve Russell, Natural Resources Conservation Service
- Doug Shriver, Centennial Ditch
- Steve Vandiver, Division Engineer
- Ray Wright, Rio Grande Water Conservation District

Dennis Felmlee and Brian Hyde managed the Project for their respective agencies; their input to the Project was indispensable. The TAC met to review and discuss intermediate Project deliverables at key Project milestones and participated in making strategic planning decisions.

### **1.3.2 Consulting Team**

The Project consulting team was assembled to provide expertise covering each of the Project goals. In addition, the team provided significant overlap in most technical areas, allowing easy integration of field work, analysis and solutions between the disciplines. The Project consulting team consisted of:

- MWH Americas, Inc., Denver, CO (Project Management, Hydrology, Hydraulics, Floodplain Issues, Compact Issues)
- Agro Engineering, Inc., Alamosa, CO (River Inventory, GIS Mapping, Irrigation Diversions, Local Coordination)
- Lidstone and Associates, Fort Collins, CO (Geomorphology, Irrigation Diversions)
- SWCA, Inc., Westminster, CO (Vegetation, Habitat, Wildlife)

### **1.3.3 Public Meetings**

Involvement of the general public and water users is key to the success of projects such as the RGHRP. Two public meetings were held during the Project. These are summarized below.

#### ***Project Kickoff Meeting, September 18, 2000***

Approximately 80 people from the local community attended, and interest in the Project's success was high. The audience was first given a 40 minute presentation on the purpose, history and scope of work for the Project. Following the presentation, the audience was invited to mark specific locations of problems on maps and photographs. This information was integrated into a GIS coverage. The notes provided by the public and the contacts made during the interactive session were used extensively in the field work and subsequent analysis.

#### ***Project Presentation Meeting, August 16, 2001***

The final recommendations of the RGHRP were presented at a public meeting on August 16, 2001. Approximately 100 people from the local community attended.