

New Mexico

Project Name

Price's Dairy

Property

570-acre riverfront farm, located five miles south of downtown Albuquerque on the Rio Grande

Estimated Funding Needs

\$20 - \$23 million total
(which includes senior water rights)

Significance

- Significant senior water rights
- Largest remaining agricultural parcel in the Albuquerque metro area
- Growth management and open space preservation
- Migratory bird stopover habitat/ prime birding location
- Recreational use and access to Rio Grande
- Farmland preservation
- Educational opportunities and outreach
- Economic stimulus and tourism

MIDDLE RIO GRANDE NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE



Photo by Don Usner

Price's Dairy is located in the South Valley of Albuquerque, New Mexico, five miles south of downtown on the second largest river in North America, the scenic Rio Grande. At 570 acres, this former dairy is one of the largest remaining farms in the Middle Rio Grande Valley and the largest agricultural property within the Albuquerque metro region. The city of Albuquerque is among the fastest growing urban areas in the United States and its developing sprawl contributes to a loss of history and culture while placing significant stress on the natural resources of the Valley and the Rio Grande.

Given the property's size and location, it has been the target of various development schemes as well as efforts by various federal, state and local agencies to preserve and protect the property. Currently, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) is considering the option of establishing a new national wildlife refuge called the Middle Rio Grande. By protecting the property as a refuge, it would greatly bolster environmental education for students, provide a gateway to the larger regional USFWS refuge system, and protect the natural resource values of the property that would be lost through development. In addition, because of the property's significant water rights, the protection of this property would also add to the health and vitality of the adjacent Rio Grande, which is struggling to not only support the people who depend on it for water but also the wildlife that live within and around it.

As one of the last undeveloped parcels along the Rio Grande, Price's Dairy provides an important refuge and waypoint for migratory birds such as sandhill cranes, Arctic geese,

and varied duck species that move up and down the river from summer breeding grounds in the north to wintering havens in the south. In addition to supporting this critical flyway, the river corridor also provides an opportunity for hiking and biking along the planned Rio Grande Trail, which is proposed to parallel the river as it cuts through New Mexico from north to south. The Price's Dairy property would provide an important trailhead for this system and also be a new southern terminus of the City of Albuquerque's existing Paseo del Bosque Trail, which was highlighted recently in *National Geographic Adventure* magazine.



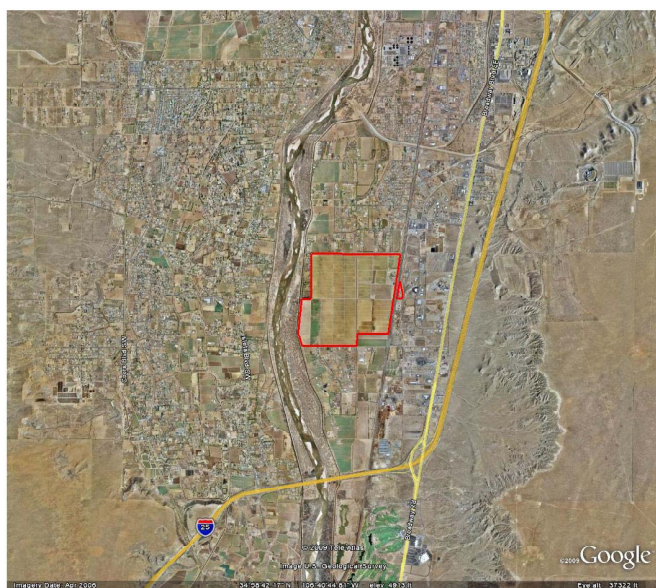
In addition to the possible USFWS visitor's center and education facility, the property could also provide hands-on agricultural and small farm demonstration opportunities through programs run by New Mexico State University or the University of New Mexico, sustaining an important connection to the area's agricultural traditions.



Photo by Don Usner

Protection of Price's Dairy as a new national wildlife refuge will offer a myriad benefits for the public. As open space and as a trailhead, it would provide recreational opportunities and add to the quality of life for an area that has often been the forgotten part of the Albuquerque metro area. Its proximity to the Rio Grande, large undeveloped acreage and existing farming activity offer the USFWS and state agencies an opportunity to engage in sound environmental restoration practices while connecting young people and urban residents to the natural world. With the potential of the USFWS visitor's center, there is also opportunity for economic stimulus to the South Valley. The property's easy access to the "Big I", the intersection of I-25 and I-40, and the Albuquerque International Airport make it a

logical first stop for visitors looking to gain insight into New Mexico's natural wonders.



Over the years, various attempts have been made to preserve this property. During that time, other large-acreage properties on the river have been sub-divided and developed and the water rights sold to support other needs. With a landowner who seeks a conservation outcome, the opportunity exists now to preserve this property before it disappears, and the opportunity to protect the Rio Grande, engage the next generation and support economic development on the south side of the city is gone forever. This is a property that has high environmental values but also high people values and could become a resource that benefits New Mexico residents and visitors far into the future.

