Lower Rio Grande River – Aquatic Species & Habitat

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The Lower Rio Grande
Historic Fish Assemblage (LRG)

- American Eel*
- Blue Catfish
- Bluegill
- Blue Sucker*
- Fathead Minnow
- Flathead Catfish
- Flathead Chub
- Gizzard Shad
- Longnose Dace
- Longnose Gar*
- Red Shiner
- Rio Grande Silvery Minnow*
- River Carpsucker
- Shovelnose Sturgeon*
- Smallmouth Buffalo
- Western Mosquitofish
### Modern Fish Assemblage (LRG)

#### Extirpated Fish Species (no longer found in the Lower Rio Grande River)
- American Eel
- Blue Sucker
- Longnose Gar
- Rio Grande Silvery Minnow
- Shovelnose Sturgeon

#### Extant Fish Species
- Largemouth Bass*
- Black Bullhead Catfish*
- Blue Catfish
- Bluegill
- Channel Catfish*
- Common Carp*
- Fathead Minnow
- Flathead Catfish
- Flathead Chub
- Freshwater Drum
- Green Sunfish*
- Gizzard Shad
- Longear Sunfish*
- Longnose Dace
- Mosquito Fish
- Red Shiner
- River Carpsucker
- Smallmouth Buffalo
- Walleye*
- Western Mosquitofish
- White Bass*
- Yellow Bullhead Catfish*
Reduced optimal habitat

Natural river flow
- Pool habitats
- Oxbow lake
- Rifflle/Run habitats

Channelized river flow
- Rifflle/Run Habitats
River Channelization
Winter Drying
Variation in habitat characteristics mitigates dry periods.

Pools can provide refuge habitat during droughts to the resident fish population. When flows are restored the fish can then move about the river freely again.
Fish still persist

In areas of the Rio Grande that retain water all year long (south of Hatch, NM to Caballo Dam) fish persist all year long.
Sportfishing Opportunities
Most of the fish that now persist in the Lower Rio Grande are not native to the Rio Grande River.

Additionally, most are habitat generalists, rather than the habitat specialist that once existed in the river.

Habitat generalist: Largemouth Bass

Habitat specialist: Shovelnose Sturgeon
Repatriation of extirpated species would be difficult without habitat restoration. The river in its current state can no longer support the historic native fish community.

Adding habitat structures (boulder piles, artificial riffle habitats, creating deep pools) would increase the complex habitat and increase fish survival and numbers.
Questions/Comments?