



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

DATE: September 24, 2019

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Western Rivers Conservancy, City of Alamosa create new park on the banks of the Rio Grande

Partners and community to celebrate the new Alamosa Riparian Park with a ribbon cutting ceremony on Tuesday, October 15

ALAMOSA, CO – [Western Rivers Conservancy](#) and the community of Alamosa just added a pristine 203-acre riverfront park to the city’s open space offerings. Named Alamosa Riparian Park, this new public open space is the result of a two-year effort by Western Rivers Conservancy, the [City of Alamosa](#), and a long list of partners to conserve a mile of the Rio Grande and create new opportunities for recreation along its banks.

“The vision of the Alamosa Riparian Park has been realized, thanks to our partnership with the City of Alamosa and the many community supporters who helped make this happen,” said Dieter Erdmann, Western Rivers Conservancy’s Interior West Program Director. “The park preserves a valuable stretch of wildlife habitat on the upper Rio Grande and provides excellent trail access that connects residents and visitors to the great river in the city’s backyard.”

Located just northwest of Alamosa, the park will serve as an upstream anchor for the city’s growing network of pedestrian and bike trails, adding more than five miles of new trails on the property itself.

“It’s wonderful to see the community unite around the shared desire to connect with the Rio Grande,” said Andy Rice, Parks, Recreation, and Library Director for the City of Alamosa. “Alamosa Riparian Park meets our residents’ needs for our burgeoning outdoor recreation and trail usage that center on the Rio Grande, making our city more healthy and vibrant.”

The park is a critical piece of the community's *Revitalize the Rio Initiative*, an effort to link trails and improve river health and access along the Rio Grande throughout Alamosa and south to 11,000-acre Alamosa National Wildlife Refuge.

“Alamosa Riparian Park is tangible progress toward achieving the community’s vision to connect the rich assemblage of public green spaces and wildlife areas in and around Alamosa,” said Andy Rice.

To make the park a reality, Western Rivers Conservancy purchased adjacent properties in 2018 from two families: 185 acres from Regas and Sarah Chefas, and 18 acres from Ken Colwell and Jamie Laufle. The landowners shared the community’s vision to create public open space along the river and keep the land undeveloped. Prior to WRC’s purchase, recreational access to the properties required special arrangements or trespassing on private land.

On September 19th, the City of Alamosa officially took title to the park lands, which are currently accessible for public enjoyment.

True to its name, Alamosa Riparian Park contains extensive groves of tall cottonwoods (or *alamosas*, in Spanish) that shade trails for pedestrians, cyclists, birders, runners and others to enjoy year-round. Healthy, native plants line the river and provide habitat for animals like the rare southwestern willow flycatcher, a bird that is disappearing in North America. Visitors can also view river otters, bald eagles and other wildlife.

The park is within walking distance of several neighborhoods and schools, and it will help link the city’s major green spaces, including the Oxbow Recreation Area just across the river.

Creation of Alamosa Riparian Park inspired broad local support from every level of the community, including the City of Alamosa, Alamosa County, San Luis Valley Great Outdoors, Rio Grande Watershed Conservation and Education Initiative, Rio Grande Headwaters Restoration Project, San Luis Valley Development Resources Group, Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and San Luis Valley National Wildlife Refuge Complex.

“The park project was a top priority in the San Luis Valley, and the community rallied at the opportunity to make it a reality,” Erdmann said.

[Great Outdoors Colorado](#) (GOCO) ranked Alamosa Riparian Park as its number-one Open Space Project in 2018 and awarded \$695,000 for the city to purchase the land. GOCO is a voter-approved fund that invests up to half of Colorado Lottery proceeds into improving the state's parks, trails, wildlife, rivers and open spaces.

In addition to GOCO, critical funding support was provided by the [LOR Foundation](#), [Gates Family Foundation](#), [The Outcalt Foundation](#), [El Pomar Foundation](#), [Trinchera Blanca Foundation](#), [San Luis Valley Federal Bank](#), [San Luis Valley Health](#), and [Colorado Open Lands](#).

The project was also made possible with support from the San Luis Valley Conservation Fund, which was created in 2015 by Western Rivers Conservancy, the LOR Foundation, Rio Grande

Headwaters Land Trust and Colorado Open Lands. The fund is a collaborative effort to bolster local conservation efforts in the San Luis Valley and to preserve the region's rich cultural heritage, all while enhancing livability for valley communities.

MEDIA EVENT: On Tuesday, October 15, at 5:30pm, press and the community are invited to a ribbon-cutting ceremony to mark the opening of Alamosa Riparian Park. For more information, contact Kelley Baily, City of Alamosa PR Specialist at (719) 587-2024 or kbaily@ci.alamosa.co.us.

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About Western Rivers Conservancy

Western Rivers Conservancy acquires lands along rivers throughout the West to conserve critical habitat and to create or improve public access for compatible use and enjoyment. By working with local agencies and organizations and by applying decades of land acquisition experience, WRC secures the health of whole ecosystems. WRC has protected hundreds of miles of stream frontage on great western rivers, including the Rio Grande, Yampa, John Day, Gunnison, Salmon, Snake, North Umpqua, Klamath and Madison Rivers. To learn more, please visit www.westernrivers.org.