



**RAISE  
THE  
RIVER**  
RECONNECT THE COLORADO

**REPORT OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

May 2016



# RAISE THE RIVER

RECONNECT THE COLORADO

Raise the River is a unique partnership of U.S. and Mexican non-governmental organizations committed to reviving the Colorado River Delta.

**W**e focus on the activities necessary to support environmental restoration for benefit of the people and wildlife of the Delta.

Thanks to the generous support of our donors, this partnership was able to take advantage of a historic agreement between the United States and Mexico to acquire water and begin to restore the Delta at a significant scale. These efforts, which are described in detail in this report, have helped set the stage for negotiation of a

more comprehensive long-term agreement between both countries.

**Raise the River:** current partners in Raise the River include Sonoran Institute, Pronatura Noroeste, A.C., The Nature Conservancy, Redford Center and new partners Restaremos el Colorado, A.C. and National Audubon Society. At the beginning of the grant period, Raise the River included National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and Environmental Defense Fund.



ACCOMPLISHMENTS:  
**FUNDRAISING**

# FUNDS RAISED

## REACHING OUR INITIAL GOAL

Through the very generous support from philanthropic organizations in the U.S. and Mexico, as well as on-line individual contributions, we have been able to meet **our initial 5-year, \$10 million fundraising goal**. These funds support on-the-ground habitat establishment, water acquisition and operations, community involvement and communications necessary to accomplish restoration.

## ONGOING NEEDS

Going forward, **we have set a new interim target of \$4 million** to cover water acquisition, restoration and operational costs from mid-2016 to mid-2018. Negotiations to renew the binational agreement, which would otherwise expire in 2017, are currently underway. Upon completion of those negotiations, we will set a new five-year budget and fundraising goal.

**We invite you to join us as a donor, to ensure the continued progress of our restoration work.**



Between 2013  
and December 2015,  
**over \$10 million**  
was raised to benefit  
the restoration of the  
**Colorado River Delta**



### WATER RETURNS

Raise the River pledged ongoing water via base flows.



### TREES PLANTED

Cottonwoods and willow trees define a healthy habitat.



### SCIENTIFIC STUDIES

Bringing scientific rigor to the work of restoration.

# ACCOMPLISHMENTS: RESTORATION

The binational agreement allowed Raise the River to demonstrate the feasibility of scaling up restoration efforts in the Delta.

What had previously been a modest activity—less than 200 acres restored—is now expected to grow to more than 2,300 acres by 2017, when the current binational agreement ends.

Our donor funding allowed us to prepare restoration sites for a significant delivery of water—dubbed the “pulse flow”—more than 100,000 acre-feet, an amount not seen in the Delta since the late 1990s.

The pulse flow occurred in the spring of 2014, just over fifteen months after the binational agreement had been signed. Within that short time period, Raise the River partners Sonoran Institute and ProNatura Noroeste removed invasive plant species, dug ditches and planted hundreds of saplings in anticipation of the pulse flow.



*March 2014 Pulse Flow*



# ACRES RESTORED

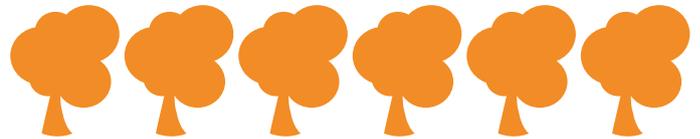
Beyond taking advantage of the pulse flow, we have continued to work to prepare and restore other sites along the river. As of the end of 2015, we have restored 680 acres of riparian and wetland habitat in the river's main channel, and are well on our way to meet our restoration goal of 2,300 acres.

\*Trees planted

2013	2014	2015
26,564	+59,177	+38,376
	Total of 85,741	Total of 124,117

# TREES PLANTED

Cottonwoods and willow trees are the defining feature of healthy habitat along the river. Sonoran Institute and ProNatura Noroeste maintain native tree nurseries that provide saplings used for planting. As of 2015, with our donors' generous support, we have planted more than 120,000 trees.





# NATIVE BIRDLIFE RETURNING



Once saplings mature into trees, birds return to the river, whether they stay over the winter, migrate along the Pacific Flyway, or breed during the spring season. Raise the River partners monitor bird populations year-round, and we are pleased to report that bird numbers are on the rise!

Within months of planting trees, restoration sites serve as an important stopover for warblers and other migrating songbirds. Over time, these sites experience a greater diversity and abundance of birds relative to other areas along the river, averaging 40% or higher for many key species, including Hooded Oriole, Yellow-breasted Chat, and the threatened Yellow-billed Cuckoo.

## RETURN OF WILDLIFE

Birds are not the only wildlife drawn to the restoration sites. Families of beavers, bobcats, and coyotes have made their home among the cottonwoods and willows, as well as gophers, ground squirrels, and the snakes that chase them.



# WATER

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Water is critical to restoration, which is why the binational agreement included explicit water delivery obligations.

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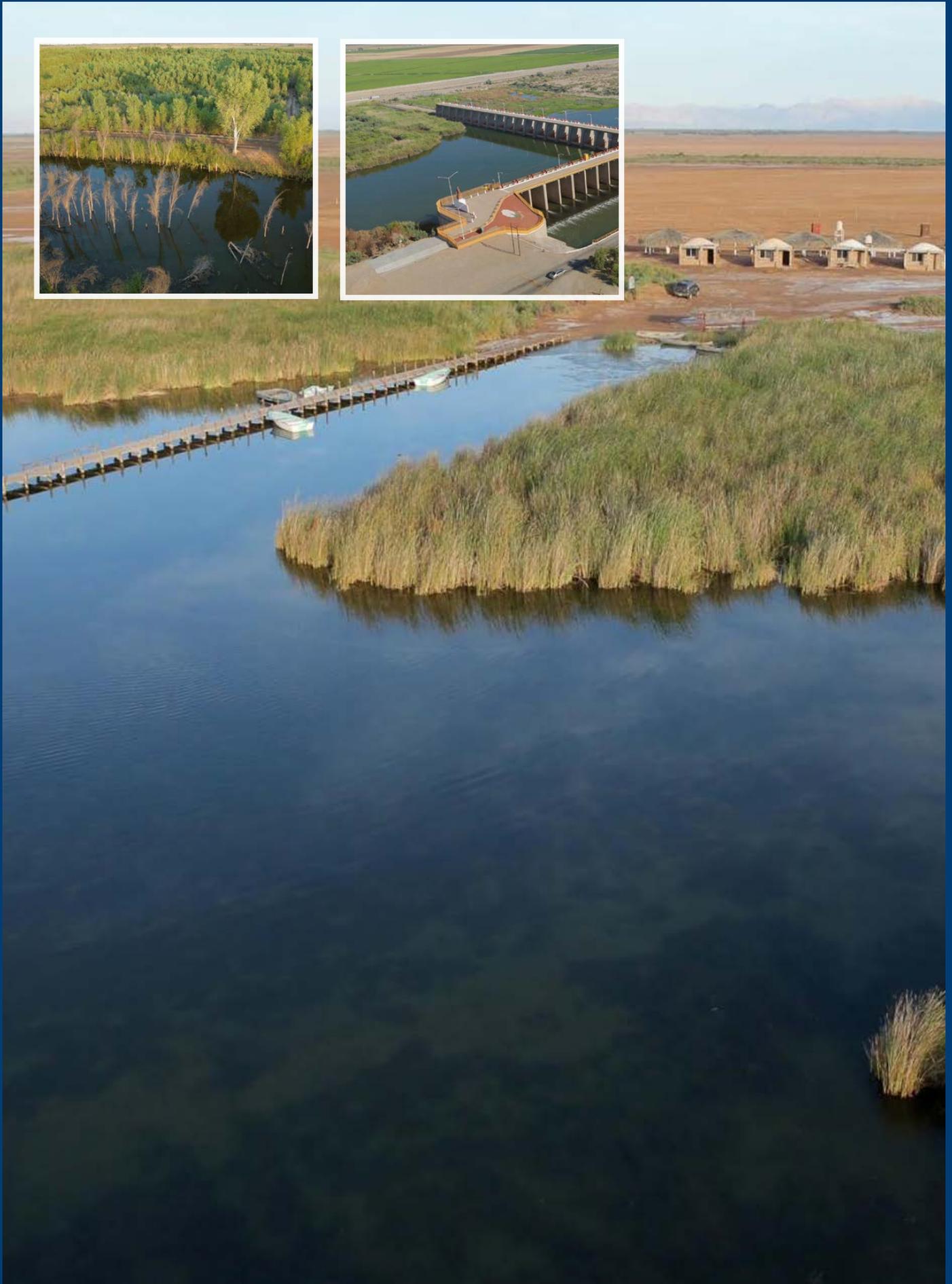
**M**ore than 1000,000 acre-feet from the United States and Mexico were required for the pulse flow, supplemented by another 50,000 acre-feet that Raise the River pledged to provide over the five-year period of the agreement.

To meet our obligations, Raise the River worked with a newly established water trust—the first in Mexico — to permanently acquire or temporarily lease water for restoration.

Water acquired can be used on an annual basis, while leased water is used only once.

Our combined donor funding has allowed us to be able to acquire and deliver over 35,000 acre-feet of water since 2013, representing close to 70% of our obligation under the bi-national agreement. Most importantly, we are on schedule to meet our 52,696 acre-feet water delivery goal by 2017.

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The pulse flow—the first of its kind in the Delta—sought to recreate the benefits associated with historical spring floods that had helped recharge groundwater, disperse seedlings, and provide an extra boost to new plant growth. All of these were initially evident as a result of the pulse flow, but additional monitoring and evaluation will be needed to assess its long-term effects.

One additional benefit, as the accompanying photos illustrate, was the tremendous positive reaction from nearby communities, generations of whom had never experienced flows like these in the river. For many of them, the pulse flow demonstrated the value of restoring in the Delta and its broader social benefits.



***BEFORE: Stake 22/34 in the Delta, March 21, 2014***



***DURING: Stake 22/34 in the Delta, April 10, 2014***



***AFTER: Stake 22/34 in the Delta, September 29, 2014***

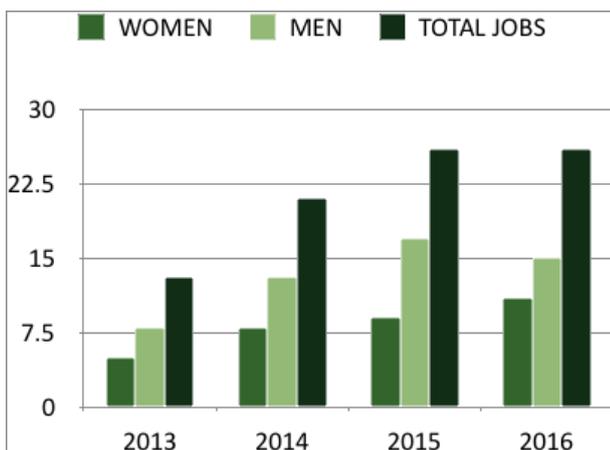


# COMMUNITY

Raise the River partners promote community engagement in restoration. We believe that for conservation to endure, communities must have a strong role in and benefit from such efforts.

## EMPLOYMENT GENERATED

From the start, local residents and leaders have helped build and manage the native plant nurseries, prepare and manage our restoration sites, and welcome visitors as birdwatching guides and hosts in their communities. Donor support for restoration provided the following employment and volunteer opportunities.



# VOLUNTEERS

Local volunteers and visitors from the United States and other countries have worked alongside community members planting trees and doing other restoration work. We are deeply thankful for their critical assistance, especially during the busy spring growing season!

Volunteer groups have including the following:

- Primary School Nuevo León- Heroes de Chapultepec
- COBACH
- Museo del Desierto Sonorense / Sonoran Desert Museum
- Primary School Jorge Lopez, Ejido Francisco Murguía
- Students from Whitman College, Semester in the West program
- Sonora State University (UES) from San Luis Río Colorado
- CECYTE Mexicali
- CECYTE Xochimilco
- Community members from Mexicali, San Luis Río Colorado and the Mexicali Valley (such as bicycle riders, naturalists, Lion Club Cucapah)
- Mexican Government agencies including: SEMARNAT, CONANP CILA/IBWC, CONAFOR, SIDUE, CONAGUA, CESPM, SECTUR, SPA
- UABC (from Ensenada and Mexicali)
- Boy Scouts



## YOUTH PROGRAM PARTICIPATION

Students from local communities also have an opportunity to participate in restoration efforts, from river clean up days to on-the-ground restoration. An “Adopt a River” partnership with local schools has been in operation since January 2015 involving an average of 300 students per year in field trips and environmental education programs in the Delta.



## RECREATION/TOURISM

Tourism and recreation are thriving economic activities in the Delta, benefitting directly from restoration efforts. For example, where water is found in the river’s tributaries, camps serve as destination points for those who enjoy recreation-based sports like fishing, hunting, boating, and bird watching.

On weekends and holidays, these camps draw hundreds of people who also enjoy picnics and camping along river. Entrance fees generate hundreds of dollars on the busiest days, while special events like weddings can generate thousands of dollars in one day.

As one camp owner acknowledged, they would not be in business without a healthy river with water in it.



# ADVOCACY/AWARENESS





## SOCIAL MEDIA COMMUNITY

*Raise The River is using Facebook and Twitter as the principle outreach vehicles for the group’s advocacy and awareness campaigns. Raise The River’s Facebook had had an average of over 68,500 monthly Impressions and Reach of over 51,000 – more than 10 times its number of followers – demonstrating an exceptional rate of community engagement and social sharing. Monthly updates are also posted to the Raise the River Rally and GoFundMe pages, and website Blog.*



### Facebook



- Followers: 4,938
- Engagement: Average weekly ‘Reach’ of 51,000



### YouTube



- Subscribers: 451
- Views, since January 2014: 241,200

### Videos

- July 2014: 10-minute Raise the River film RENEWAL, narrated by Robert Redford
- December 2014: Year in Review video, narrated by Robert Redford, highlighting the Campaign’s 2014 accomplishments
- To date, the collection of Raise the River film shorts have been viewed over 25,000 times since March 2014.



### Twitter



- Followers: 829
- Engagement: Total impressions since February 2014: 105,000



### Website

- Over 95,200 visits since July 2014.



**RaiseTheRiver.org**

# PRESS/ARTICLES PUBLISHED



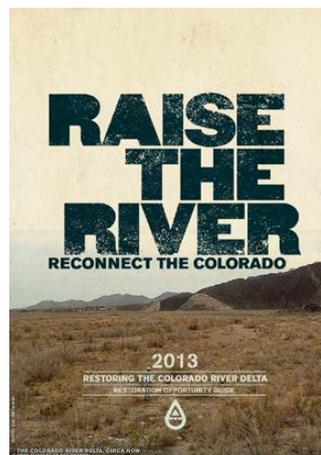
\*Articles published

2012	2013	2014	2015	2016 (1Q)
26	6	24	21	8

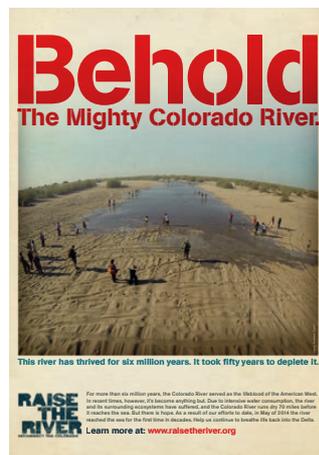
## SELECTED ARTICLES:

- Edible Baja Magazine, April 2016 — [A River's Return](#).
- Univision, September 17, 2015 -- [Colorado river: Hispanics to the rescue](#).
- New Yorker: Where the River Runs Dry, May 25, 2015 – [The Colorado and America's water crisis](#).
- Al Jazeera America, April 27, 2015 – US-Mexico water pact brings life back to Colorado River's parched delta.
- National Geographic, December 19, 2014 – [With Water Life Returns to the Colorado River](#)
- Outside Magazine, June 14, 2014 – [The Day We Set the Colorado River Free](#).
- High Country News, November 4, 2013 – [New Hope for the Delta](#).
- The New York Times: November 20, 2012 – [U.S. and Mexico Sign a Deal on Sharing the Colorado River](#).

# ADVOCACY ASSETS



BROCHURE



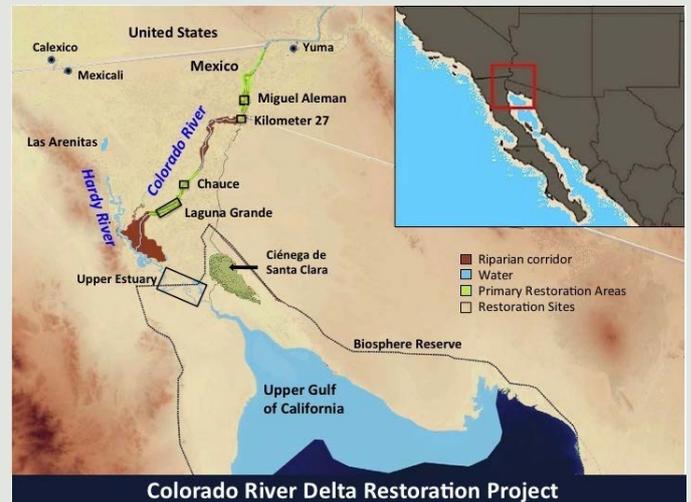
MEN'S JOURNAL AD

# RAISE THE RIVER

RECONNECT THE COLORADO

## RAISE THE RIVER CHARTER

Raise the River is a unique partnership of six U.S. and Mexican non-governmental organizations committed to reviving the Colorado River Delta. We focus on the activities necessary to support environmental restoration for benefit of the people and wildlife of the Delta.



### To accomplish these purposes, Raise the River:

- Serves as a clearinghouse for information to public and funders. This outreach is in service of public awareness and fundraising, not advocacy on particular policy issues. The latter is the province of individual organizations (often working together, but not with the RTR label).
- Ensures consistency in messages about the need for restoration, implementation to date, and future opportunities
- Develops and communicates stories that embody the community connections to Delta restoration
- Assists the partners in engaging Joint fundraising where appropriate
- Tracks resource needs and grants and contributions received to address those needs

### The **organizational partners** of Raise the River are:

- Pronatura Noroeste, A.C.
- Restauremos el Colorado, A.C.
- Sonoran Institute
- The Nature Conservancy
- National Audubon Society
- The Redford Center

[RaiseTheRiver.org](http://RaiseTheRiver.org)

Raise the River is coordinated by Mary Kelly, Parula, LLC, reporting to a steering committee of representatives of Raise the River partners.