# **RECONNECT THE COLORADO**

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS REPORT July 2018

## AT A GLANCE

# Minute 319 Accomplishments, through year-end 2017:

- Over 1,000 Acres Restored
- > 245,000 Trees Planted
- 57,362 acre-feet of Water Delivered
- Wildlife populations expanding in restored sites
- > 100 Local Jobs Created

> 3,000 participants per-year average in educational programs (since 2015 initiation)

### **Coalition Profile**

- Established 2012
- Coalition of 6 NGOs working together
- Over \$10 million raised for conservation
- Ongoing Scientific Monitoring, Management, and Reporting



Raise the River is a unique coalition of U.S. and Mexican non-governmental organizations committed to reviving the Colorado River Delta, together with the renewal of community relationships and engagement that promote long-term stewardship of the river.

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

With the generous support of our donors, this coalition was initiated in 2012 after the historic agreement Minute 319 was signed between the United States and Mexico, to help NGOs deliver on commitments in the bi-national agreement to acquire water and begin to restore the Delta at a significant scale.

These efforts helped set the stage for the successful negotiation of a more comprehensive long-term agreement between both countries, Minute 323. This historic agreement, signed in 2017, promotes a more secure water future for communities in both countries and scales up ongoing environmental restoration projects in the Delta.

With the adoption of Minute 323, Raise the River is working to expand and solidify bi-national cooperation for the continued restoration of the Delta.

Raise the River Coalition partners include Sonoran Institute, Pronatura Noroeste, A.C., The Nature Conservancy, National Audubon Society, The Redford Center, and Restauremos el Colorado, A.C.

RaiseTheRiver.org

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS: FUNDRAISING

# ACCOMPLISHMENTS: FUNDS RAISED

#### REACHING OUR INITIAL GOAL

Through the very generous support from corporate and philanthropic organizations in the U.S. and Mexico, as well as individual contributions, we met our initial 5-year, \$10 million fundraising goal in December 2015, two years ahead of schedule. These funds have supported the on-the-ground habitat establishment, water acquisition and delivery, operations, community involvement and education, and advocacy necessary to accomplish restoration.

#### ONGOING NEEDS

Going forward, we will be establishing a new funding goal to enable the continuation of our work in the Colorado River Delta and ensure the sustainability of previously restored sites. Our new goal will reflect the increasing scale of our work to create a network of restoration sites within the Colorado River's main corridor, as well as its tributaries, estuary, and other Delta wetlands.

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

\*\*Donations may be tax-deductible in either the U.S. or Mexico, via our corresponding non-profit status. Please ask us for details.



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



#### WATER RETURNS

Raise the River delivered 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**

Meeting our commitments under the 2012-2017 bi-national Colorado River agreement, *Minute 319*, produced results and proved what is possible when a small amount of water is committed to conservation efforts.

Donor funding, together with cash and in-kind contributions from both governments, allowed us to prepare restoration sites for a significant delivery of water—dubbed the "*pulse flow*".

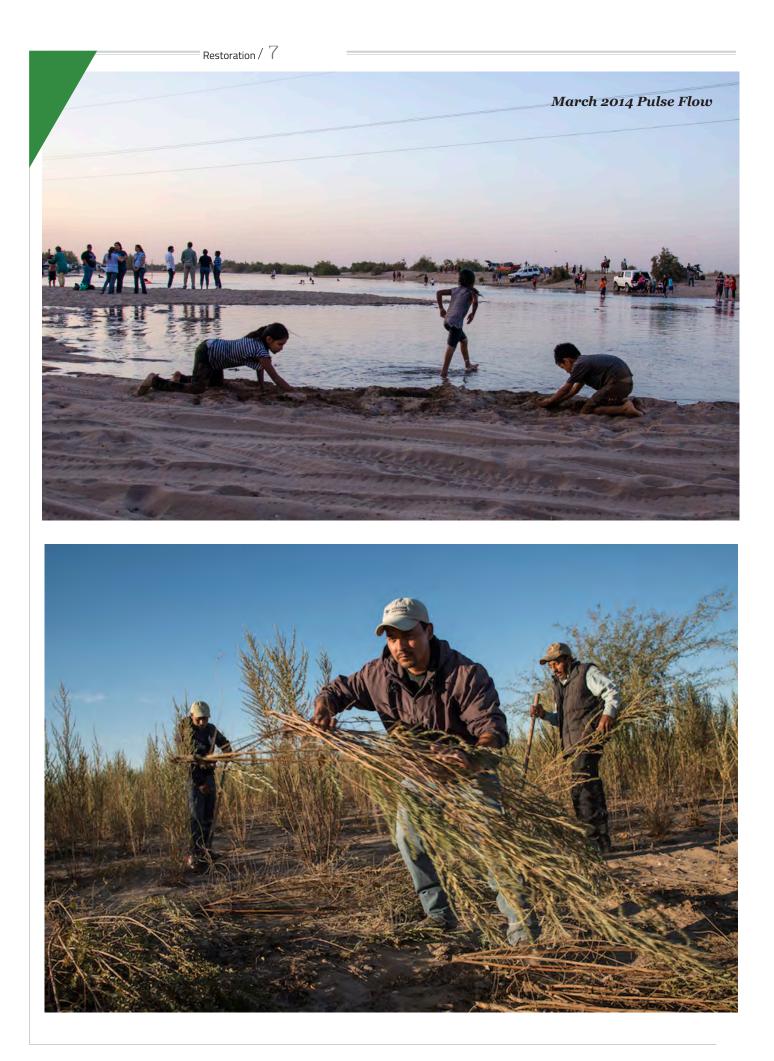
The pulse flow injected more than 100,000 acre-feet of water into the Delta, an amount not seen in this part of the Colorado River since 2001.

The pulse flow occurred in the spring of 2014, just over 15 months after the bi-national agreement had been signed. Within that short time period, Raise the River coalition partners Sonoran Institute and Pronatura Noroeste removed invasive plant species, dug ditches, and planted hundreds of saplings in anticipation of the pulse flow.









# ACRES RESTORED TREES PLANTED

We continue to prepare and restore other sites along the river. At the end of 2017, we restored more than 1,000 acres of riparian and wetland habitat and met our restoration goal under Minute 319 of 1,200 acres by June 2018.



Cottonwood, willow, mesquite, and other native 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. By year-end 2017, with our donors' generous support, we planted more than 245,000 trees, exceeding our restoration goal by more than 22%, with survival rates of greater than 90% in our key restoration sites.

2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
26,564	+59,177	+24,176	+124,483	+11,100
	Total of 85,741	Total of 109,917	Total of 234,400	Total of 245,500





# NATIVE BIRDLIFE

River flows and diverse habitat bring birds back 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 our scientific reporting concludes that bird numbers in our restored sites are on the rise!

Within months of planting trees, restoration sites serve as an important stopover for warblers and other migrating songbirds. Our monitoring shows that the restored sites are experiencing a greater diversity and abundance of birds relative to other areas along the river. For example, bird diversity is 30% higher and the abundance of riparian birds is twice as high in Miguel Aleman than in the non-restored adjacent floodplain. Among 19 bird species monitored for conservation interest, an increase of 49% was recorded from 2013 to 2017.

Today, our Laguna Grande restoration site has the greatest abundance and diversity of conservation priority bird species in the entire Colorado River corridor in Mexico, including the Hooded Oriole, Yellow-breasted Chat, and the threatened Yellow-billed Cuckoo.

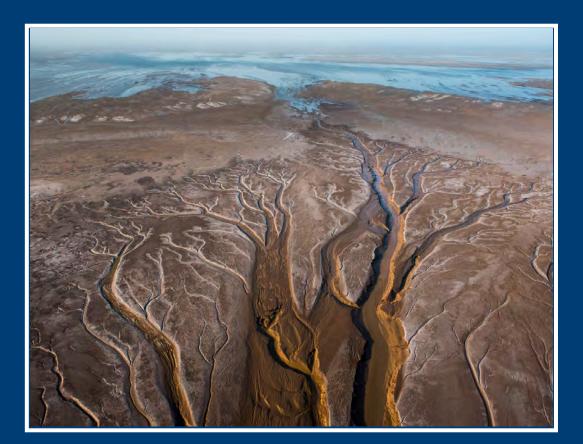
# RETURN OF WILDLIFE

Birds are not the only wildlife drawn to the restoration sites. Families of bobcats, and coyotes have made their home among the cottonwoods and willows, as well as gophers and ground squirrels while beavers have returned to the river banks. We have documented a continued expansion of these species, as well as reptiles and amphibians, in the newly restored areas.



# WATER

Water is critical to restoration, which is why both bi-national agreements have included explicit water delivery obligations.



ore than 100,000 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 Minute 319 agreement.

To meet our obligations, Raise the River worked with the Restauremos el Colorado 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 allowed us to acquire and deliver 57,362 acre-feet of water by year-end 2017, exceeding our obligation under the Minute 319 bi-national agreement.





## LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE PULSE FLOW

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, establish seedlings, and provide an extra boost to new plant growth.

All of these were initially evident as a result of the pulse flow. However, our ongoing monitoring and evaluation to assess the long-term effects has shown us that seedlings were successfully established only in prepared restoration sites where continued base flows of water were later delivered.

Two growing seasons after the 2014 pulse flow release of water into the Colorado River Delta, the International Boundary and Water Commission published their *Interim Report for the Environmental Flows* in October 2016, which demonstrated that birds, plants, and groundwater in the Delta benefited. However, by 2017 the groundwater was lower, and the vegetation was less green (less rigorous) than prepulse flow in most places along the riparian corridor.

The only places that still thrive are the restoration sites, due to base flow water deliveries. This indicates the importance of active restoration management. One important outcome, as the accompanying photos illustrate, was the tremendous positive reaction from nearby communities, generations of whom had never experienced water flowing 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 1/Delta 23, March 20, 2014





DURING: Stake 12/Delta 23, March 28, 2014

#### EFFICIENT WATER MANAGEMENT

Less than 1 percent of the Colorado's historic flow to the Delta was returned by the flows sanctioned under Minute 319, yet the strategic timing and placement of the water supported the thesis that a small amount of water is sufficient to restore crucial habitat for the birds and wildlife that have historically lived in the Delta. It also provided lessons learned to be applied to future water deliveries. -- From the "Minute 319 Colorado River Limitrophe and Delta Environmental Flows Monitoring Interim Report", published by the International Boundary Water Commission (IBWC), October 21, 2016.



AFTER: Stake 1/Delta 23, September 28, 2014 = Community / 14

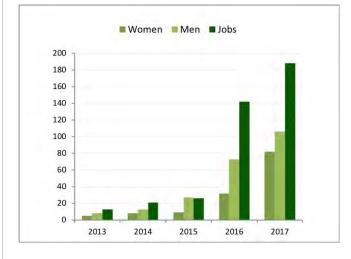




# COMMUNITY

## **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:

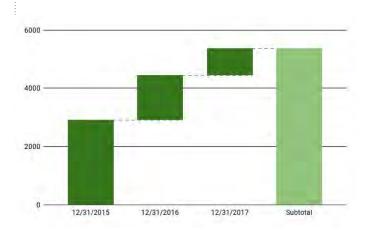


Raise the River coalition partners promote community engagement in restoration.

We believe that for conservation to endure, communities must have a strong role in, and benefit from, such efforts.

## 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!



= Community / 15



## 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.

In addition, we reached over 2,800 students through inclass presentations, talks, and participation in Science Fairs during 2017.



## **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 recreationbased sports like fishing, hunting, boating, and bird watching. On weekends and holidays, these camps draw hundreds of people who enjoy picnics and camping along the river. Income is generated from entrance fees and special events.

During 2017, a new community recreational program, *Sábados Familiares en Laguna Grande* was launched, which brings families to the restoration site for an interpretive tour, hiking though the restored native trees, and kayaking in the river channel. In 2017 more than 160 families participated, with all scheduled events fully subscribed prior to the event date.



## raisetheriver.org

# RAISE

# ADVOCACY/AWARENESS



Raise the River is using Facebook and Twitter as the principle outreach vehicles for the group's advocacy and awareness campaigns. In 2017 Raise the River's Facebook page had an average of over 93,700 monthly Impressions and a monthly Reach of over 60,857 - approximately 10 times its number of followers - demonstrating an exceptional rate of community engagement social sharing. and Regular updates are also posted to the Raise the River Rally and GoFundMe social fundraising pages, as well as to our website Blog.



#### Facebook

- Followers: 6,149 (YE2017)
- Engagement: Average weekly 'Reach' of 60,857



#### Twitter

- Followers: 1,004 (YE2017)
- Engagement: Over 56,800 impressions during 2017

Tube

#### YouTube

- Subscribers: 451 (YE2017)
- Views, since January

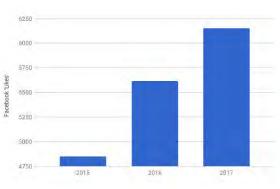
2014: 248,000



#### Website

• Over 111,455 visits between July 2014-Dec 2017

• Average visits per month of 2,650



#### **VIDEO HIGHLIGHTS**

- Our "Report from the Field" series of short videos, which launched in mid-2015, have attracted over 51,000 views on YouTube and Facebook.
- 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



## **RAISETHERIVER.ORG**

# **PRESS/ARTICLES** PUBLISHED

The adoption of Minute 323 in September 2017 - and the significant contribution that the Raise the River coalition played in its negotiations - resulted in more than 55 articles published on this story in the week following the signing of Minute 323.

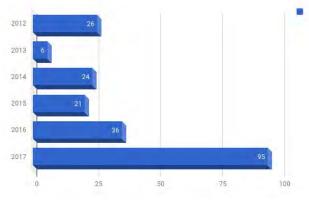
#### SELECTED **ARTICLES:**

THE DAILY WILDCAT



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## **ADVOCACY ASSETS**



- Los Angeles Times, September 27, 2017 -- U.S., Mexico may be at odds, but they've reached agreement on managing the Colorado River
- Washington Post, September 26, 2017 -- US, Mexico reach deal to conserve Colorado River water
- The Associated Press, September 26, 2017 -- US, Mexico expand pact on managing overused Colorado River
- BBC, November 1, 2016 -- Two Years Later, Water Release Continues to Bring Life to Colorado River Delta
- Edible Baja Magazine, April 2016 A River's Return.
- Univision, September 17, 2015 -- Colorado river: Hispanics to the rescue.
- 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.





# **QUICK FACTS**

#### Mission

To restore water and life to the Colorado River Delta region.

#### Organization

A coalition of six non-governmental organizations: Sonoran Institute, Pronatura Noroeste, A.C., The Nature Conservancy, National Audubon Society, The Redford Center, and Restauremos el Colorado, A.C.

#### Values

Efficient habitat conservation, environmental stewardship and education, accountability, due diligence, fiscal capability, efficiency.

#### Leadership

Directed by a Steering Committee of representatives of Raise the River partners. Steering Committee led by co-chairs John Shepard of Sonoran Institute and Jennifer Pitt of National Audubon Society.

#### Specialty

Raise the River is a model for cross-border watershed cooperation and conservation.

#### Year Founded

2012

#### **Geographic Scope**

Colorado River Delta region

#### Statistics

Over 245,500 native trees and shrubs have been planted to date, with more than 1,000 acres restored in the Colorado River Delta. Over \$10 million has been raised for restoration and conservation activities, including water deliveries for the environment totaling 57,362 acre-feet between November 2012 and December 2017.

#### Donations

Institutional donations are accepted though non-profit member organizations of the Raise the River coalition, while individual donations are accepted at the Raise the River Rally website: https://rally.org/raisetheriver.

Donations may be tax-deductible in either the U.S. or Mexico, via our corresponding nonprofit status. Please ask us for details.

# **SPONSORS & SUPPORTERS**

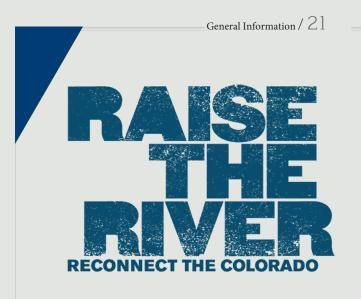
#### **MAJOR SUPPORT PROVIDED BY:**

	Argosy Foundation		
	Arizona Community Foundation		
	Austin Memorial Foundation		
	Bonneville Environmental Foundation		
Stuart and Joanna Brown		,	
	W.L. Lyons Brown, Jr. Charitable Foundation Inc.		
Comisión Nacional de Áreas Naturales Protegidas			
	(CONANP)	(	
	Gordon and Donna Crawford		
	Ann & Gordon Getty Foundation	'	
	Hunter Industries	1	
	Keurig Green Mountain, Inc.		

Mr. and Mrs. David Lane Fundación Tichi Muñoz National Fish and Wildlife Foundation JTS Fund @ NY Community Trust The David and Lucille Packard Foundation Ann Ray Charitable Trust Fundación Gonzalo Río Arronte Carlos Slim Foundation/World Wildlife Fund Sonoran Joint Venture Terra Foundation U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service The Walton Family Foundation

#### ADDITIONAL SUPPORT OR SERVICES PROVIDED BY:

LightHawk Stephen McConahey Family Foundation Mosaic Media Group, Inc. Park & CO Rally.org Santa Barbara Catering Mr. James Scott Jr. Instituto del Desierto Sonorense Sunka Entertainment Jonathan Waterman, Author & Photographer



#### **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 through activities that support environmental restoration for the benefit of the people and wildlife of the Delta.

#### The central activities of Raise the River are:

- Coordinate planning and implementation of the environmental component of Minute 323
- Coordinate on-the-ground restoration, acquisition of water rights to support habitat restoration, and critical operations; and
- Coordinate fundraising outreach to potential donors and the public in the U.S. and Mexico, communicating accomplishments to date, the benefits of restoration in the Delta, and opportunities for additional progress over the coming decade.

Raise the River is directed by a Steering Committee of representatives of Raise the River coalition partners.



RaiseTheRiver.org

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