**SCRIPT— WATER DESK**

**TITLE: Restoring the Colorado River Delta**

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| **VIDEO** | **AUDIO** |
| **SUGGESTED LEAD-IN**  Gabriela Gonzales  Sonoran Institute  Jennifer Pitt  National Audubon Society | **Just across the border, in Mexico, where the Colorado River approaches the sea with barely a trickle, conservationists are working to restore the natural habitats of the river’s dry delta, with surprising results. Gary Strieker has the story.**    **---------------------------------------------------------------------------------**  **FOR DECADES, WHILE THE U.S. AND MEXICO SHARED THE WATER**  **OF THE COLORADO RIVER FOR AGRICULTURE, CITIES AND**  **INDUSTRY…**  **…NONE OF THE RIVER’S WATER WAS DEDICATED TO THE**  **ENVIRONMENT, AND THE RIVER’S NATURAL ECOSYSTEMS AND**  **WILDLIFE DISAPPEARED. IN ITS LOWEST REACHES, THE RIVER DRIED**  **UP, NO LONGER REACHING THE SEA.**  SOT –“A HUNDRED YEARS AGO THE WHOLE MEXICALI VALLEY USED  TO BE A BIG LUSH ENVIRONMENT WITH A BIG FLOWING RIVER, AND  WHAT WE SEE RIGHT NOW IS LESS THAN ONE PERCENT OF THAT.”  **NOW, UNDER A NEW BILATERAL AGREEMENT, WATER IS BEING DIVERTED FROM IRRIGATION CANALS IN MEXICO BACK INTO THE RIVER, DEDICATED TO RESTORING THE ENVIRONMENT, WITH A MODEST GOAL…**  SOT – “…TO BRING JUST A LITTLE BIT OF THE RIVER BACK, FOR THE BIRDS THAT PASS THROUGH THIS AREA AS PART OF THE PACIFIC FLYWAY, AND OF COURSE FOR THE LOCAL COMMUNITIES THAT LIVE ON TOP OF EFFECTIVELY A DEAD RIVER.”  **TO DO THIS, MEXICO AND THE U.S. AGREED TO SHARE IN COLORADO RIVER SHORTAGES AND SURPLUSES, TO BINATIONAL WATER CONSERVATION MEASURES, AND TO ALLOW MEXICO TO STORE WATER IN U.S. RESERVOIRS.**  **WITH SUPPORT FROM CONSERVATION NONPROFITS WORKING TO RESTORE HABITATS ALONG THE RIVER, THE RESULTS ARE ALREADY STRIKING.**  SOT – “WHAT YOU SEE AROUND HERE IS WHAT THE RIVER USED TO LOOK LIKE A HUNDRED YEARS AGO, BUT LET’S REMEMBER WE DIDN’T HAVE WATER FOR MORE THAN 60 YEARS AT THIS SPOT, AND THE RIVER WAS NEARLY EXTINCT. WE ARE MAKING NEW HABITAT, WE ARE BRINGING BACK A BUNCH OF DIFFERENT SPECIES.”  **AND FURTHER DOWNSTREAM IN THE COLORADO DELTA, DURING A TIME OF RISING TEMPERATURES AND DECREASING WATER FLOWS, THERE’S THE CHALLENGE OF THE ESTUARY…**  SOT –“…THE ESTUARY IS WHERE THE RIVER SHOULD MEET THE OCEAN, AND RIGHT NOW WE ARE STILL WORKING ON RESTORING THAT ECOSYSTEM. WE STILL NEED A LOT OF FRESH WATER TO FLOW ON THE RIVER TO BE ABLE TO MEET THE GULF OF CALIFORNIA….  **THAT’S A TOUGH CHALLENGE, BUT PROGRESS SO FAR IS INSPIRING.**  SOT -- WE ARE SHOWING EVERYONE IN THE U.S. AND MEXICO AND THE WORLD THAT RESTORATION IS POSSIBLE AND THAT NATIVE PLANTS AND ANIMALS ARE MAKING A COMEBACK.”  **GARY STRIEKER, REPORTING FOR THE WATER DESK.** |

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