SOUTHWESTERN RIPARIAN TREE AND SHRUB PLANTING METHODS THAT REQUIRE MINIMAL OR NO IRRIGATION

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ABSTRACT

Due to the loss of the natural hydrologic conditions on many river systems in the Southwest, it may be necessary to plant riparian vegetation on the banks and flood plains to reduce soil erosion, enhance wildlife habitat, create buffers, and develop pristine recreation areas.

From 2002 to 2004, over 34,000 acres in New Mexico have been treated either chemically or mechanically to control salt cedar, Russian olive, Siberian elm and other non-native phreatophytic vegetation. In the Southwest where annual precipitation is less than 15 inches, traditional planting methods require frequent follow-up irrigation. This is very labor intensive and often cost prohibited. In response, the Los Lunas Plant Materials Center has developed deep-planting methods (for trees and shrubs) that tap into the shallow water table of these riparian systems limiting the amount of follow-up irrigation.

This presentation will discuss in detail these planting methods.