

Enhanced Habitat at SWRP Outfall

The outfall from the Southside Water Reclamation Plant (SWRP), where Albuquerque's treated wastewater flows into the Rio Grande, will soon see improvements aimed at benefiting the South Valley community as well as multiple endangered species. A \$4.3 million overhaul is in the works that will include a new pedestrian and cycling path and habitat enhancements for fish and wildlife on the eastern riverbank.

There will be no modifications to the mouth of the outfall itself. The project will alter the adjacent riverbank to allow for SWRP's clean discharge effluent to mix with Rio Grande water in a floodplain habitat specifically designed for the Rio Grande Silvery Minnow. Water Rights Program Manager Diane Agnew said that by improving the movement and quality of water in the area, the enhanced riverbank will provide a more suitable environment for fish to lay their eggs and hatch their young. The project also involves the removal of non-native vegetation,

restoring the riverbank to a natural floodplain, and the establishment of a native riparian habitat.

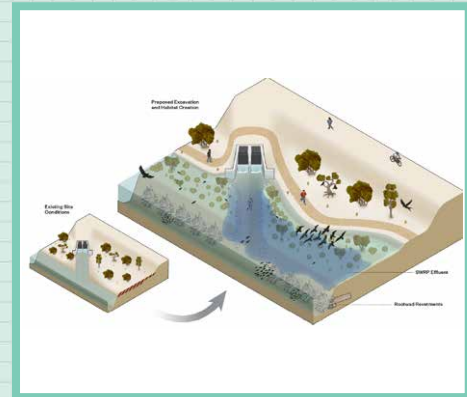
She explained, "When we've monitored the Rio Grande Silvery Minnow, we discovered that they, and other fish, prefer our outfall water because it's consistent, of high-quality, and has hospitable temperatures. This project will help to support the local ecosystem and ensure that fish populations continue to thrive in the years to come."

Agnew's team has already received more than \$900,000 in capital outlay grants to cover design and permitting for the project. Agnew hopes additional funding will come this year to cover the construction costs.

"The SWRP Outfall Restoration Project will create a space that has the potential to benefit multiple endangered species besides the Silvery Minnow, like the Southwestern Flycatcher and the Yellow-Billed Cuckoo. And, Water Authority employees and their families will be able

to come and enjoy the trails through the Bosque in this area and see the restored native riparian habitat. Hopefully, they will catch a glimpse of a porcupine or beaver, too," said Agnew.

Construction of the restoration project is slated to begin next winter.



This rendering shows how a widened outfall channel will help create spawning areas for the Rio Grande Silvery Minnow.