

# LOBATOS BRIDGE OUTDOOR CLASSROOM & RECREATION ENHANCEMENT PROJECT

Presentation to the Rocky Mountain District Resource Advisory Committee



- Introduce RAC to The Great Outdoors Fund (TGOF) and its Partnership with BLM CO
- Raise RAC's awareness about Lobatos Bridge Outdoor Classroom & Recreation Enhancement Project



# THE GREAT OUTDOORS FUND AT-A-GLANCE:



## **NONPROFIT**

501(c)(3) charitable organization dedicated to expanding equitable access to the outdoors and improving recreation opportunities for the benefit and enjoyment of people of all ages, abilities and backgrounds

## **NICHE**

Unique from any other charity in America with focus on enhancing recreation infrastructure and access through public-private partnerships – and first-of-a-kind crowdfunding platform – *think GoFundMe for Outdoor Recreation*

- 100% of all donations go directly to project as designated by donor

## **NEUTRAL FUNDING MECHANISM**

Will help any agency responsible for managing outdoor recreation as well as their existing nonprofit partners and local stakeholders to enhance recreation access and opportunities in their community through collaborative fundraising

## **PROVEN TRACK RECORD WITH PUBLIC/PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS**

Skilled and nimble team with proven track record of raising \$20+ Million to help keep the great outdoors great

- More than 100 projects in Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona, Louisiana, Tennessee, Georgia, Maryland, and Florida and all across Canada
- Projects include: picnic areas and campgrounds, pavilions, trail and other recreation restoration work; construction of boat ramps and fishing piers; park and playground rehabilitation; post-fire restoration work and others



## BACKGROUND ON PARTNERSHIP WITH BLM

- 2017 – TGOF is established
- 2018 – BLM WO awards assistance agreement to TGOF
- Significant Deliverables:
  - Develop **The Fund dB**, database for recreation-related projects
  - Merit-merit based process of prioritization
  - Connect **The Fund dB** to TGOF.org to accept project-specific donations
    - *Think Go-Fund-Me for outdoor recreation projects*
- 2022 – BLM CO establishes cooperative agreement with TGOF
- Synopsis of partnership with BLM CO:
  - Help complete wanted & viable projects as public-private partnerships
  - Start by helping SLV Field Office with project 40 years in the making

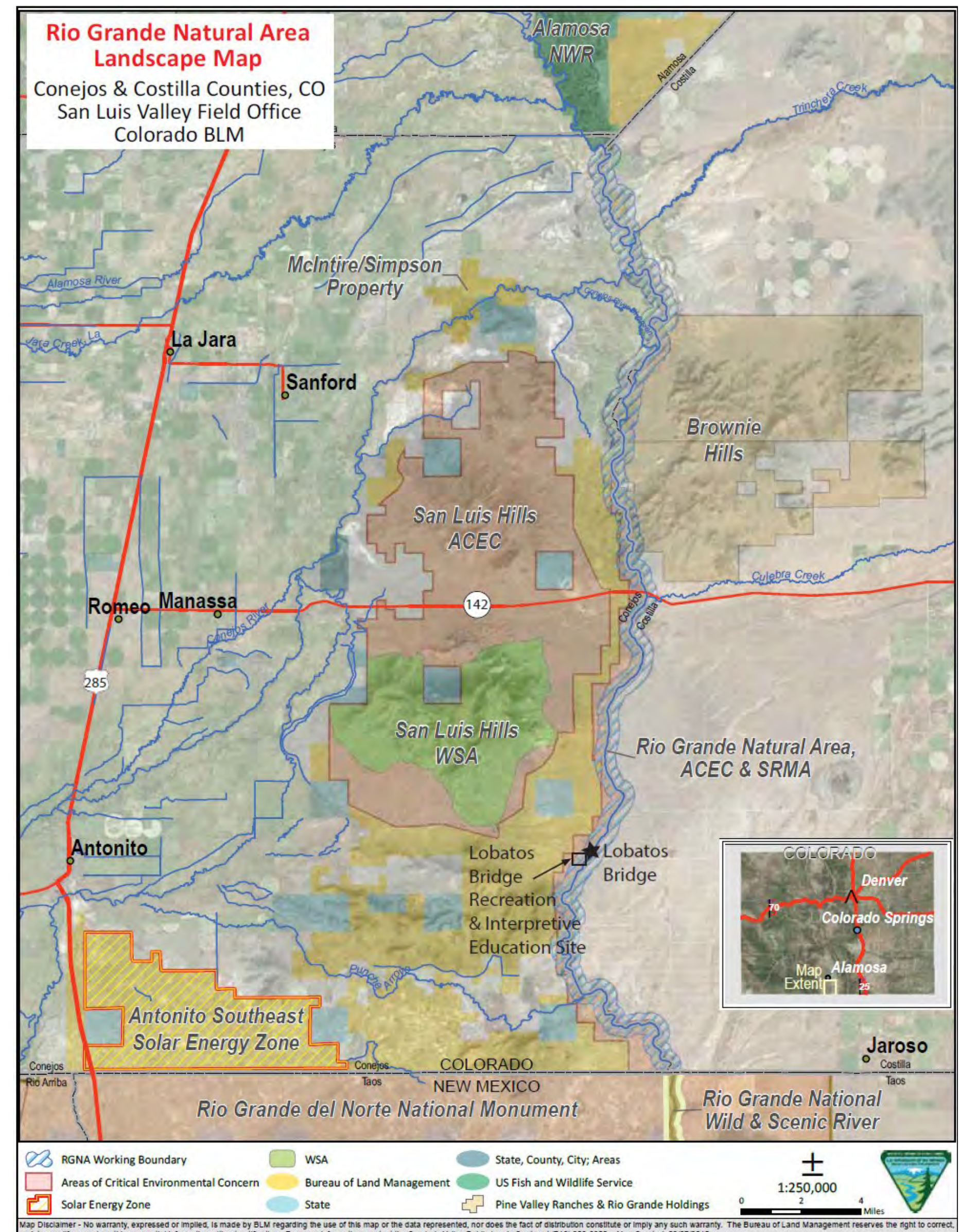
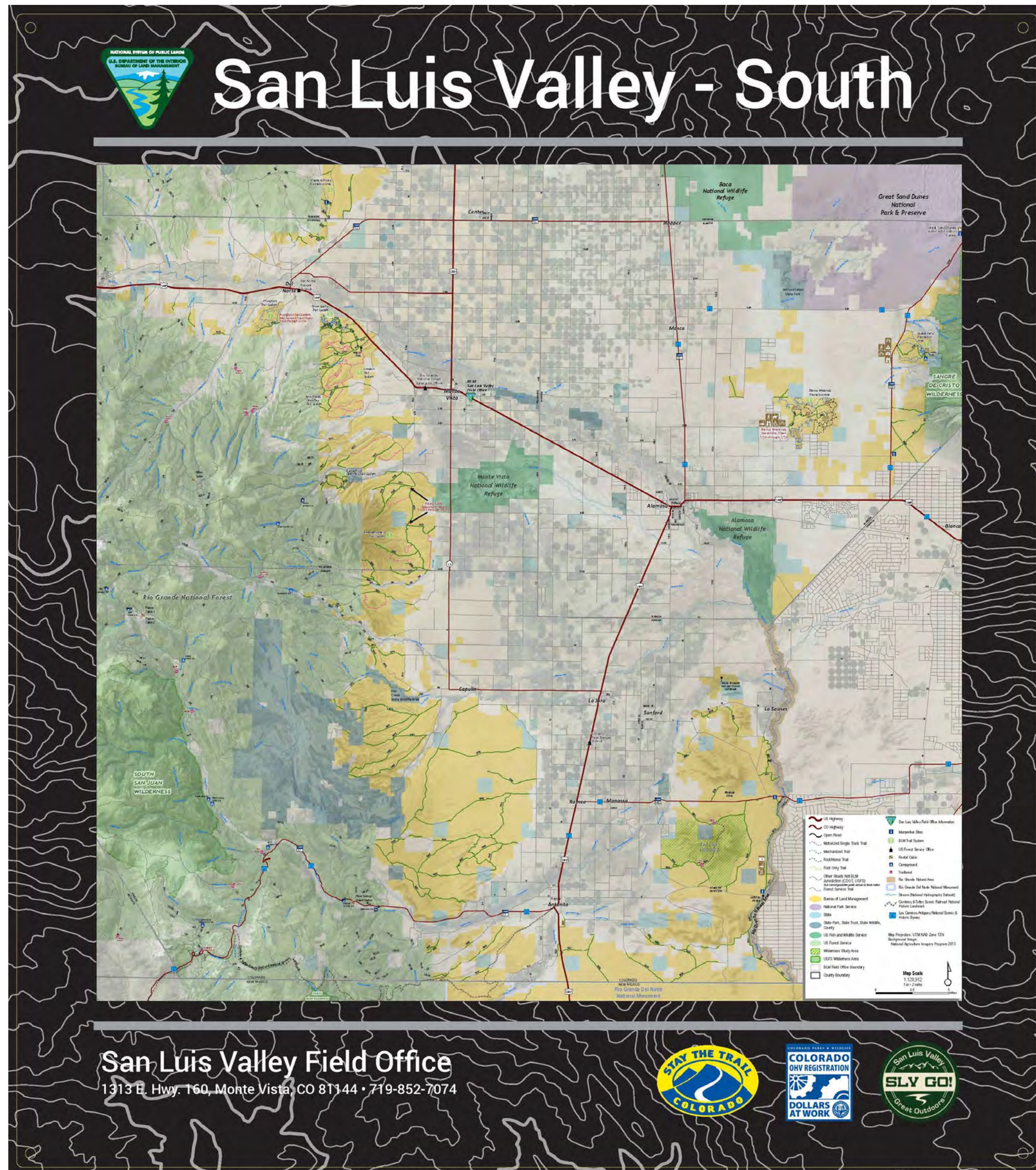
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Leveraging Limited Resources  
on Agency's Top Priorities



# LOBATOS BRIDGE OUTDOOR CLASSROOM & RECREATION ENHANCEMENT PROJECT





- **Develop Site for Resource Benefit**
  - Interpretive Site
  - Boat Ramp
- **Develop Site for Rec Benefits**
  - Social, Economic, and Environmental
- **Fulfill Plans**
  - RGNA Mgmt. Plan
  - RGNA Act
  - RG Corridor Plan
  - RMP
- **Heritage Tourism Destination**
  - CTO-Mystic Valley
  - SLVTA & County Tourism
- **HOL-Hands On the Land**
  - Nature-Based Classroom
  - Local Community Pride
  - Embajadores (GO! Equity in the Outdoors)
  - CCW and SdC-NHA
  - Generation Wild (GenWild)
  - ASU (Classes and Adventure Program)



• **Outdoor Classroom - Interpretive Panels**

- Story in Every Direction
- Petroglyph
- Boat Ramp/River Info

• **Boat Ramp**

- Improved Access to River
- Vehicles and Trailers

• **Picnic Sites**

- 3 x Tables
- Fire Rings

• **Parking Area**

- Road Base
- Boulders

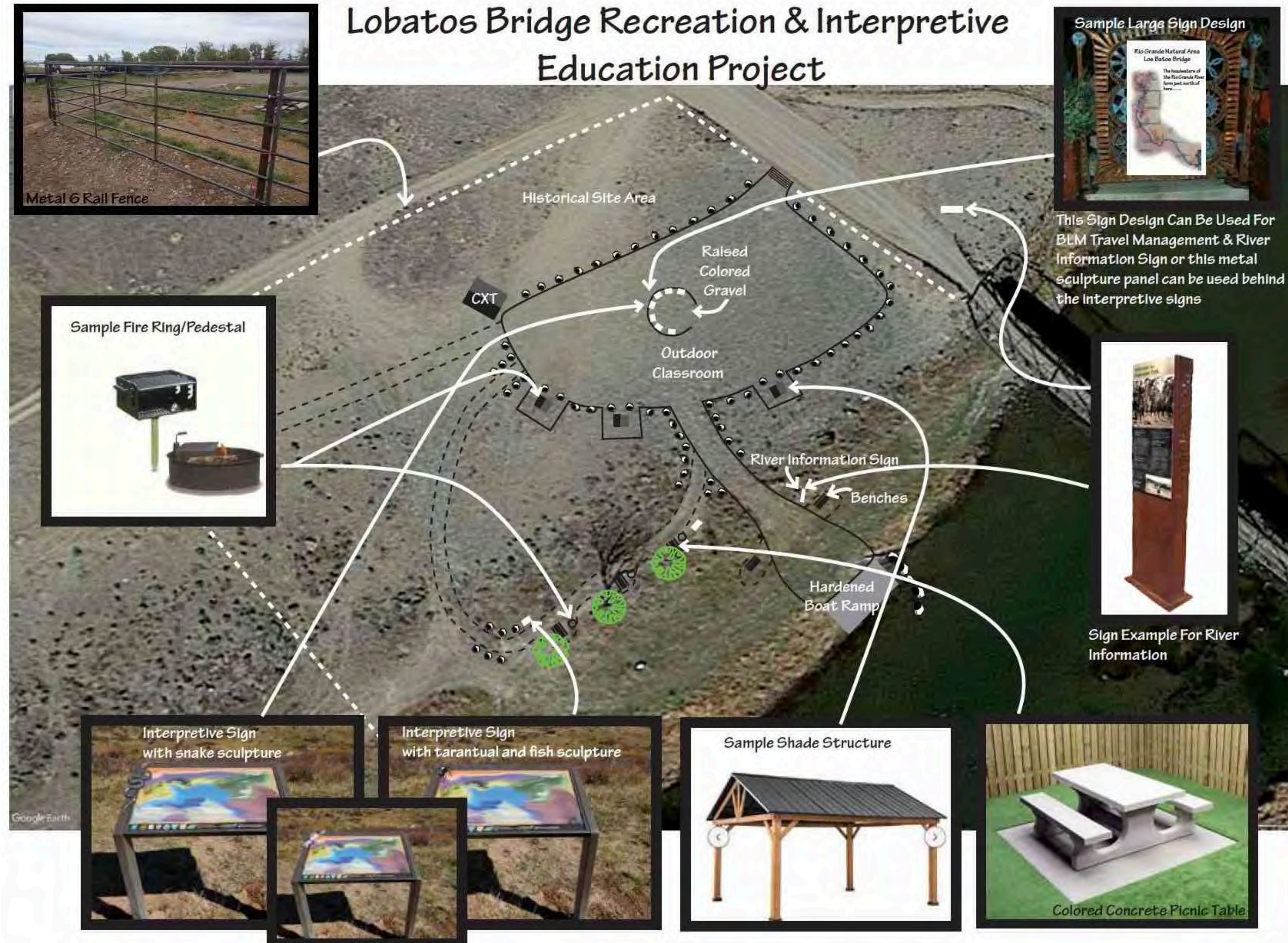
• **Fencing**

- Metal & Functional
- Cattleguard Replaces Gate

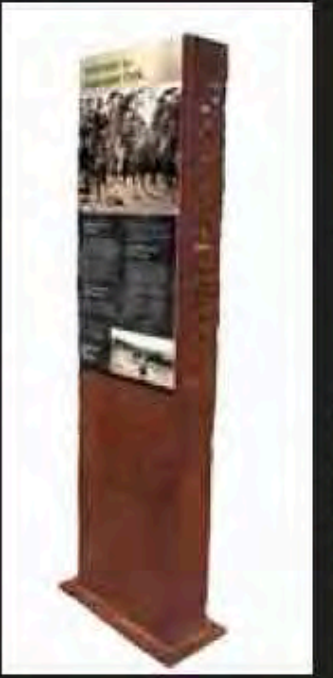
• **Vault Toilet**

• **Cameras**

Lobatos Bridge Recreation & Interpretive Education Project



This Sign Design Can Be Used For BLM Travel Management & River Information Sign or this metal sculpture panel can be used behind the Interpretive signs





# Simulation of Boat Ramp Access at Lobatos Bridge



# Simulation of Picnic Areas at Lobatos Bridge





# CURRENT PARTNERS

- **The Great Outdoors Fund (TGOF)**
  - Primary Fundraiser
  - Reporting
- **Occidental**
  - Donor
- **Gates Family Foundation**
  - Donor
- **Sangre de Cristo NHA**
  - Donor
  - Interpretive Education Oversight Committee
- **Trichera Blanca Foundation**
  - Donor
- **RG Bank**
  - Donor
- **Counties**
  - Conejos – GOCO ‘Lead Applicant’
  - Costilla – GOCO ‘Co-Applicant’
- **SLV Great Outdoors (SLV GO!)**
  - GOAT’s – Field Crew/Implementation
  - Interpretive Education Oversight Committee
- **ASU Salazar RGdN Center**
  - 142 Bridge Project in 2020
  - Interpretive Education Oversight Committee



- **Community Support at all Levels**
  - BLM from Field Office to State Director
  - Conejos County & Costilla County
  - Elected Officials and many other stakeholders
- **Site Design & Budget**
  - January 2023
- **NEPA**
  - March 2023
- **Current Ongoings**
  - April 2023 – TGOF secures initial funding
  - May 2023 – Interpretive Education Oversight Committee formed
    - Design & development of interpretive panels begins
  - June 2024 – Completed Student | Mentoring Sculpting project
  - August – GOCO application process begins
  - Nov – Final approval of RGBRT grant
  - Early Dec – GOCO Community Impact Grant awards announced
- **Ribbon-Cutting Ceremony**
  - Late Summer/Early Fall ('25)



## SAMPLING OF INTERPRETIVE PANELS UNDER DEVELOPMENT

### All signs for Project Site:

- **Outdoor Classroom:** Ten (10) Interpretive Wayside Markers– 24” x 36”
- **Trail:** Three (3) Interpretive Wayside Markers – 24” x 36”
- **Boat Ramp:** One (1) Interpretive Kiosk – 36” x 48”

# ANCIENT CULTURES

The San Luis Valley has been inhabited for at least 13,000 years. Some of the oldest cultures in the western hemisphere, Clovis and Folsom, who witnessed the receding of the last ice age glaciers, hunted this area.

The San Luis Valley would have looked very different then and would have been covered by a large ancient lake where prehistoric herd animals such as the Columbian Mammoths, as well as giant sloths, ancient bison, and camels would have foraged around the edges. The lake that covered most of the Valley floor is evidenced by shell fossils found on the surface shorelines on the hills that surround you.

The spear points crafted by these early peoples were large and designed to take down big prey such as the Columbian Mammoth, a much larger species than the Woolly Mammoth.

Both cultures would have been nomadic, following herd animals from location to location to hunt for food.

An atlatl is a large throwing stick that provides more power to the spear with a stone point on the end was used to take down large megafauna.

This point was discovered along the banks of the Rio Grande. It is made of petrified wood and a point that may go back several thousand years. This point may have been used to hunt large animals that would have grazed along this river corridor.

This mammoth tooth was found near the Great Sand Dunes that would have been grazing on the edge of the ancient lake in the San Luis Valley. This tooth weight is approximately 10 pounds.

This sculpture was made by Aldo Pece of Carver High School under the direction of Faith Boudreau 2014. Artist: Courtney Abby Ortiz

In Cooperation With:

# LOBATOS BRIDGE

The bridge in front of you, legally named the, Costilla Crossing Bridge was built in 1892 and is on the National Register of Historic Places. It is one of three remaining bridges in the United States that is designed by Edwin Thacher, the chief engineer of the Keystone Bridge Company. The bridge is the oldest wrought iron bridge in southern Colorado that is still in use. The Thacher Truss Bridge is rare as it combined some of the characteristics of a Pratt Truss with the diagonals under tensions, and the Howe Truss with diagonals under compression.

The bridge was the first bridge to cross the Rio Grande in the San Luis Valley. At the time, the Rio Grande would have been much deeper and difficult to cross. Now that the water is held back by high mountain reservoirs in the San Juan Mountains for irrigation, the Rio Grande, although still mighty, runs from the high mountains north of Creede to the Gulf of Mexico.

Only a few examples of bridges that are similar to Edwin Thacher's 1885 patented Thacher truss configuration remain in the entire country, and as such this bridge, fabricated by the Wrought Iron Bridge Company, was among the most important metal truss bridges in the country. The only other known surviving examples remaining are the West Springbrook Road Bridge in Broadway, VA, to be bypassed and preserved in place, the Ellsworth Ranch Bridge abandoned in rural Iowa, and the Costilla Crossing Bridge, preserved in place in rural Colorado.

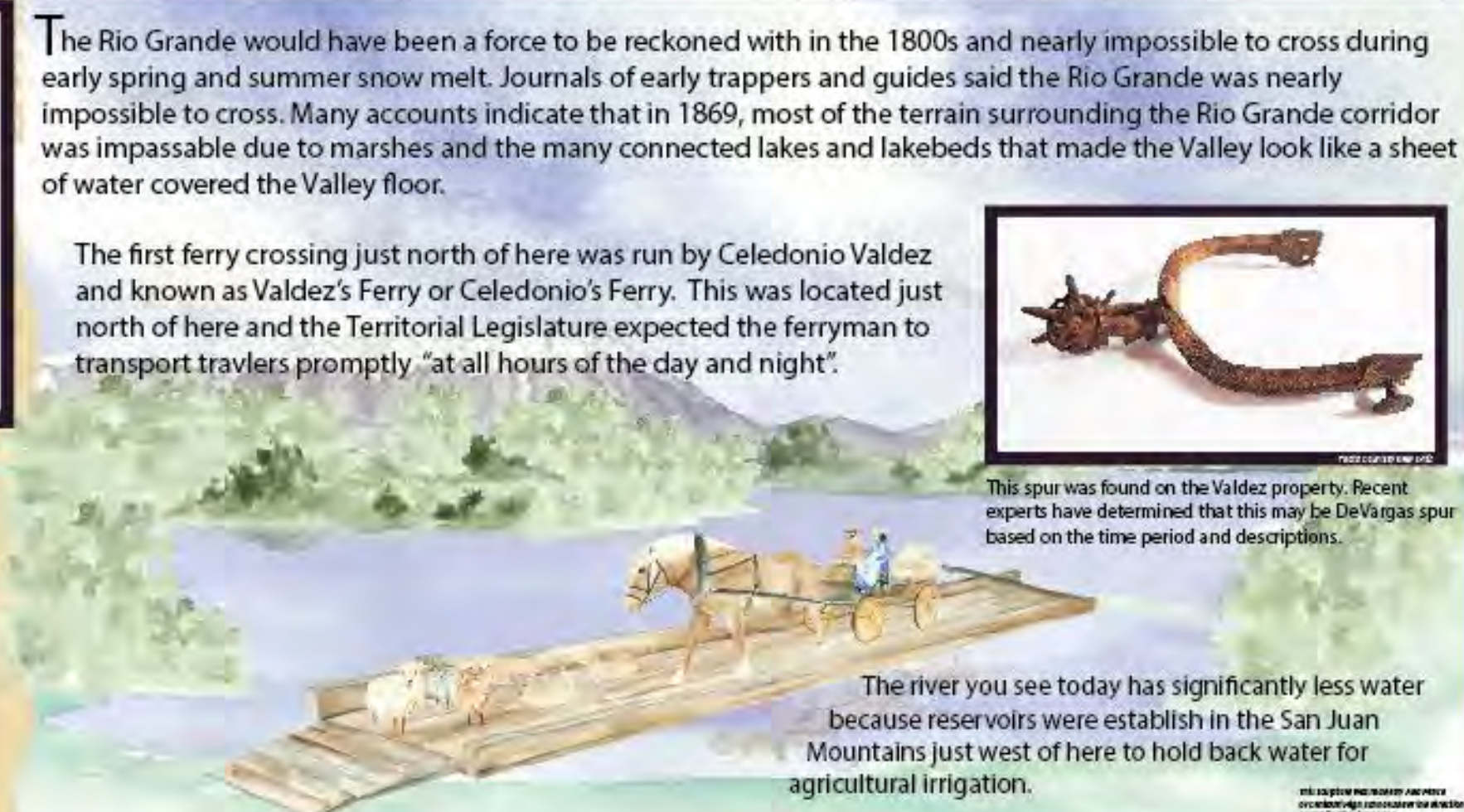
Although the bridge is legally named the Costilla Crossing Bridge, many locals call it "Lobatos Bridge".

Edwin Thacher 1839-1920, was born in St. Lawrence County New York and was one of four children. He attended Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in 1860 and graduated with high honors as a civil engineer in 1863. He was an assistant engineer in the U.S. Civil War to help with military railroads.

In Cooperation With:

# SAMPLING OF INTERPRETIVE PANELS UNDER DEVELOPMENT

## A MASSIVE RIVER




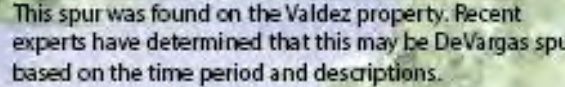

The Rio Grande would have been a force to be reckoned with in the 1800s and nearly impossible to cross during early spring and summer snow melt. Journals of early trappers and guides said the Rio Grande was nearly impossible to cross. Many accounts indicate that in 1869, most of the terrain surrounding the Rio Grande corridor was impassable due to marshes and the many connected lakes and lakebeds that made the Valley look like a sheet of water covered the Valley floor.

The first ferry crossing just north of here was run by Celedonio Valdez and known as Valdez's Ferry or Celedonio's Ferry. This was located just north of here and the Territorial Legislature expected the ferryman to transport travelers promptly "at all hours of the day and night".


The river you see today has significantly less water because reservoirs were established in the San Juan Mountains just west of here to hold back water for agricultural irrigation.

The De Vargas crossing would be considered the first record of Spanish crossing of the mighty river, where he found the safest route. In future years this would become the dominant crossing until the ferry was developed to help settlers transport and livestock, goods and materials to the west side of the Valley.

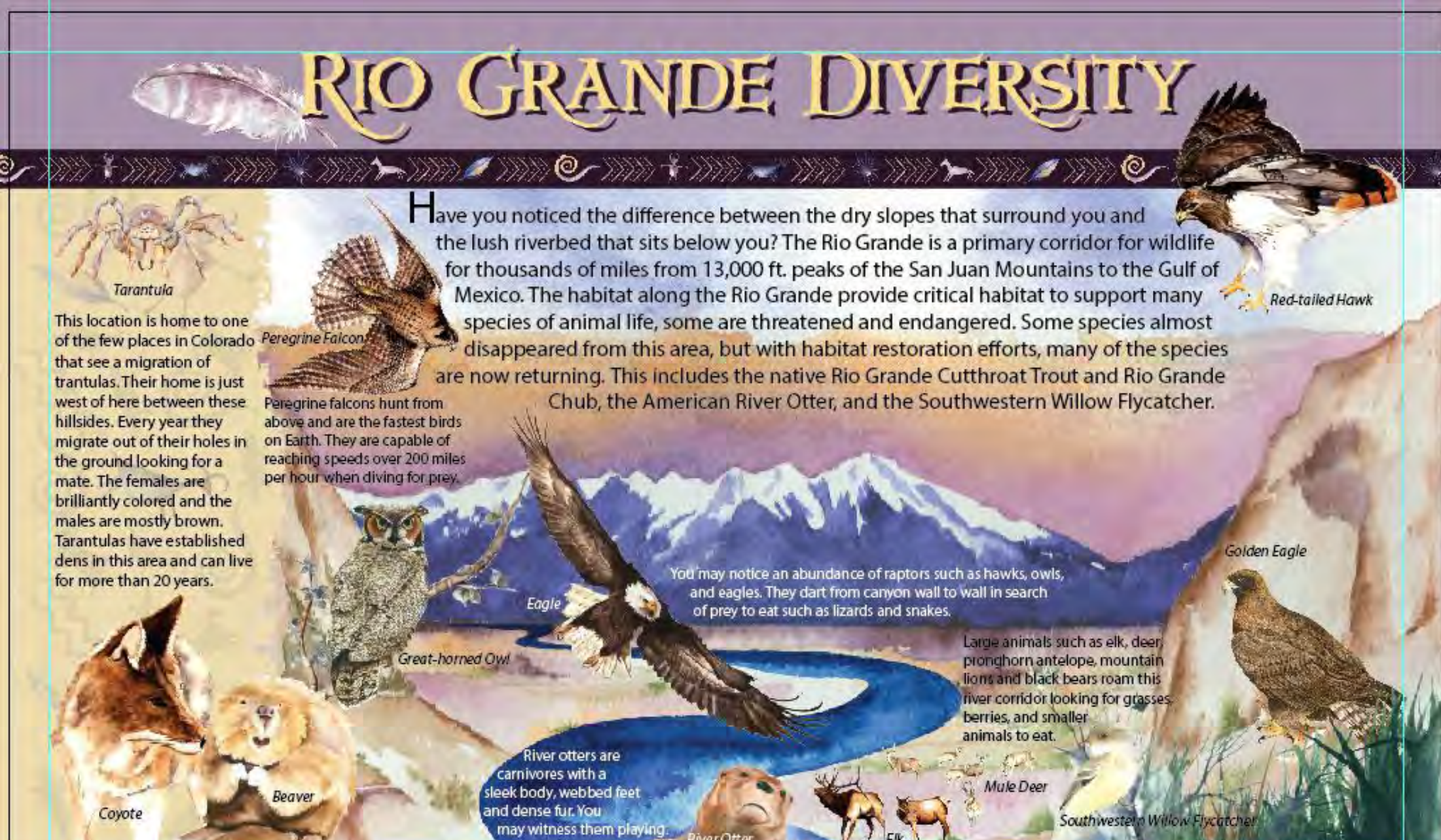
This spur was found on the Valdez property. Recent experts have determined that this may be DeVargas spur based on the time period and descriptions.

In Cooperation With:



## RIO GRANDE DIVERSITY



Have you noticed the difference between the dry slopes that surround you and the lush riverbed that sits below you? The Rio Grande is a primary corridor for wildlife for thousands of miles from 13,000 ft. peaks of the San Juan Mountains to the Gulf of Mexico. The habitat along the Rio Grande provide critical habitat to support many species of animal life, some are threatened and endangered. Some species almost disappeared from this area, but with habitat restoration efforts, many of the species are now returning. This includes the native Rio Grande Cutthroat Trout and Rio Grande Chub, the American River Otter, and the Southwestern Willow Flycatcher.

You may notice an abundance of raptors such as hawks, owls, and eagles. They dart from canyon wall to wall in search of prey to eat such as lizards and snakes.

Large animals such as elk, deer, pronghorn antelope, mountain lions and black bears roam this river corridor looking for grasses, berries, and smaller animals to eat.

River otters are carnivores with a sleek body, webbed feet and dense fur. You may witness them playing.

Peregrine falcons hunt from above and are the fastest birds on Earth. They are capable of reaching speeds over 200 miles per hour when diving for prey.

Tarantulas have established dens in this area and can live for more than 20 years.

Golden Eagle

Red-tailed Hawk

Eagle

Great-horned Owl

Coyote

Beaver


River Otter

Mule Deer

Elk

Southwestern Willow Flycatcher

In Cooperation With:





# PROJECT COSTS & FUNDING

Lobatos Bridge Outdoor Classroom & Recreation Enhancement Project		
ITEM	ESTIMATED TOTAL	BALANCE NEEDED
<b>Project Designs</b>		
<i>Sub-total</i>	\$ 5,850	\$ -
<b>Perimeter Fencing</b>		
<i>Sub-total</i>	\$ 70,608	\$ 30,608
<b>Parking Area</b>		
<i>Sub-total</i>	\$ 89,503	\$ 89,503
<b>Recreation Amenities</b>		
<i>Sub-total</i>	\$ 44,774	\$ 41,480
<b>Trail Work</b>		
<i>Sub-total</i>	\$ 28,265	\$ 28,265
<b>Boating Access</b>		
<i>Sub-total</i>	\$ 50,000	\$ 50,000
<b>Interpretative Education Site (Rotunda)</b>		
<i>Sub-total</i>	\$ 126,250	\$ 79,450
<b>Historic Mondragon Store</b>		
<i>Sub-total</i>	\$ 4,350	\$ 4,350
<b>Additional Signage &amp; Sculptures</b>		
<i>Sub-total</i>	\$ 20,500	\$ -
<b>Fisher Petroglyph</b>		
<i>Sub-total</i>	\$ -	\$ -
<b>Toilets</b>		
<i>Sub-total</i>	\$ 105,366	\$ 105,366
<b>Project Administration</b>		
<i>Sub-total</i>	\$ 96,000	\$ -
<b>Miscellaneous</b>		
<i>Sub-total</i>	\$ 35,785	\$ 32,500
<b>TOTAL</b>	\$ 677,251	\$ 461,522
Contingency	\$ 27,199	\$ -
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	\$ 704,450	\$ 461,522
<b>Total Raised to Date</b>		\$ 242,927.90

Donors	Contributions
Bureau of Land Management	\$ 115,079.00
Occidental	\$ 60,000.00
Gates Family Foundation	\$ 40,000.00
Sangre de Cristo National	\$ 20,000.00
Moore Charitable Foundation	\$ 4,000.00
RG Bank	\$ 3,500.00
Individuals	\$ 348.90
<b>Total Raised to Date</b>	<b>\$ 242,927.90</b>





LOBATOS BRIDGE OUTDOOR CLASSROOM  
&  
RECREATION ENHANCEMENT PROJECT

THANK YOU

