

## **Riparian Assessments and Best Management Practices with Agriculturalists along the Lower Animas River**

Alyssa Richmond<sup>1\*</sup>, Melissa May<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>San Juan Watershed Group, Aztec, New Mexico, United States of America; [sjwg@sanjuanswcd.com](mailto:sjwg@sanjuanswcd.com)

<sup>2</sup>San Juan Soil and Water Conservation District, Aztec, New Mexico, USA; [melissa.may@sanjuanswcd.com](mailto:melissa.may@sanjuanswcd.com)

The San Juan Watershed Group (SJWG) is composed of citizens and local agencies working to improve water quality in the San Juan River and its tributaries. In cooperation with the San Juan Soil and Water Conservation District (SJSWCD) and the Animas Watershed Partnership (AWP), the SJWG has prioritized nutrient enrichment and bacteria pollution as the most problematic water quality issues in the New Mexico portion of the Animas River Watershed via the Lower Animas Watershed Based Plan (LAWBP). While spear heading watershed-base planning, coordinating water quality research, and conducting education and outreach the Watershed Group works with landowners to identify, prioritize, develop, and implement agriculture and livestock best management practices (BMPs) that will filter nutrient and bacterial pollution to the watershed.

With the goal of identifying agricultural producers along the Lower Animas interested in implementing BMPs and conducting free riparian health assessments with these stakeholders, the SJWG co-hosted an Agricultural Best Management Practices workshop with RiversEdge West (REW), SJSWCD, and New Mexico State University San Juan County Extension Office in June of 2019. Titled “Water, Weeds, and Wildlife: Tools for Managing Your Riverside Property,” the workshop covered topics from weed management to riparian pasture management and offered an avenue for several landowners to request further consultation. In the upcoming spring, free riparian health assessments will be conducted following the Natural Resource Conservation Services (NRCS) Visual Riparian Assessment Tool (VRAT) by the SJWG and REW. The SJWG will work with these landowners to develop projects based on these assessments and to plan future BMP projects that can be included in the LAWBP.

With this opportunity to share the current outcomes and future endeavors of this BMP outreach campaign and VRAT utilization, the SJWG anticipates familiarizing fellow restoration specialists on the organization’s endeavors and feedback from landowners. Agricultural producers are some of the most valuable stake holders to engage with for the implementation of BMP projects, and their insights, desires, and recommendations will be shared with the riparian restoration community.