



Resilience of the Big Bend-Río Bravo region improved through better ecosystem management and restoration



2013–2014 Project

North American Collaboration for Conservation of Transboundary Protected Areas

The transboundary protected areas in the Big Bend-Río Bravo region have been the focus of four years of CEC support to increase the ecosystem health and resiliency of the region to climate change. This region is a composite of riparian, grassland and mountainous habitats that harbors endangered plants and animals and supports migrating species. Project work has focused on identifying priority areas for conservation within these habitats, implementing joint strategies for adaptive management, and assisting communities with the development of sustainable livelihoods.

Key Accomplishments

- Identified priority areas for conservation and developed binational strategies and monitoring protocols for the Rio Grande, its tributaries and its uplands
- Engaged several communities in Maderas del Carmen, Ocampo and Cañón de Santa Elena in the implementation of opportunities for ecotourism and riverbank restoration activities
- Planted about 3,000 trees within the fragile riparian zones of three tributaries to the Rio Grande
- Monitored approximately 3,000 square kilometers of riparian habitats (including watersheds) for topography and vegetation
- Collected seeds of native milkweed plants for use in future milkweed restoration and monarch butterfly conservation activities

Products

- *Conservation Assessment for the Big Bend-Río Bravo Region: A Binational Collaborative Approach to Conservation*
- *A Proposal for Developing Desired Future Conditions for the Big Bend Reach of the Rio Grande/Río Bravo* (Roadmap to a Binational Conservation Strategy)
- Landscape-level monitoring report of priority conservation areas in the Big Bend-Río Bravo region using repeat photography
- Reforestation report of Terlingua Creek in Big Bend National Park, Texas
- Hydrological and biological monitoring report of San Carlos and San Antonio creeks in the protected natural area of Cañón de Santa Elena, Chihuahua
- Assessment and management of visitor use and carrying capacity at ecotourism recreational sites in the protected natural areas of Maderas del Carmen and Ocampo, Coahuila
- Report on collection of native milkweed plant seeds for future monarch butterfly conservation activities

Partners, Stakeholders and Beneficiaries

The Steering Committee members include representatives from *Comisión Nacional de Áreas Naturales Protegidas*, *Instituto Nacional de Ecología y Cambio Climático*, National Park Service, US Fish and Wildlife Service, US Department of the Interior and International Boundary and Water Commission. Partners also include over thirty members of the Big Bend-Río Bravo Conservation Cooperation, comprising other governmental agencies, organizations, universities and citizens. Other stakeholders and beneficiaries in the region include landowners, farmers and ranchers.

About the CEC

The Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC) was established by the governments of Canada, Mexico and the United States through the North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation, the environmental side agreement to NAFTA. An intergovernmental organization, the CEC is composed of a Council of cabinet-level environmental officials from the three countries, a Joint Public Advisory Committee and a Secretariat that provides operational support for cooperative work between the three countries. The organization brings together citizens and experts from governments, nongovernmental organizations, scientists, researchers and businesses to seek solutions to protect North America's shared environment while supporting sustainable economic development.

