Candelaria Nature Preserve

Operational Activity

Winter Report FY 2023

Ciudad Soil and Water Conservation District

CIUDAD SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Friends of Candelaria Nature Preserve EST. 2020

CITY OF ALBUQUERQUE 35th Anniversary OPEN SPACE 1984 2019 PARKS AND RECREATION

RIO GRANDE RETURN

Ciudad Soil and Water Conservation District (Ciudad SWCD) manages Candelaria Nature Preserve in accordance with State statutory mandate [73-20-25 NMSA 1978] which states:

It is declared to be the policy of the legislature and the purpose of the Soil and Water Conservation District Act [73-20-25 NMSA 1978] to:

> *(1) control and prevent soil erosion;*
> *(2) prevent floodwater and sediment damage;*
> *(3) further the conservation, development, beneficial application and proper disposal of water;*
> *(4) promote the use of impounded water for recreation, propagation of fish and wildlife, irrigation and for urban and industrial needs; and*
> *(5) by the application of these measures, conserve and develop the natural resources of the state, provide for flood control, preserve wildlife, protect the tax base and promote the health, safety and general welfare of the people of New Mexico.*

Ciudad SWCD operations at Candelaria Nature Preserve are authorized through a collaborative Intergovernmental Agreement with CABQ Open Space as approved in 2020 and a Joint Power Agreement with CABQ Open Space as approved in 2021.

Ciudad SWCD wishes to thank the many partners which make this restoration project possible, including the City of Albuquerque Open Space Division, Rio Grande Return, and Friends of Candelaria Nature Preserve. Supplemental funding was provided by the New Mexico Healthy Soil Program.

For questions about the Candelaria Nature Preserve Operational Activity Winter Report FY 2023 contact:

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Forward

In the ongoing efforts towards the comprehensive restoration of the Candelaria Nature Preserve (CNP), land managers at the site continue to implement strategic topographic changes aimed at enhancing the ecological resilience, biological diversity, and structural diversity of the habitat to support a mosaic of species. One notable focus lies in the utilization of topographic variations to optimize rainwater harvesting, provide shade, and offer wind protection to specific native habitat shrub planting zones. This deliberate integration of intentionally designed topographic features, with an eye toward the flow patterns of available water, aligns with our commitment to replicating the natural variability found in ecosystems and fosters a more resilient and diverse landscape.

A key aspect of this management approach involves the incorporation of roughness and asymmetry, attributes that have historically been absent from these fields due to traditional agricultural practices. By reintroducing these elements into the landscape, the CNP offers a better emulation of the complexity and dynamism present in natural habitats. The departure from conventional agricultural practices and land disturbance at the CNP is integral to the overall goal of establishing a dynamic mosaic of habitats that promote a more stable state of equilibrium over time while embracing the inherent variability found in nature.

The long-term vision for the CNP centers on the transition of these agricultural fields into a vibrant array of native and climate-adapted species that sustain diverse populations of wildlife. To achieve this vision, restoration activities necessitate a holistic approach, including soils management, cover crop management, integrated pest management, and wildlife cropping. This commitment extends to the incorporation of flexibility in planning and management approaches, which have become even more necessary in the face of a changing climate and declining water resource reliability and availability. This style of approach, while highly variable in its application across fields, plays a pivotal role in shaping the larger habitat restoration goals across the CNP.

As the CNP progresses toward its vision of a 20-year transition, water emerges as the primary limiting factor influencing the transformation of habitat over time. The presence of a substantial seed bank in the soil, composed of particularly aggressive agricultural weeds, and invasive species pressure from the surrounding area underscores the need for careful water management and irrigation regimes. This intricate balance ensures that changes take place gradually as water, staff time, and desired plant materials and beneficial seeds become available, allowing for the effective manipulation of the extant seed bank in response to altered water conditions. This nuanced approach, informed by the RMP and a team of highly skilled experts specializing in climate-adaptive strategies, is critical to the success of the CNP. The management team's commitment to climate adaptation is paramount in habitat restoration design and its implementation at the CNP.

Jaren Peplinski
Ciudad SWCD Water Resources Coordinator
Urban Waters Federal Partnership Ambassador

Executive Summary

The Candelaria Nature Preserve Open Space (CNP) is located just east of the Rio Grande corridor and encompasses 167 acres within the municipal limits of the City of Albuquerque (City). The framework for restoring wildlife habitat within the CNP is provided by the CNP resource management plan (RMP). Ciudad Soil and Water Conservation District (Ciudad SWCD) is responsible for the management of the Northern Tract of CNP, totaling 78.44 acres

Wildlife habitat restoration design and implementation continued in 2023. Efforts funded by the New Mexico Department of Agriculture Healthy Soil Program (HSP) continued into Spring 2023. Under this plan, work completed on Field 1A included application of paper mulch and soil amendments. The HSP also funded planting of dry-soil grassland species in field 3B and planting wildlife crops in fields 1D and 1E. In Fall of 2023, Ciudad SWCD and Rio Grande Return (RGR) staff developed a habitat restoration plan for the eastern portion of Field 4A incorporating topographic changes that will harvest rainwater, enhance shade, and provide wind protection. Grading and construction of berms were completed, and native dryland grasses were no-till drilled.

Wildlife Farming also continues in 2023. Fields 1E, 1D, 2D, and 4D were planted with wildlife crops and irrigated. Field 3B was seeded with dry-soil grassland species and the basins of field 1B were periodically irrigated with surface water and weeded. CNP partners and volunteers also planted hedgerow plants along Fields 1A and 1B.

Monitoring occurred throughout 2023 to help evaluate the effectiveness of restoration practices. This monitoring included soil sampling, field assessments and observations, and photographic documentation. One specific assessment tool utilized is the SER Recovery Wheel, an evaluation tool designed to help assess the degree of recovery over time of an ecosystem that is receiving treatment. Generally, the CNP showed a considerable improvement in the state of ecological recovery as compared to 2022.

Community engagements and outreach events were also hosted throughout 2023. Monthly public CNP tours continued, and many youth groups were directly involved with restoration activities on the CNP. Citizen science continued in the form of weekly bird observations and a public birding event is planned for early January 2024.

Unfortunately, there has also been regular unauthorized public access and two break ins that resulted in significant property loss. CNP managers are actively looking for cost-effective ways to improve security.

Financially, Ciudad SWCD operated with a contractual amount of $94,999.80 for FY23 which covered contractual costs at a basic level. Additional funding was brought in from an HSP grant totaling $57,361.00.

Introduction

Located just east of the Rio Grande corridor and encompassing 167 acres within the municipal limits of the City of Albuquerque (City), the Candelaria Nature Preserve Open Space (CNP) (figure 1) is on property that was purchased in 1978 by the City for the purpose of creating a nature-study area and wildlife preserve (City of Albuquerque Open Space Division, 2021). This includes 38.8 acres leased to the State Parks Division of the Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department for the Rio Grande Nature Center State Park (RGNCSP). The federal Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) provided a portion of the funding for this purchase and this funding sets forth specific rules and guidelines about the use of land acquired with LCWF funds. However, in 2016, based on concerns raised by neighbors and other residents about the activities occurring on the CNP, the LCWF found the City Open Space Division (OSD) was not in compliance with LCWF rules and guidelines and this finding motivated the development of a comprehensive resource management plan (RMP) to bring City Open Space Division into compliance with LWCF requirements given in the purchase agreement. Completed in 2019 (public version released in 2021), the RMP provides the framework and guidelines for all activities on the CNP including but not limited to restoration practices, public recreation, and general maintenance. The RMP, with a

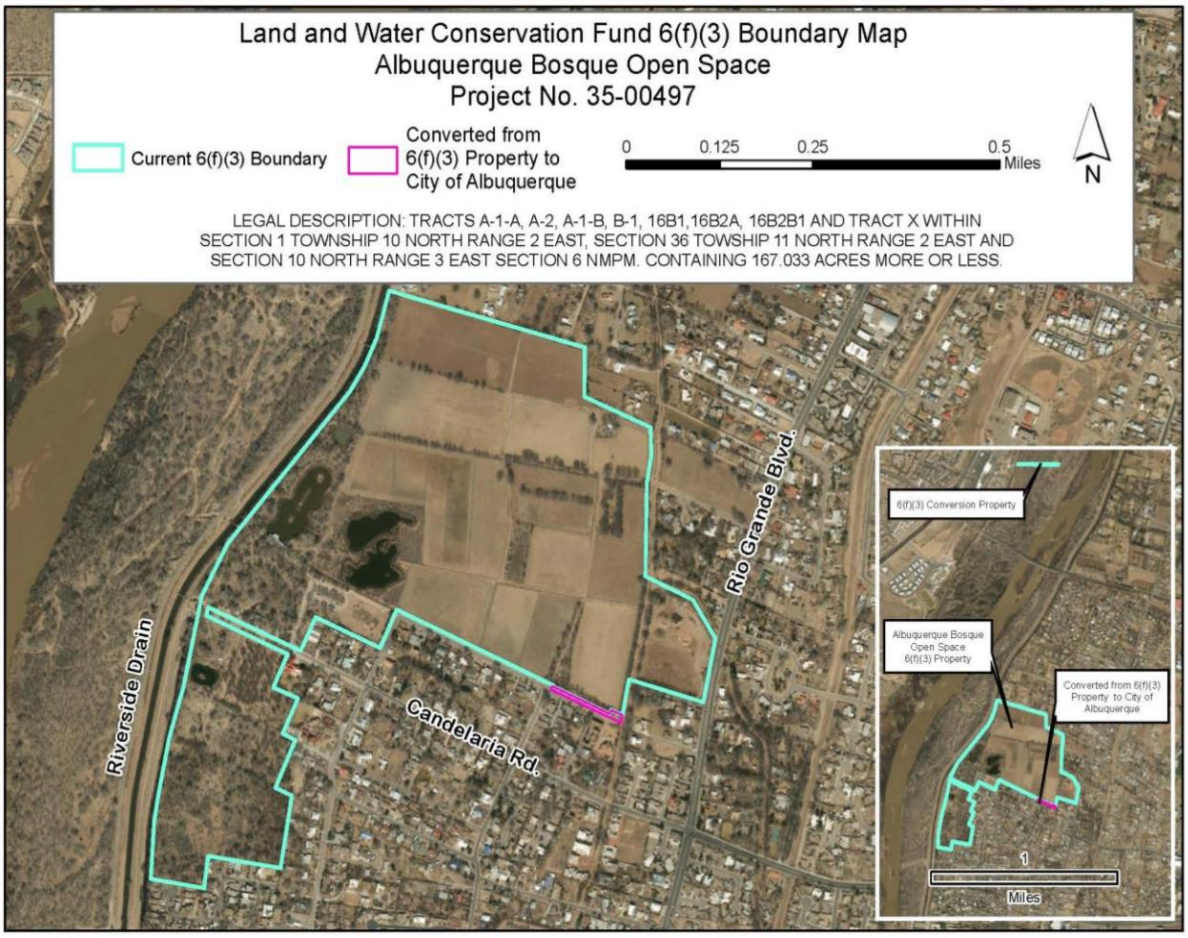

Figure 1. Land and Water Conservation Fund boundary map for Candelaria Nature Preserve (from OSD, 2021). The CNP is operationally divided into the dominant North tract and a smaller South tract.

20-year implementation span, is an adaptive management plan designed to provide the framework for restoring wildlife habitat within the CNP. Goals of the RMP include transitioning from farming alfalfa to farming wildlife crops, restoring native habitat throughout the CNP, and providing recreational activities and educational outreach as well.

The purpose of this report is to detail activities that have occurred on the North Tract of the CNP during the 2023 calendar year as outlined in the RMP. This report focuses on the activities that took place on the areas of land on the CNP that are leased to Ciudad SWCD. These activities occurred on the North Tract which totals 78.44 acres. (figure 2).

Figure 2. Designations of the different fields within the North Tract of land in the CNP perimeter. The RGNCSP is distinguished by the ponds in the middle-left portion of the photograph (from Candelaria Nature Preserve Operational Activity Winter Report FY, 2021).

Wildlife Habitat Restoration Design and Implementation

New Mexico Department of Agriculture Healthy Soil Program (HSP)

Restoration efforts that have been funded by the New Mexico Department of Agriculture Healthy Soil Program (HSP) continued from 2022 into Summer of 2023. Goals of these efforts are to reduce surface soil erosion during drought conditions and to improve soil conditions through intensive mulching, establishing native plants, improving irrigation efficiency, and removing invasive species.

Field 1A was one of the primary areas targeted by the HSP project and the 1A design plan was fully implemented into 2023. Highlights of the design plan include:

- using large scale sheet mulching to increase soil microbial diversity and reduce invasive species presence in the cover soil
- applying soil amendments and inoculants
- planting native species in fields and along hedgerows with assistance from contractors and volunteers

The design plan schematic for field 1A is shown in figure 3. Continuing implementation from 2022, in December to February 2023, Ciudad SWCD, Rio Grande Return (RGR) and City staff, with the help of volunteers, applied paper mulch and soil amendments.

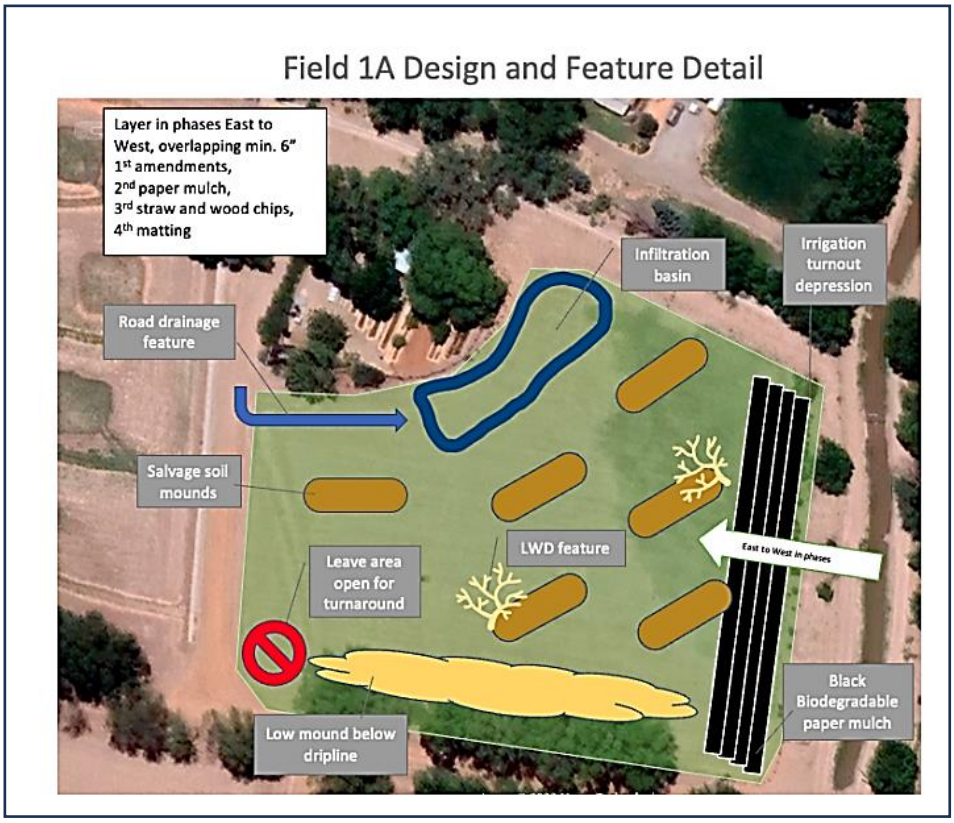

Figure 3. HSP project design-plan schematic for field 1A (from CSWCD, 2022).

HSP funding was also used for work on field 3B in 2023. During recent years, field 3B was suffering from significant shrink-swell cracking caused by recent fallowing and drought. Part of the HSP project plan was to integrate straw mulch into the topsoil to provide microsites for native Gramma-seed germination and to enhance soil stability and water infiltration. In the spring, straw was crimped into the surface soil of field 3B and dry-soil grassland species were successfully seeded. Through this process, it was discovered that the Sandhill Cranes thoroughly enjoy straw.

Finally, HSP funding was used for planting wildlife crops in fields 1D and 1E. This funding also supported work on field 1B, but for 2023 the efforts on 1B were primarily planting native species, irrigation, and removal of weedy species.

Field 4A Design and Implementation

In Fall of 2023, Rio Grande Return (RGR) and Ciudad SWCD staff developed a habitat restoration plan for the eastern portion of Field 4A (approximately 7 acres of predominantly Gila Clay Loam soils). Although this portion of 4A is the primary viewing area for visitors to the eastern wildlife blind, the eastern portion also presents a challenge because there are no surface-water irrigation rights on this section of the field and water must therefore be brought in via pipe, hose, or other mechanical method. With that consideration, the habitat-design plan incorporates topographic changes that will simultaneously harvest rainwater, enhance shade, and provide wind protection to native-habitat, shrub-planting zones (figure 4).

Grading and construction of berms was completed in Fall 2023 (figure 5). In addition, native dryland grasses were no-till drilled into the open zones of 4A to allow establishment during precipitation events. No-till tillage, or conservation tillage, limits disturbance to the soil surface and allows composting of agricultural residue in place (OSD, 2021).

Finally, the western portion of 4A where surface water irrigation exists will be planted with wildlife crops in 2024.

Figure 4. Design-plan schematic for field 4A developed by RGR and CSWCD. Top photo shows first phase of implementation, followed by the second stage in the bottom photo. North direction is approximately to the right of figure.

Figure 5. Grading of field 4A in Fall 2023. Top of photo is north direction.

Other Habitat Restoration

As required by the RMP, Ciudad SWCD and Rio Grande Return are interested in collaborating with RGNCSP to pursue funding for habitat restoration on the North Tract for the areas leased by Ciudad SWCD and RGNCSP.

Planning for phased removal of invasive species and revegetation has begun pending the approval of the CNP Integrated Pest Management (IPM) plan. In the meantime, as part of invasive species management, Ancestral Lands Conservation Corps began removing invasive species during the summer of 2023; herbicide was not applied in the process. Ciudad SWCD and RGR will continue to monitor and manage invasive species to their best abilities without the IPM.

Additional planning for the development of field-specific restoration plans will continue into 2024. In 2024, a high priority for Ciudad SWCD will be the development of restoration plans for field 1C, 2D, and 4D. Depending upon resource availability, design plans for 3A, 3C, 4B, 4C, will be created as well.

Transitioning to Native Habitat for Wildlife

One long-term vision of the CNP is the eventual creation of a dynamic mosaic of native habitats that will support plant and animal diversity (OSD, 2021). To fully achieve this long-term plan, restoration activities will require a holistic approach that incorporates soils management, cover

crop management, integrated pest management, and wildlife cropping. Specifically, much wildlife crop work was accomplished on the CNP in 2023.

Wildlife Farming/ Wildlife Crops/Farm Fields

In Fall of 2023, RGR and Ciudad SWCD developed a habitat restoration plan for the eastern portion of Field 4A (approximately 7 acres of predominantly Gila Clay Loam soils). As part of this plan (see details in previous section), native dryland grasses were no-till drilled into the open zones of 4A to allow establishment during precipitation events. The western portion of 4A where surface water irrigation exists will be planted with wildlife crops in 2024.

Also for 2023, wildlife farming continued from 2022 in multiple fields of the North Tract of the CNP. Fields 1E, 1D, 2D, and 4D were planted with wildlife crops and irrigated. Although fields 4B and 4C were not planted with new crops in 2023, crews maintained them such that wildlife crops planted in 2022 continued to grow. These crops planted in previous years were additionally enhanced by native sunflowers planted by the birds (figure 6).

Figure 6. Sunflowers. summer 2023.

Field 3B was seeded with dry-soil grassland species and straw was crimped into the surface of 3B to enhance soil stability and water infiltration.

Much work was also completed on field 1B. The east basins of field 1B were periodically irrigated with surface water and weeded and the 1B west basins were watered individually with groundwater. The native habitat plants are establishing well in both basins. More diversity will be added in 2024.

Lastly, CNP partners, with the help of volunteers, planted, mulched, watered and weeded hedgerow plants along Fields 1A and 1B (figure 7).

Figure 7. Auger holes and shrub plantings in CNP field 1A .

Moving forward into year three of the RMP implementation, Ciudad SWCD will continue to plant native hedgerows to serve as windbreaks and to improve structural diversity. These hedgerows will also provide a network of wildlife corridors for movement and will provide habitat for food and shelter. Additionally, Ciudad SWCD will continue to

plan wildlife crops in field 1D and 1E and may consider planting wildlife crops in field 2A, 2B, and 2C until further restoration designs are developed in years to come.

Monitoring and Sampling

Monitoring occurred throughout 2023 to provide metrics to help evaluate the effectiveness of restoration practices. This monitoring included soil sampling, field assessments and observations, and photographic documentation. One specific assessment tool utilized by CNP partners is the SER Recovery Wheel.

The SER Recovery Wheel

For 2023, RGR and Ciudad SWCD project managers continued to utilize the Society for Ecological Restoration (SER) recovery wheel as one method to evaluate baseline-ecological conditions for the CNP fields. The SER recovery wheel is an evaluation tool designed to help assess the degree of recovery over time of an ecosystem that is receiving treatment (SER, 2023). The evaluation metrics consist of the following six primary attributes (listed alphabetically): absence of threats, ecosystem function, external exchanges, physical conditions, species composition, and structural diversity. Each of these primary attributes has three sub-attributes (not listed here for brevity) for a total of 18 scoreable attributes for each ecosystem under evaluation. These attributes are evaluated on a scale of 1-5 points (stars) and the mean of the three sub-attributes is computed to find the final score of each of the six primary attributes.

The individual values of 1 through 5 stars are themselves determined in accordance with the SER International Restoration Standards (SER, 2023); details are not provided in this report.

All 18 sub-attribute scores can also be plotted in a circular, wheel-shaped diagram that provides a good visual reference for the relative state of recovery for the evaluated ecosystem; this diagram is the actual SER recovery wheel (fig. 8).

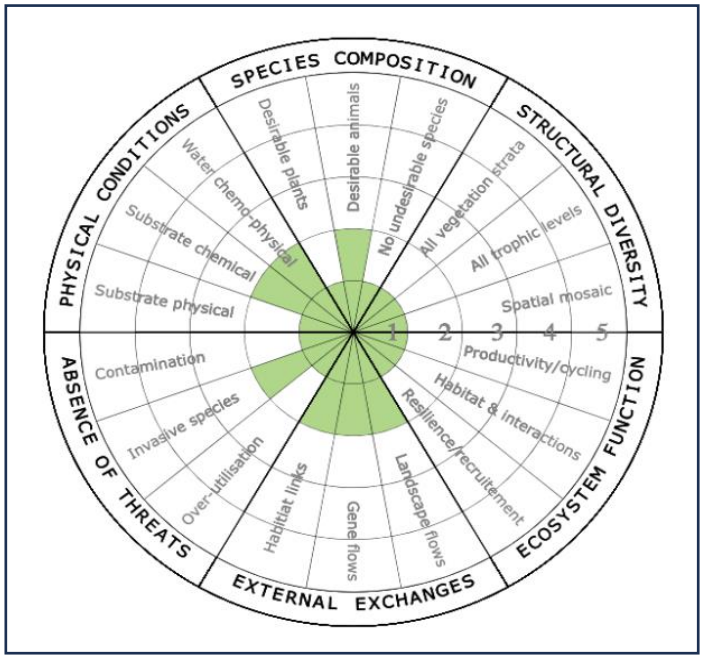

Figure 8. An example of a completed SER recovery wheel assessment. The wheel has been populated with actual information from the CNP in 2022 (from Candelaria Nature Preserve Operational Activity Winter Report FY, 2022).

The accurate evaluation of each attribute is dependent on the assessor's familiarity with the reference ecosystem as well as familiarity with the goals, objectives and site-specific indicators of the individual project (SER, 2023). For this reason, accuracy of the evaluation can be improved by having multiple assessors contribute to a consensus score for each of the attributes.

Every year, to help meet monitoring goals of the RMP, CNP managers will complete a SER recovery wheel for all 15 fields within the north tract. However, limited resources prevented completion of a SER recovery wheel for all fields prior to this report and for that reason, this report will present results based on the evaluation of fields 1A, 1B, 1C, 1E, 3B, 4A, and 4C. SER recovery wheel assessments will be completed for the remainder of the fields and the information collected will be factored into future overall assessments.

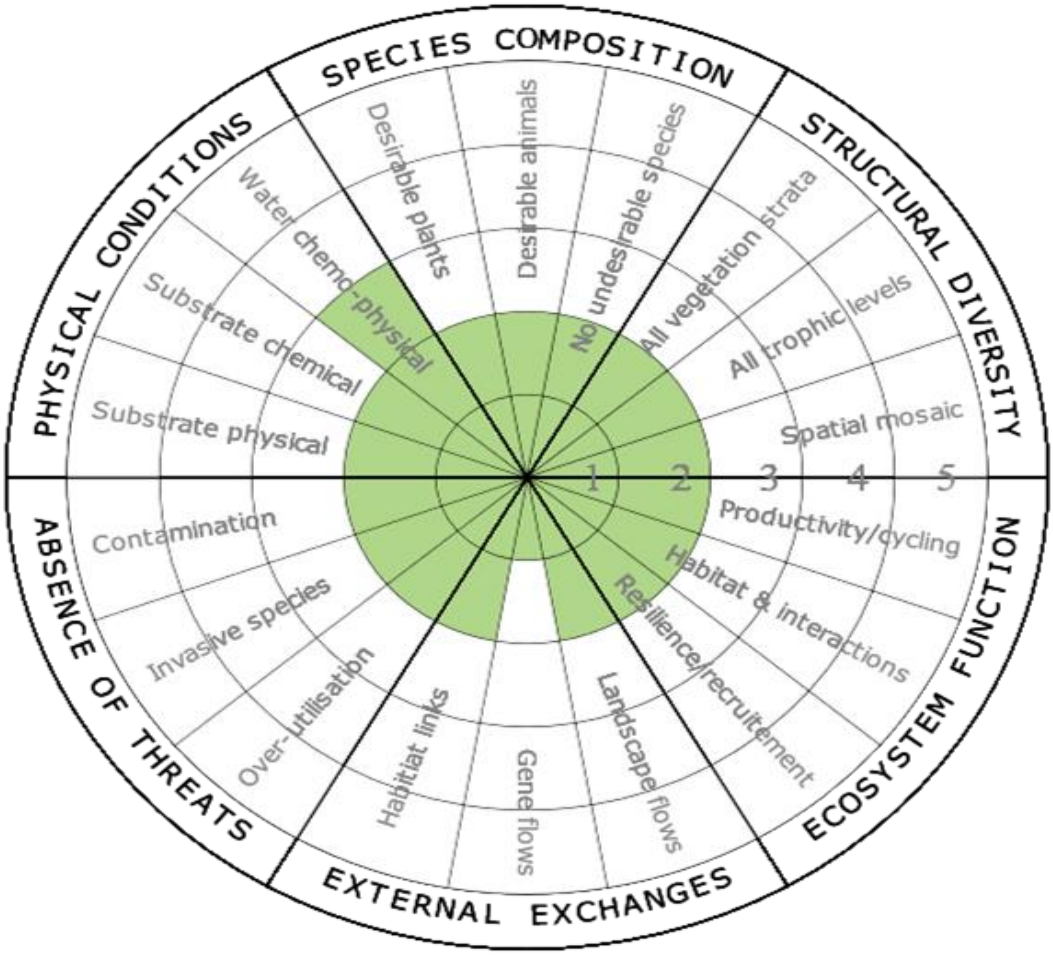

Figure 9. An SER recovery wheel assessment of the overall state of ecological recovery for the CNP in late 2023. Attribute scores are the mean scores from assessments on 7 fields of the CNP.

SER Recovery Wheel results for 2023.

To use the SER recovery wheel to make an overall evaluation of the state of ecological recovery of the CNP for 2023, individual SER recovery wheel evaluations were performed in late December 2023, at fields 1A, 1B, 1C, 1E, 3B, 4A, and 4C. To improve the quality and robustness of these evaluations, a minimum of two assessors were used to evaluate each of the 18 sub-attributes for each field. An "overall" score for each of the sub-attributes was then computed as the mean of the sub-attributes from the individual fields. These overall sub-attribute scores were then used to populate a SER recovery wheel; this recovery wheel is a representation of the overall state of ecological recovery for the CNP at the end of 2023 and is shown in figure 9.

Generally, the CNP showed a considerable improvement in the state of ecological recovery as compared to 2022. These results are encouraging and reinforce that appropriate and effective restoration strategies have been selected and implemented at the CNP. However, it is difficult to have an overabundance of monitoring and the data that comes with it and the need exists to develop more rigorous baseline monitoring of species richness, abundance, and population structure.

Other Monitoring Methods

Photo documentation of specific sites and wildlife was also completed throughout 2023 as a method of monitoring restoration efforts on the CNP. Remote, motion-activated game cameras have been deployed at strategic places around the CNP, as determined by City and RGR staff, and the cameras are actively collecting images of wildlife (figure 10). Besides providing documentation of wildlife that visits the CNP, this photographic data is also being used by City, Ciudad SWCD, and RGR staff to develop a wildlife corridor plan. Additionally, photo documentation of conditions at specific sites across the CNP continues in 2023. These photographs are cataloged by staff from Ciudad SWCD, CABQ, and RGR for comparing before and after conditions, monitoring ongoing conditions on a seasonal basis, and documenting project implementation as needed.

Figure 10. A coyote photographed with a CNP remote game camera.

Routine soil sampling was also completed in the 2022-2023 reporting cycle and the analysis was performed by Ward laboratories, a full-service agricultural testing laboratory headquartered in Kearney, Nebraska. Six samples were collected in September 2022, and 7 more were collected in May 2023. The Ward analysis measured pH, buffer pH, sum of cations (CEC), base saturation (%), soluble salts, organic matter, nitrate-nitrogen, P, Ka, Ca, Mg, Na, S, Zn, Fe, Mn, and CU.

Ciudad SWCD and RGR continue to monitor the performance of out plantings in areas that are undergoing active restoration. Staff will walk through fields seasonally and prior to implementing major activities and will note conditions and level of success of previous plantings. This information is then used to help guide future management strategies.

Finally, bird monitoring is also ongoing in the form of weekly surveys with RGNCSP. Additional bird monitoring is also planned for January 2024 in the form of a public Bioblitz event, which is a public, citizen-science event designed to record as many species as possible within a designated

time at a specific location (National Geographic Society, 2023) . This will also be an excellent public outreach opportunity for the CNP.

Woodward House Interpretive Center and Nursery

Located in the northeast corner of the CNP, the Woodwood House (WWH) is a historic, small, adobe structure that will continue to provide a home for many of the daily functions of CNP management. The WWH is ideally located with easy, but limited, vehicle access and provides essential workspace for team meetings and daily business functions, as well as storage of computer peripherals, environmental-education supplies, and other general office supplies and materials. As noted, vehicle access and parking at WWH is limited in accordance with the RMP, and Ciudad SWCD, RGR, and other partners are careful to maintain RMP requirements. For 2023, Ciudad SWCD staff and partners continue to organize and maintain this deceptively critical interior space.

Besides the Woodward House itself, the surrounding outdoor space also continues to serve as a nursery for care of thousands of seedlings, many of which have been sourced from NM Energy Minerals and Natural Resources Department (EMNRD) conservation seedling program and the Santa Ana Native Plants nursery. In 2023, NM Department of Agriculture Healthy Soil Program (HSP) funding supported further expansion of the nursery stock to include native woody species and grasses, both of which have been used to increase native species cover and provide plantings for hedgerows. In general, restoration efforts at the CNP that involve out planting have been aided tremendously by having plant materials on-site and the WWH nursery continues to be invaluable. The nursery has also been instrumental as an interpretive education center and is used regularly during tours with youth groups and the public to demonstrate successful plant grow out.

Overall, the WWH and nursery continue to provide tremendous utility to the operations of the CNP.

Community Engagement, Outreach, and other notables

Monthly tours continued and were led by the Friends of Candelaria Nature Preserve (FCNP), with support from Ciudad SWCD, RGR, and City staff members. FCNP also helped coordinate and lead tours for Albuquerque Oasis (an organization that advocates for lifelong learning). In addition, the City coordinated and led tours with the Raptor Research Foundation and RGR led tours for students from UNM Art & Ecology programs. Partners also led tours for various local elected officials.

Besides public tours, many youth groups were also directly involved with restoration activities on the CNP (figure 11). Ancestral Lands Conservation Corps, Cottonwood Gulch Expeditions, and RiverXchange helped plant and water hedgerows and other native plants and also assisted with removing nonnative species. Rocky Mountain Youth Corps was also involved with the removal of invasive species and other restoration efforts as well. In addition to the participation of youth groups in restoration activities, citizen science also continued in the form of weekly bird observations recorded in partnership with RGNCSP and a BioBlitz "Wing In the New Year" event is planned for early January 2024.

Figure 11. celebrating a morning of successful restoration work in CNP field 1A.

There were also major infrastructure improvements completed on the CNP during 2023. In October 2023, both the east and west nature viewing blinds were completed. The west blind is located on the western border of the CNP (on the border of field 1E) and is accessed via the Rio Grande Bosque Trail; the east blind is located on the eastern border of the CNP (on the border of field 4A) and is accessed via the trail along the Duranes Lateral Drain. The opening of these blinds was celebrated with a public ribbon-cutting ceremony in November with Albuquerque Mayor Tim Keller attending and acting as the master of ceremonies (figure 12).

Figure 12. Albuquerque Mayor Tim Keller attending a public ribbon-cutting ceremony for the viewing blinds.

Work is also moving forward with developing an interpretive signage plan, and the effort is being led by FCNP. In addition to the interpretive signage, new entrance signs were developed and installed by the City in October 2023.

In September of 2020, a Habitat Council was formed to support Valle de Oro National Wildlife Refuge, Whitfield Conservation Area and Candelaria Nature Preserve. The Council will provide technical advice on a myriad of subjects including habitat plans, wildlife crops, monitoring, and weed management. The Council includes representatives from: Ciudad Soil and Water Conservation District, Valencia Soil and Water Conservation District, US Fish and Wildlife Service, New Mexico State University, Natural Resources Conservation Service, CABQ BioPark, Heritage Garden, Rio Grande Return, Habitat Farm Collective, and Audubon New Mexico. The Habitat Council did not meet during 2023, however partnering organizations did continue to support each other throughout the year. The City has been in touch with several agencies from the Habitat Council in hopes of developing an Integrated Pest Management plan that builds on successful work from other similar sites and this effort is ongoing into 2024.

Unfortunately, there have also been negative events at the CNP in the form of unauthorized public access and break ins that resulted in significant property loss. Regular misunderstanding about public access to the RMP continues and it has become a common occurrence to witness unauthorized visitors. Although largely harmless, these visitations are nonetheless contrary to the RMP and CNP partners are actively looking for solutions. Not as harmless, however, were break ins that occurred in August and November of 2023. Besides causing significant damage to the gate and fence at Arbor Road, the perpetrators also stole the Rolling River Trailer and a RGR truck, along with a RGR staff member's custom trailer that was used on site for operations. The Rolling River was returned shortly thereafter with only minor damage, but the truck and trailer were never recovered. The gate and fence have since been repaired and CNP managers are actively looking for cost-effective ways to improve security, including the installation of cameras and high-security fencing.

Financial Summary

Ciudad SWCD operated with the City's contractual amount of $94,999.80 for FY23 which covered costs at a basic level. These costs included project management and coordination for both Ciudad SWCD and RGR, as well as irrigation, seed drilling, mowing, and restoration planning and design. Care and maintenance of plant materials and nursery space near the WWH was also included in these costs.

Additional funding was brought in from an awarded New Mexico Department of Agriculture's Healthy Soil Program (HSP) grant totaling $57,361.00. Grant funding from the HSP program supported habitat restoration and designs for field 1A and 1B, in addition to native and hedgerow plants, cover crop seeds, and contractual costs that supported labor and coordination for RGR.

Planned actions to further build capacity include project proposals to the NM Energy Minerals and Natural Resources Department for the Land and Water Conservation Fund, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Urban Waters Five Star Grant, and the US Fish and Wildlife Service North American Wetland Conservation Act. Additionally, Ciudad SWCD and RGR plan on submitting another HSP proposal in FY 2024 as the project team has been very successful with HSP grant awards.

Figure 13. Coyote howling at Candelaria Nature Preserve. *Photo Credit Brandt Magic*

Ciudad SWCD appreciates the opportunity to assist restoration efforts at CNP as outlined in the Resource Management Plan and will continue to pursue funding that can be applied to those objectives.

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