United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service

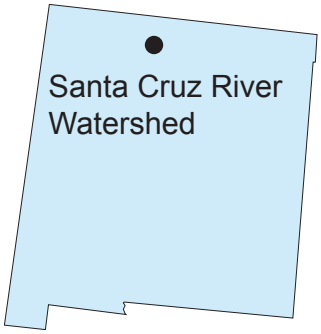
Watershed Operations

October 2009

Santa Cruz River Watershed, New Mexico

Introduction

This project will contribute significantly to the economic growth of the area. The project will protect 1,400 residents, 350 small farms, and a number of businesses and public bridges and buildings.



The Santa Cruz River Watershed is located in Santa Fe and Rio Arriba Counties, New Mexico

Funded through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009, this project is part of the Obama Administration's plans to modernize the nation's infrastructure, jump-start the economy, and create jobs. NRCS is using Recovery Act dollars to update aging flood control structures, protect and maintain water supplies, improve water quality, reduce soil erosion, enhance fish and wildlife habitat, and restore wetlands. NRCS acquires easements and restores floodplains to safeguard lives and property in areas along streams and rivers that have experienced flooding.

Project Description

- **Location:** Santa Fe and Rio Arriba Counties, 3rd Congressional District
- **Federal Funding:** $240,000

This dam developed a longitudinal crack located above the internal drain as a result of fine grain soil washing into the drain material creating a void. This project will restore integrity and safety to the Site 4 flood control dam by remediating the crack.

Partners

- USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service
- Santa Fe-Pajoaque Soil and Water Conservation District

Benefits

The project will continue to provide annual flood damage reduction benefits, and improved public health and safety due to reduced flood damage. It will reduce danger and need for emergency personnel. This project provides over $357,000 in average annual flood damage reduction and over 44,000 tons per year in reduced sediment damage.

Longitudinal crack in the dam due to movement of material inside the dam.

Economic Opportunities

Direct and indirect jobs will be created during the construction phase. And, over time the flood protection will make business opportunities feasible where they would not be otherwise.

Statewide Perspective

This dam, along with six additional dams, provide benefits to the Valley's residents and businesses. The Santa Cruz Valley is home to 10,000 residents and 2,500 small farms. The majority of the population is considered socially disadvantaged. It is an important area that was settled over 500 years ago by the Spanish. While farming in the area is primarily self sufficient where farmers grow only enough to serve their family, the valley is also known for its Rio Grande chili which is a culturally significant spice in New Mexico. It is also an important apple producing area of the state.

For More Information

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A geolgist investigates the cause of the crack within the dam.