

TWDB Funds “Forgotten River” Study

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<http://www.twdb.state.tx.us/publications/newsletters/WaterforTexas/WFTspring05.pdf>

In February 2005 the Texas Water Development Board (TWDB) unanimously approved a \$100,000 grant for an unsolicited research proposal from the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) for a feasibility study of how to control salt cedar, enhance flows, and restore native habitat in the 150 miles of the Rio Grande stretching from Fort Quitman to Presidio, Texas, sometimes called the “Forgotten River.”

Study results will be included in a report that:

1. defines the extent of salt cedar in the Forgotten River;
2. examines factors that are key to identifying how flows can be improved; and
3. examines, at least preliminarily, various potential solutions to ensuring adequate flows in this section of the Rio Grande.

This one-year feasibility study is a requirement before restoration/enhancement implementation can move forward on this binational river segment.

The Forgotten River Study will cost approximately \$400,000, with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers contributing \$200,000, along with a combination of TCEQ, Texas Department of Agriculture, UT Center for Space Research, UT Center for Research in Water Resources, and Environmental Defense contributing \$100,000 of in-kind services. The \$100,000 from the TWDB will serve as the required cash match for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers study and will be dedicated to Study Task 4-Limited Environmental Analysis.

Results of the study should be of interest to the TCEQ, TWDB, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, Texas Department of Agriculture, Far West Texas Regional Water Planning Region, Plateau Regional Water Planning Group, Rio Grande Regional Water Planning Group, International Boundary and Water Commission, National Park Service, and local farmers and ranchers in the region.

The Forgotten River Study is more than a simple brush control project. The Forgotten River is a long and diverse stretch of a binational river. In addition to salt cedar control, there is likely a need for channel improvements and restoration of native habitat. If the study results in federally funded projects, it will likely trigger the

National Environmental Policy Act that may include addressing critical issues identified in this study.