

Tres Rios River Management Plan



Steering Committee Summary Report and Consensus Plan

September 1998

Prepared by
Tres Rios River Management Plan Steering Committee



GREELEY AND HANSEN
ENGINEERS

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October 8, 1998

Mr. Richard G. Perreault
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Management Division, Planning Branch
FLOOD CONTROL DISTRICT OF MARICOPA COUNTY
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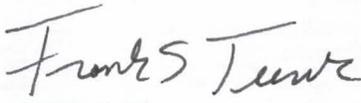
Subject: Tres Rios River Management Plan
Steering Committee Consensus Plan
Executive Summary

Dear Mr. Perreault:

Attached for your records is a copy of the Executive Summary of the Tres Rios River Management Plan Steering Committee Consensus Plan.

Yours very truly,

GREELEY AND HANSEN


Frank S. Turek

Enclosure
FST/4263/Steering/rla

RGP
4/19/99

HOLLY ACRES REVIEW OF TRES RIOS ALTERNATIVES 3 AND 4

The Holly Acres Planning Committee, after reviewing features of Alternatives 3 and 4, have the following questions and selection of features:

Questions:

1. This question may be premature, but which Alternative allows better conveyance during high water flows?
2. Holly Acres would like to see hydraulic models of area of the river where the Maricopa County Landfill is located, with the existing condition and then with the landfill removed. Is this possible without a lot of effort and expense?
3. Is the Diurnal Wetland acreage really 43.1 less in Alternative 4 than in Alternative 3? If it is less, then why does Alternative 4 cost more than Alternative 3? This affects the Habitat Units and Cost for this feature.

Selections: If the conveyance of Alternative 3 is nearly equal to or greater than Alternative 4, Holly Acres would select Alternative 3 with the following changes:

1. Substitute the features from 91st Ave. to 115th Ave. - north of the Salt Cedar thicket in the GIRC area of Alternative 4, with some minor realignment.
2. Reshape some of the Open Water/Marsh areas in the Salt Cedar thicket between El Mirage Rd. and the Buckeye Feeder Ditch discharge point, keeping approximately the same acreage for the Open Water/Marsh. Then provide a series of Cottonwood willow fingerlings parallel to the north bank from El Mirage R. to Buckeye Feeder Ditch discharge point.

Discussion:

1. If the Diurnal Wetland feature figures are incorrect, this would add approximately 15 Habitat Units at the same cost of Alternative 3.
2. If the Holly Acres Overbank Constructed Wetlands selection is accepted, this would add approximately 59 Habitat Units to Alternative 3 at an additional cost of 3.5 million. (5.9 thousand per Habitat Unit) The additional cost of 5.9 thousand per Habitat Unit seems a bargain when compared to average cost of 11.6 thousand per Habitat Unit in Alternative 3 and an average cost of 9.4 thousand per Habitat Unit in Alternative 4 for the same feature. See calculations below.
3. One benefit if the Holly Acres Overbank Constructed Wetlands selection is accepted, the St Johns Irrigation District's water delivery system would be more efficient, economical and help us in our effort with NRCD, EPA, ADEQ and others to prevent water of poor quality of being discharged into the "Waters of the United States."
4. Another benefit of the Holly Acres selection, it would keep more land in the private ownership and in turn help the support of the local school tax revenues.
5. Holly Acres assumes that Alternative 3 will carry more water than Alternative 4, therefore, we like to keep as many features of Alternative 3 as possible. We feel that our selected changes would decrease the flows very little and yet provide additional Habitat Units of those calculated for Alternative 4. See calculations below.

Calculations:

1. Concerning the difference of Constructed Wetlands - Diurnal:

Alt. 3	Constructed Wetlands - Diurnal	150.9 ac.	83.01 H/U	\$12,651,310.00
Alt. 4	Constructed Wetlands - Diurnal	<u>107.8 ac.</u>	<u>59.29 H/U</u>	<u>\$13,200,610.00</u>
	Difference:	- 43.1 ac.	- 23.72 H/U	+ \$549,300.00

2. Calculating the benefit of selecting Alt. 4 Overbank Constructed Wetlands:

Alt. 3	Overbank Constructed Wetlands	137.35 ac.	96.14 H/U	\$11,148,800.00
Alt. 4	Overbank Constructed Wetlands	<u>222.10 ac.</u>	<u>155.50 H/U</u>	<u>\$14,644,100.00</u>
	Difference:	+ 84.75 ac.	+ 59.36 H/U	+\$ 3,515,300.00

Averages:

Alt. 3	11,148.8	÷	96.14	=	\$11,596.00/ H/U
Alt. 4	14,644.1	÷	155.50	=	\$ 9,417.43/ H/U
Diff.	3,515.3	÷	59.36	=	\$ 5,922.00/ H/U

3. Alternative 3 with Holly Acres selections:

	<u>Alternative 3 Total H/U</u>	2097.29
a.	Constructed Wetland - Diurnal Correction	15.00
b.	Alt. 4 Overbank Constructed Wetlands	59.36
c.	Alt. 4 Open Water/Marsh - Cells 1 thru 5	138.75
d.	Add Cottonwood Willow equal to the acreage in Reach # 7 of Alt. 4	<u>51.22</u>
	<u>Total Alt. 3 , And Holly Acres selections</u>	2361.62 H/U
	<u>Total Alt. 4</u>	<u>2244.53 H/U</u>
	Increase	117.09 H/U

FURTHER DISCUSSION OF ALTERNATIVE 3 VERSES ALTERNATIVE 4

At the March 22, 1999 Tres Rios Steering Committee workshop meeting, a review of Alternative 3 and 4 by Holly Acres Planning Committee was given to the attendees for their information and comments. Only a general discussion of the overall features of Alternatives 3 and 4 was made at that time.

At the March 24, 1999 Tres Rios Habitat Committee/ Gila River Indian Community meeting was held and a discussion of the Holly Acres feature selections was conducted. There seemed to be the concern of some that cost of the Open Water/Marsh features shown on Alternative 3, on the south side - Reaches 2 thru 4 and on the north side - Reaches 6 & 7 over the Cottonwood-Willow features shown on Alternative 4 for the same areas would be difficult to justify.

Although the present plan of Tres Rios River Management Plan is a Corps of Engineers Habitat Restoration project, Holly Acres felt the object of the overall project was to provide the maximum diversified Habitat Units (within budget) and yet selecting those features to **reduce** flooding of adjacent lands on both sides of the river. As we made our initial review, this was our objective. It now seems that the objective is to provide to maximum Habitat Units while not **adding** to flooding problem.

Another objective to the Tres Rios River Management Plan desired by Holly Acres is to restore (return as much as possible) this section of the rivers to its natural condition. This means to have the native vegetation and wildlife restored, not to have or create non-native habitat, hoping that species of non-native wildlife will come to the area. If they come to the native vegetation - so much the better. Also it is our desire that the native vegetation be placed or encouraged to grow in areas so that if any portion of the water supply is deleted in the future, its survival can be better assured.

The Flood Control Technical Committee's preferred plan suggests the removal of high points within the 1983 1,000 ft. clear area and the removal of the Salt Cedar thickets along with sediment deposits. Although Holly Acres believes that this plan is a workable solution, we feel that restoring the river flows to its original path during high flows, the river would better maintain itself in a natural condition - at a lower overall cost - and higher HabitatUnits. To help visualize Holly Acres proposal, a modified plan with features of Alternatives 3 & 4 is submitted for review, comments and consideration.

TRES RIOS RIVER MANAGEMENT PLAN
Steering Committee

*Steering Committee Summary Report and Consensus Plan
Executive Summary*

September 1998

1. INTRODUCTION

This executive summary presents a synopsis of the Tres Rios River Management Plan planning process. The objective of the planning process was to develop a consensus plan for improvement of the study area identified as Tres Rios, located in central Maricopa County, Arizona. The Tres Rios area generally includes a one-mile wide corridor along the Salt River and Gila River extending from 83rd Avenue on the east, downstream past the confluence with the Agua Fria River to the diversion structure of the Buckeye Irrigation Company on the west (**Figure 1-1**). The proximity of the study area to these three rivers led to the name "Tres Rios".

The principal participants in the Tres Rios River Management Plan process were representatives from Federal, Arizona, and local agencies, citizens from the Tres Rios area, and other stakeholders. A list of these principal participants is contained in **Table 1-1**. In addition to these principal participants, a number of individuals participated in one or more of the planning process meetings.

The purpose of this introductory section is to provide background on the previous studies and events that led to the planning effort, a description both of the Tres Rios River Management Plan teams organized, and of the process followed to develop a consensus plan, and a summary of the outcome results.

1.1 Previous Studies and Events

The Tres Rios River Management Plan did not originate as a result of a single study or event. It developed as a result of several studies conducted by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps), the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation), and the multi-city Subregional Operating Group (SROG) consisting of the cities of Glendale, Mesa, Phoenix, Scottsdale, and Tempe who own capacity in the 91st Avenue Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP). SROG discharges highly treated effluent from the 91st Avenue WWTP to the Salt River at the east end of the Tres Rios area.

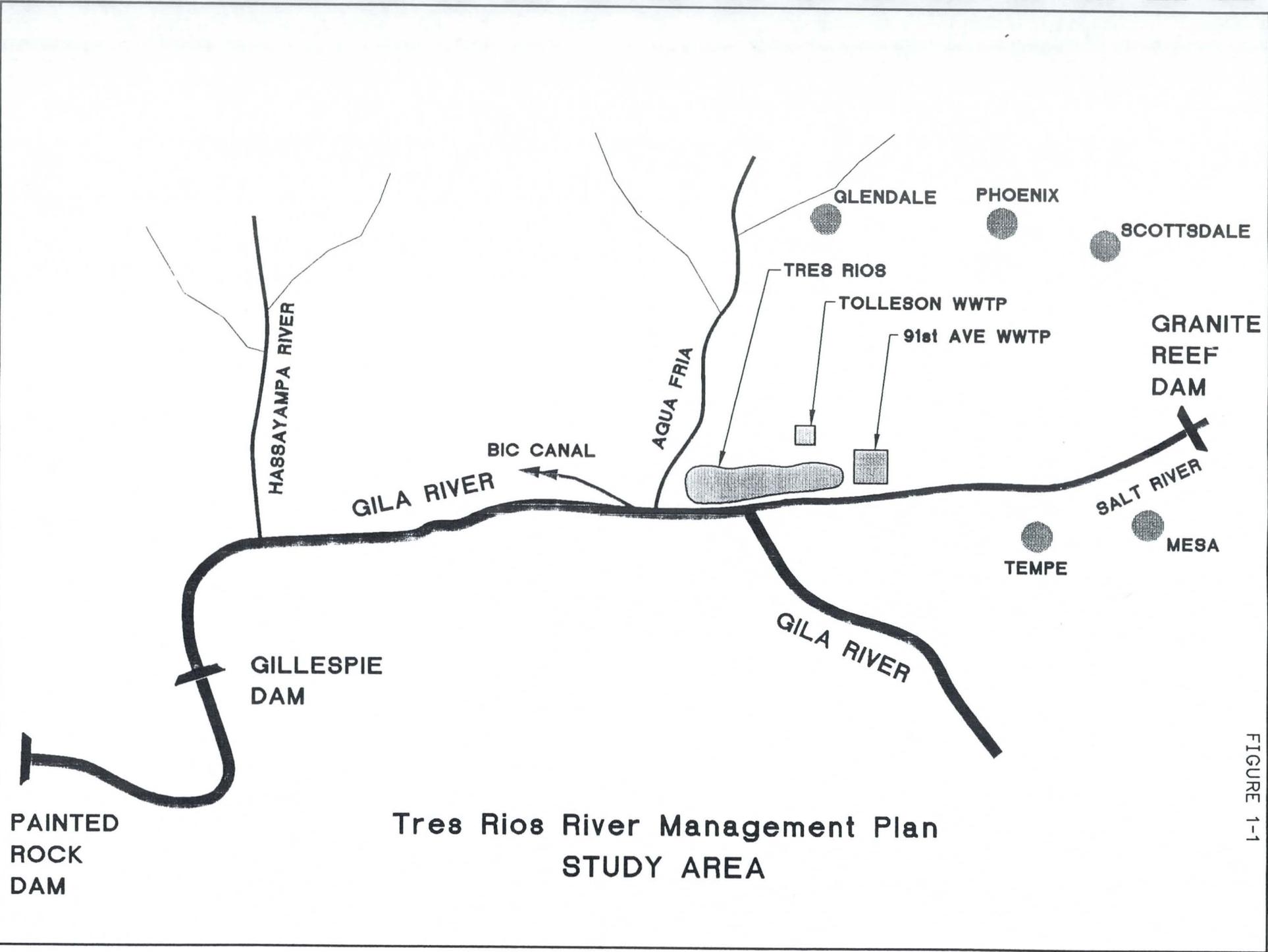


FIGURE 1-1

TRES RIOS RIVER MANAGEMENT PLAN
Steering Committee

Steering Committee Summary Report
Executive Summary

Table 1-1
Tres Rios River Management Plan Principal Participants

September 1998

FEDERAL AGENCIES

Bureau of Reclamation

Will Doyle

Diane Laush

Marvin Murray

Joe Smith

Corps of Engineers

Joe Dixon

John Drake

Mike Ternak

Alex Watt

U.S. EPA

Jack Landy

Terry Oda

U.S. Fish and Wildlife

Ron McKinstry

ARIZONA AGENCIES

AZ Dept. of Environmental Quality

Kris Randall

AZ Game & Fish Department

Bill Werner

AZ State Health Department

Craig Levy

MARICOPA COUNTY

Environmental Services

Tom Engelthaler

Flood Control District

Dick Perreault

Tom Renckly

MUNICIPALITIES

City of Avondale

Carlin Holley

City of Phoenix

Bing Brown

Jim Burke

Paul Kinshella

City of Tolleson

Scott Schroth

Gila River Indian Community

George Brooks

OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

Audubon Society

Dwayne Fink

B.J. Communications

Bill Andres

Buckeye Irrigation Company

Jackie Meck

Greeley and Hansen

Frank Turek

Holly Acres Community

Adron Reichert

Salt River Project

Paul Cherrington

The Tres Rios concept for the Salt and Gila Rivers was evaluated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in 1992 in a report entitled "Central Maricopa County Drainage Area, Arizona Reconnaissance Study". The report proposed constructed wetlands in the channels of the Salt and Gila Rivers as a part of a comprehensive flood control project. The Corps analysis at that time did not demonstrate a positive benefit/cost ratio for flood control and the Tres Rios flood control project was not implemented.

About the same time in 1992, SROG initiated the 91st Avenue WWTP Reclaimed Water Study. SROG was facing an initial projection of \$635 million for improvements to the 91st Avenue WWTP to meet anticipated, increasingly stringent ambient water quality standards and discharge limitations. SROG began the study to verify the projected cost to meet the proposed water quality standards and to investigate cost effective, environmentally sound alternatives. Phase I of the Reclaimed Water Study projected improvements to the 91st Avenue WWTP would cost \$368 million and identified groundwater recharge as a cost effective alternative. The recharge alternative involved delivering contractual water in the Arizona Nuclear Power Project pipeline and transporting surplus effluent to a recharge site at the confluence of the Agua Fria River and New River. The initial projected cost for the recharge alternative was \$220 million. This was named the Zero Discharge alternative because it eliminated all discharges to the Salt River from the 91st Avenue WWTP and thus the need for a NPDES permit. Additional phases of the Reclaimed Water Study further documented the economic and financial feasibility of implementing the Zero Discharge alternative.

In 1993 the Bureau of Reclamation began the Phoenix Wastewater Reuse and Reclamation Study to investigate three potential reuse alternatives:

- Constructed Wetlands in the Tres Rios area called the Tres Rios Project
- Recharge in the river channels at the Agua Fria and New River site, the Agua Fria Recharge Project
- Exchange with the Gila River Indian Community. This alternative was deleted from further consideration during the assessment

Reclamation's report to Congress in March 1996 recommended further investigation of the Tres Rios and the Agua Fria Recharge Projects. Additionally, in 1994 Reclamation and SROG began the Tres Rios Constructed Wetlands Demonstration Project to investigate the effluent treatment potential of constructed wetlands. This demonstration project has been in continuous operation since 1994. In

addition to investigating water quality impacts of a variety of pilot wetlands configurations and types, it is also being used to test vector control strategies and diurnal flow variation impacts.

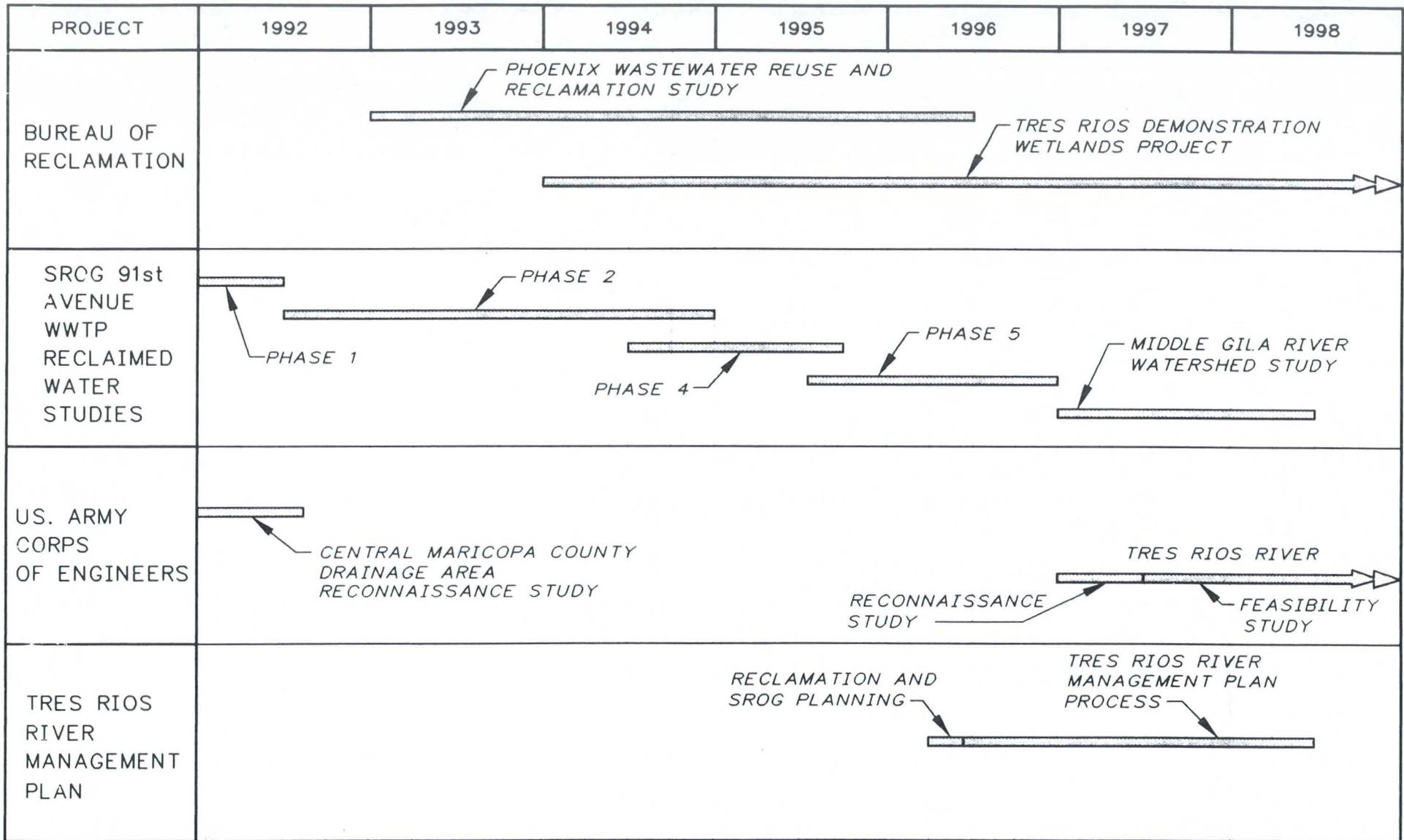
In 1995 SROG began Phase V of the Reclaimed Water Study to identify a preferred discharge alternative for the 91st Avenue WWTP to be used in the 1997 NPDES permit application. SROG knew the Zero Discharge alternative was technically and financially feasible, however, implementation could impact the existing riparian area downstream from the 91st Avenue WWTP. SROG investigated additional alternatives that could be more compatible with maintaining the riparian environment. Phase V identified 63 alternatives of which 45 included a Tres Rios Constructed Wetlands. Phase V further identified a wide range regulatory, technical, public involvement, and environmental issues associated with the 45 Tres Rios alternatives. Phase V recommended continued discharge for the 1997 NPDES permit but also recommended continued investigations of Tres Rios. SROG recognized that implementation of the Tres Rios alternative would require resolution of a wide range of issues, and a team of Federal, state, county, and municipal representatives, technical experts, and the public was assembled to address the issues.

1.2 Initiation of the Tres Rios River Management Plan Planning Process

It is impossible to identify a single point in time for the beginning of the Tres Rios River Management Plan planning process. Each of the participating entities have been involved in the general Tres Rios area in different activities and processes. However, for the purposes of this Steering Committee Report Executive Summary, the beginning of this chapter in the history of the Salt and Gila Rivers will be defined as a meeting held in April 1996.

The April 23, 1996 meeting was sponsored by Reclamation and the City of Phoenix. The purpose of the meeting was to introduce a project concept that Reclamation and SROG had been developing for the study area. **Figure 1-2** contains a chronology of previous studies described in Section 1.1 and the activities conducted by Reclamation and SROG that led to the April 1996 meeting and the development of the Tres Rios project concept.

The project concept presented by the Reclamation and SROG at the April 1996 meeting had as its stated purposes flood control, water quality improvement, recreation, and wildlife/habitat improvements. Additionally implementation of the project concept could allow for the recycling of approximately 60,000 acre-feet of reclaimed water from the 91st Avenue WWTP in a companion project, the Agua Fria Recharge project. However, this companion project is not part of this Tres Rios study effort or report.



**Tres Rios River Management Plan
CHRONOLOGY**

FIGURE 1-2

Reactions from the participants showed that there were conflicts between the stated purposes and that the tradeoffs made in formulating the Tres Rios project concept were not acceptable to all of the participants. This led to a decision to initiate a process among interested parties to review the past formulation leading to the project concept and to develop a workable proposal.

1.3 The Tres Rios River Management Plan Process Begins

The Tres Rios River Management Plan planning process began with a series of meetings spanning a six month period to identify and review the primary issue areas involved in the Tres Rios concept plan. These included water supply, flood control, water quality, and wildlife/habitat. Presentations were made on each of these subjects by subject matter experts as a means to establish a common understanding among the process participants. Each of these subject areas were summarized in sections of the Steering Committee Summary Report and were discussed in detail in the companion technical committee reports. The goals of the Tres Rios River Management Plan were:

- To develop a plan based on good science
- To develop a plan that meets the needs of all of the stakeholders
- To develop a consensus plan
- To develop a plan that is achievable

After the subject matter meetings were completed a series of meetings was held to formulate the next step. A decision was made by the participants to initiate a process to develop a commonly held vision for the management of the Salt and Gila Rivers within the study area. A document was prepared to chart the course for this effort. This document never became a "final" document in any formal sense. Instead it represents the understandings of the participants on how the process would and ultimately did proceed.

1.4 The Tres Rios River Management Plan Committee Phase

The process that was adopted for the Tres Rios River Management Plan effort was patterned after a then recently completed effort involving Alamo Lake on the Bill Williams River in western Arizona. The idea was to establish a series of technical committees around the principal issue areas: water supply, water quality, flood control, wildlife habitat and recreation (later a public involvement and a data management committee were added). The intent was for these committee participants to "leave their agency agenda at the door" and to address the subject matter their committee was assigned from a strictly technical basis. Each of these committees was charged with developing management concepts based solely on their committee objectives addressing what was preferred,

what was acceptable and what would not be acceptable. It was the intent that after the committees had completed their tasks the results would be synthesized into a management plan concept that included all of the committees' perspectives and would be acceptable to all participants.

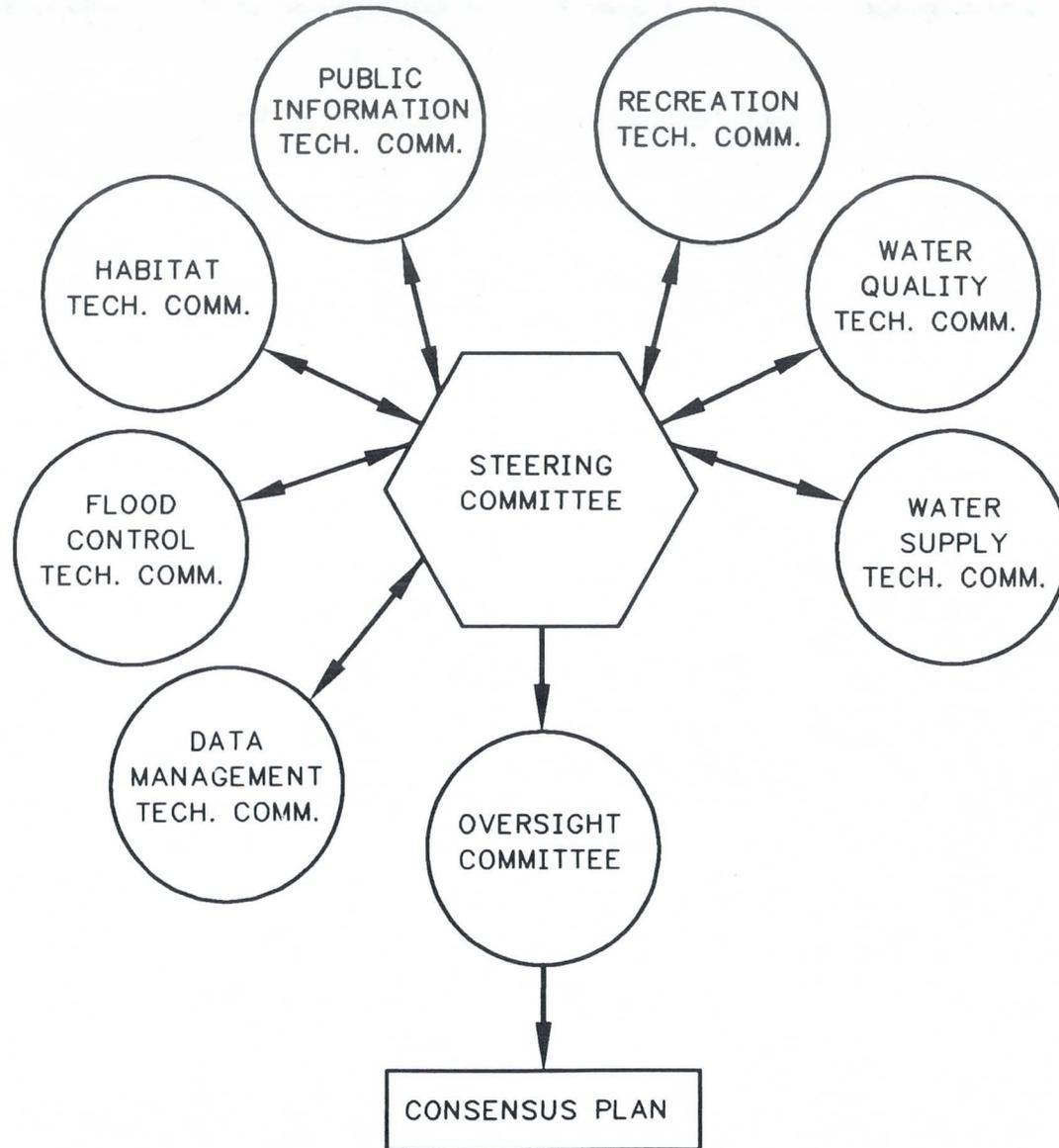
During the Tres Rios River Management Plan Committee Phase, a three tiered organizational structure was established. The structure included an oversight committee, a steering committee, and the seven technical committees. This organization structure is presented on **Figure 1-3** and the list of committee chairs is presented in **Table 1-2**.

The Oversight Committee has the highest level of responsibility. It was composed of organizational decision makers who are able to commit resources and staff time to the Tres Rios River Management Plan and able to commit their organization to the outcome. The Oversight Committee provided oversight of and direction to the Steering Committee. The Oversight Committee was scheduled to meet as appropriate. The first meeting was held on June 24, ~~1996~~¹⁹⁹⁷ to obtain a briefing on the Tres Rios River Management Plan process, background on Tres Rios, to review the progress made by the Steering Committee and the Technical Committees, and to sanction the committee phase plan development process. The second Oversight Committee meeting was held at the completion of the committee phase to obtain a briefing on this Summary Report with the goal of endorsing the plan.

The Steering Committee is the second level of responsibility. The Steering Committee was comprised of individuals recognized by their respective organizations as their representative to the process. The purpose of the Steering Committee was to ensure communication and coordination within their respective organizations, guide and support the technical committees, and to coordinate the synthesis of the technical committee products. This committee generally was comprised of members of the technical committees, including the technical committee chairs. The Steering Committee meetings became the forum where information was shared between the technical committees, schedules established, and management issues related to the process were discussed and resolved. The Steering Committee met on a regular monthly basis. The Steering Committee was also delegated to prepare this Summary Report and to develop a consensus plan for Tres Rios. This was to be done by the Technical Committees' Summary Reports into one cohesive document.

[^]
merging

The Technical Committees were charged with developing the technical information necessary to develop a commonly held vision for the management of the study area. The Technical Committees generally met monthly from January 1997 ^{to} and January 1998. Technical Committees established for the Tres Rios River Management Plan included:



**Tres Rios River Management Plan
ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE**

TRES RIOS RIVER MANAGEMENT PLAN
Steering Committee

Steering Committee Summary Report
Executive Summary

Table 1-2
Tres Rios River Management Plan Committees and Chairs

September 1998

Oversight Committee	Mike Gritzuk City of Phoenix
Steering Committee	Joe Smith Bureau of Reclamation
Technical Committees:	
• Data Management	Jack Landy Environmental Protection Agency
• Flood Control	Dick Perreault, Flood Control District of Maricopa County
• Habitat	Bill Werner Arizona Game and Fish Department
• Public Involvement	Bing Brown City of Phoenix
• Recreation	Jim Burke City of Phoenix
• Water Quality	Kris Randall Arizona Department of Environmental Quality
• Water Supply	Paul Kinshella City of Phoenix

- Data Management
- Flood Control
- Habitat
- Public Involvement
- Recreation
- Water Quality
- Water Supply

Technical Committees consisted of specific technical experts. Technical Committee representatives focused on the technical issues assigned to their committee independent of the other Technical Committees and without reflecting the views and policies of their agencies. The Technical Committees' goals were to assess the conditions and issues in Tres Rios, to develop alternatives to address the issues and to recommend a preferred alternative, acceptable alternative(s) and identify unacceptable alternatives. The Summary Reports prepared by the Technical Committees provided the foundation for the Steering Committee Report.

1.5 Tres Rios River Management Plan Synthesis

The Technical Committees' reports were not all completed at the same time. The first report completed was the flood control report. As part of this committee's work, a story board study area map was developed that became the tool for the other committees to explain their thoughts and ideas.

As the reports became complete, during the synthesis process each committee presented their results to the Steering Committee and discussed how the results fit with what previous committees had presented. As more of the committees made their presentations, the Steering Committee reviewed what previous committees had presented to identify and discuss areas of potential conflict.

This process resulted in development of a conceptual consensus plan for the management of the study area to achieve the technical objectives identified from the onset of the process.

1.6 Consensus Concept Plan Described

The consensus concept Tres Rios River Management Plan is the synthesis of four principal objectives: flood control, wildlife habitat, water quality, and water supply. Recreation was considered to be an overlay that could be applied to whatever was developed from the synthesis.

The consensus concept plan contains the following key elements and principles:

- A flood control levee should be constructed on the north side of the river to protect the areas behind the levee from the 100-year flood.
- In conjunction with the flood control levee, the plan included an active channel corridor in the river bottom excavated and kept clear of vegetation to funnel high velocity flood flows.
- In order to foster the establishment of riparian vegetation in the Tres Rios River Management Plan area, the flood control component of the plan should define an active channel sized to be stable under the present hydrology and sediment regime and a flood prone area to convey the 100-year flood.
- The existing and future wildlife habitat in the Tres Rios River Management Plan area should be maintained and enhanced where possible. Commitments to provide an adequate water supply for at least 50 years for this purpose should be negotiated
- Wetlands should be constructed to buffer diurnal flowrate fluctuations from the regional wastewater plant and to treat such inputs ^{to} the river as storm runoff, agricultural runoff, and other currently uncontrolled sources of pollutants.
- Terrace areas of the riverbank within the project area should be managed for mesquite reestablishment.
- A process should be developed with landowners and appropriate stakeholders ~~is~~ to establish and implement an integrated river management plan structure for wildlife habitat within the study area.

Figures 1-4 and 1-7 present the proposed conceptual elements of the Consensus Plan.

1.7 What Happens Now?

The Steering Committee recognizes that their job is not complete. While the Tres Rios River Management Plan consensus concept plan has been developed, its implementation will require significantly more effort. There are two principal venues currently available to pursue implementation.

PROPOSED CONCEPT ELEMENTS

UPSTREAM OF 115TH AVENUE

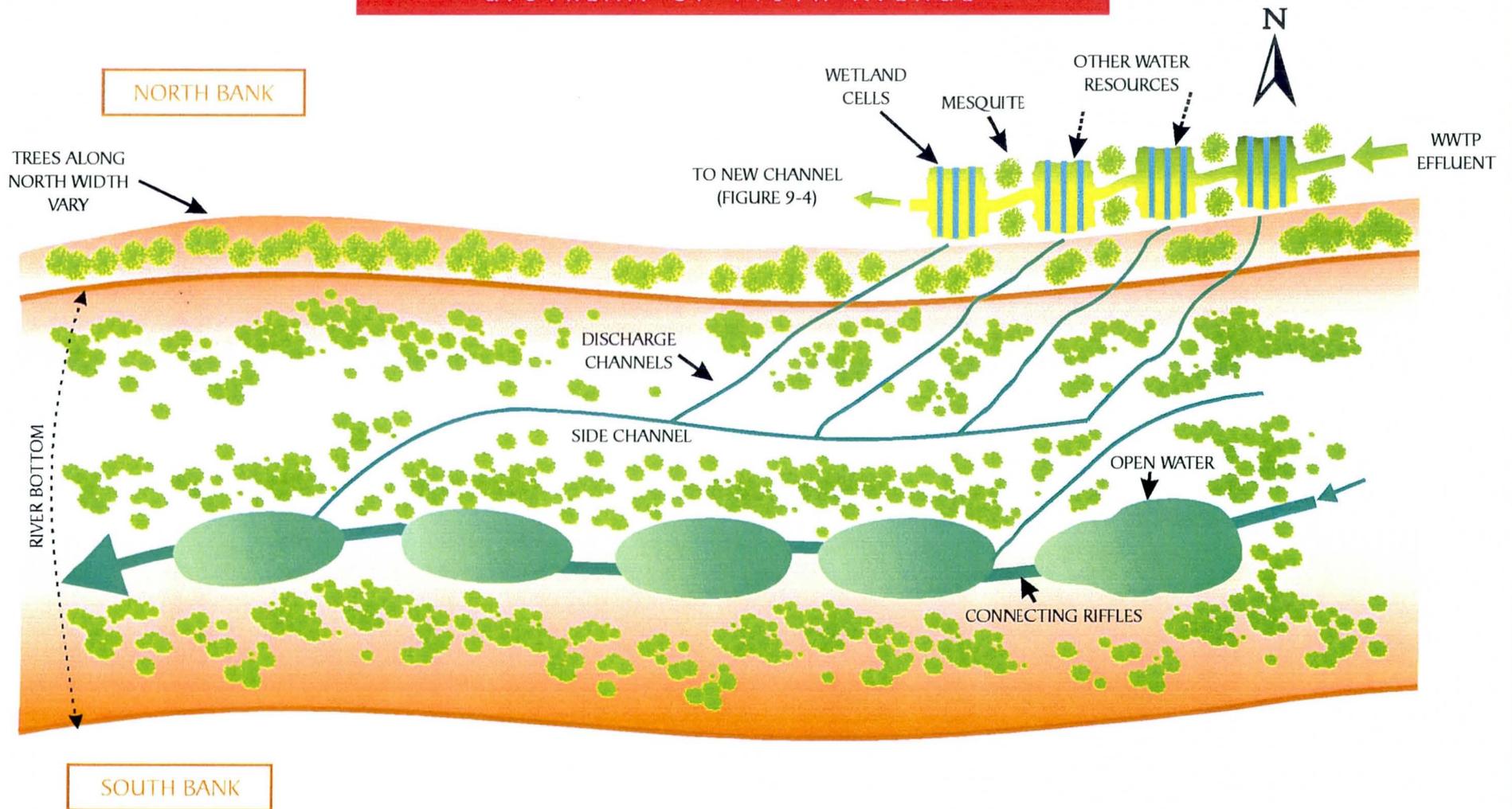


Figure 1-4

*Concept drawings not to scale

PROPOSED CONCEPT ELEMENTS CROSS SECTION

UPSTREAM FROM 115TH AVENUE

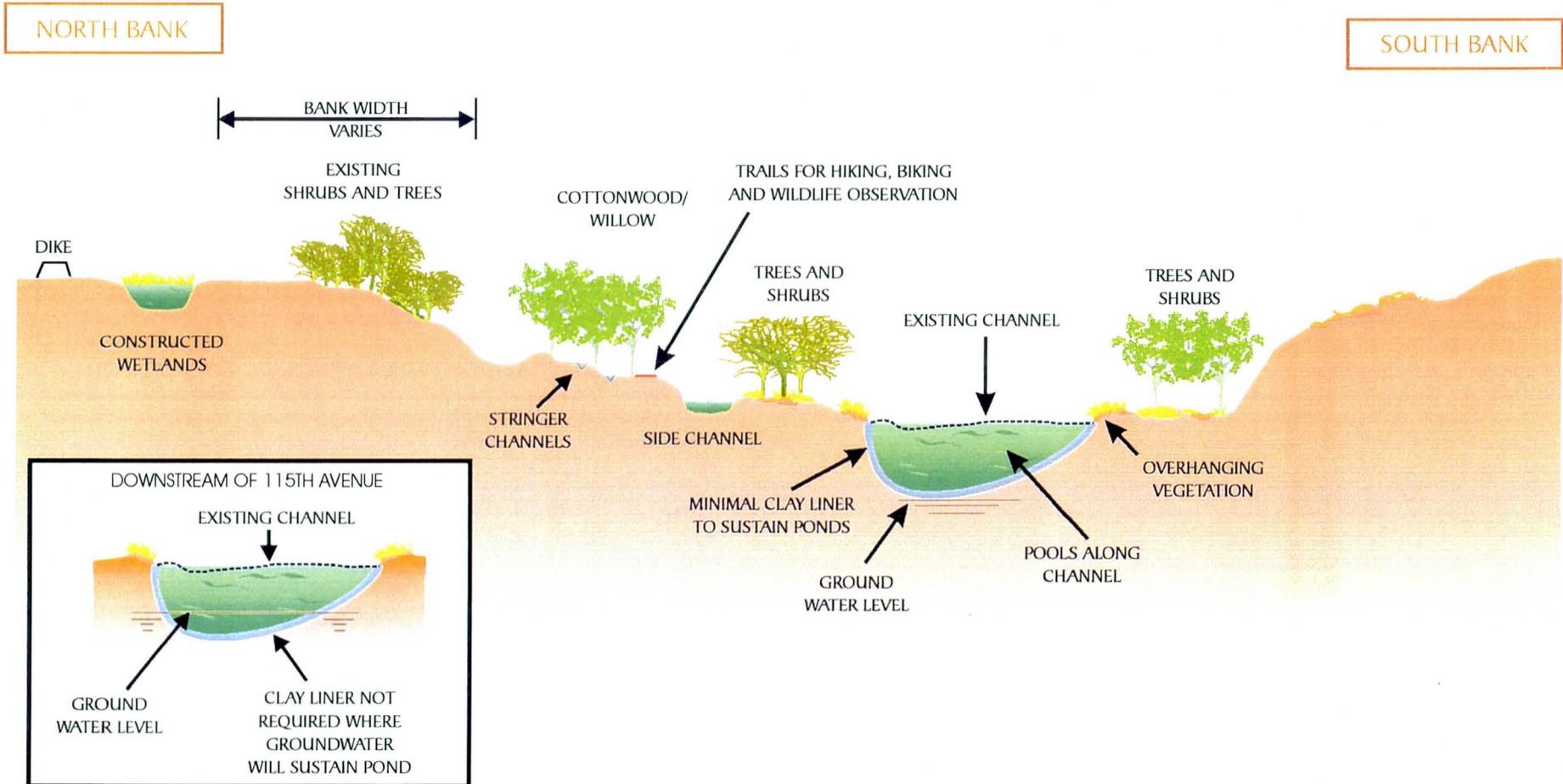


Figure 1-5

*Concept drawings not to scale

PROPOSED CONCEPT ELEMENTS

OPEN WATER POOL ENHANCEMENT

UP STREAM FROM 115TH AVENUE

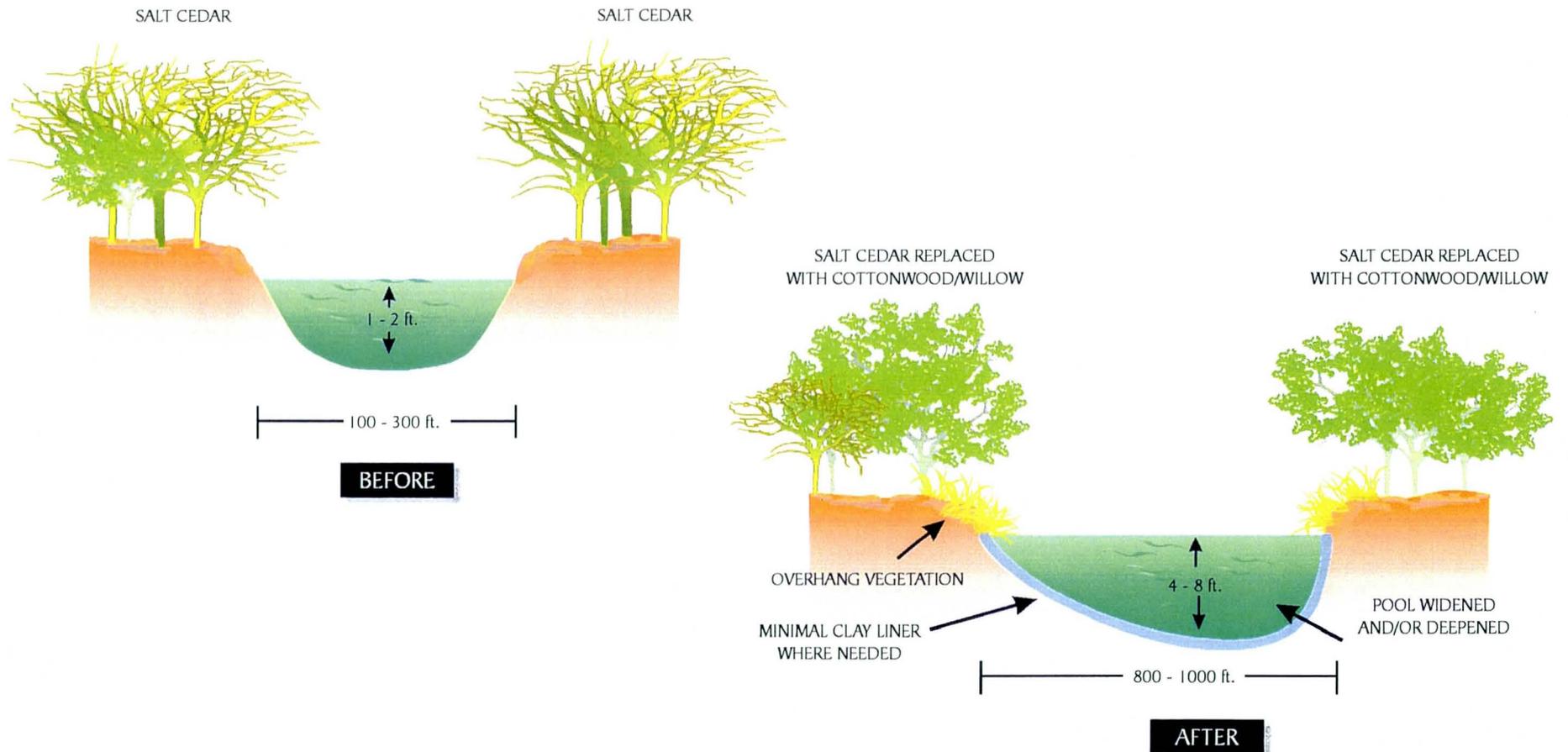


Figure 1-6

*Concept drawings not to scale

PROPOSED CONCEPT ELEMENTS

DOWNSTREAM OF 115TH AVENUE

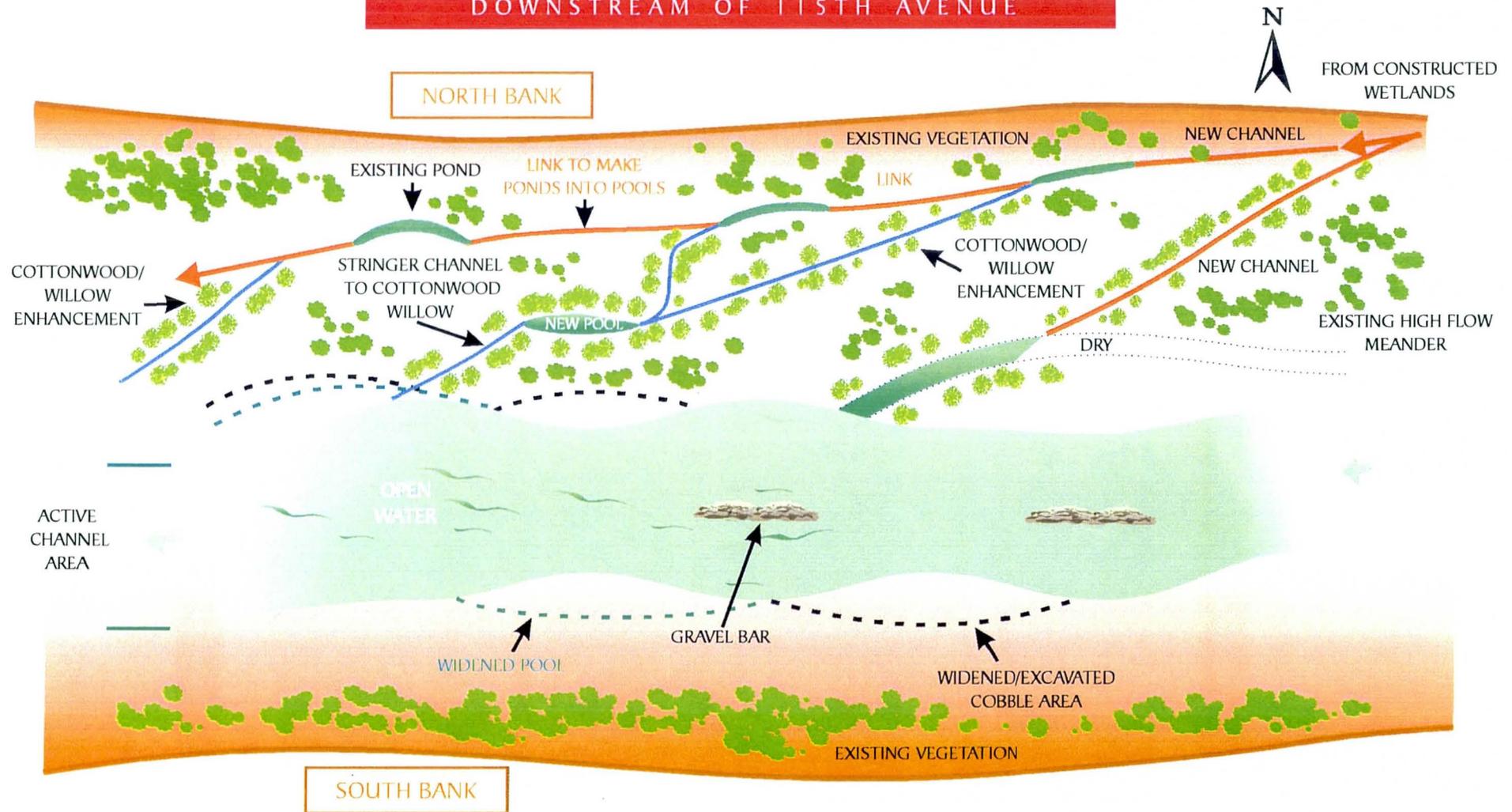


Figure 1-7

*Concept drawings not to scale

First is the ongoing Corps feasibility study for ecosystem restoration in the study area. SROG and the Corps recognized that a mechanism is needed to further refine the concept plan and then to implement some or all of the plan. SROG and the Corps entered into an agreement in 1997 to conduct a 22 month feasibility study. The results of the Tres Rios River Management Plan planning process and the concept plan will be provided to the Corps as an input to the Corps planning process with the intent that it help guide the Corps process and result in implementation of the relevant portions of the locally supported recommendation concept plan. The Steering Committee intends to participate in the Corps process to shepherd the relevant concept plan elements through to implementation.

Review

Secondly in 1999, the Arizona Department of Water Quality (ADEQ) will be initiating a watershed based water quality planning and management approach for the Middle Gila River area that includes the study area. It is the intent of the Steering Committee to participate in the ADEQ process to integrate the results of the Tres Rios River Management Plan planning process and the concept plan into the ADEQ watershed characterization process to seek implementation of the water quality objectives of the Tres Rios River Management Plan.

Additionally, the Steering Committee will seek to initiate an integrated river management plan structure in order to maintain the functionality of the river corridor. The Steering Committee will also seek to incorporate the appropriate concept plan elements into county and local land use and planning processes.

1.8 Purpose and Goals

The purpose of the Tres Rios River Management Plan is to provide a forum where the Tres Rios stakeholders could assemble to identify and address the issues involved in developing a plan for the Tres Rios area.

During the process of developing the consensus plan the Corps of Engineers initiated the Tres Rios, Arizona Feasibility Study. The information developed as a part of the Tres Rios River Management Plan will be used in the Corps study and the consensus plan developed by the Steering Committee will be used by the Corps as an alternative in the Feasibility Study.