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For more information, contact:

Karin Stangl, Public Information Officer
(505) 827-6139

Yvette Chavez, Editorial Assistant
(505) 827- 6166

Silvery Minnow Refugium Wins National Award

(SANTA FE, New Mexico) – An Albuquerque facility, which provides a sanctuary for the Rio Grande Silvery Minnow to spawn and grow, received a national award from the Association of Conservation Engineers (ACE).

The designers of the facility, FishPro, a division of HDR Inc., will be presented with the first place **ACE Award of Excellence** at the annual conference in Charleston, South Carolina on November 19.

The Albuquerque facility, called a "refugium," was built to help protect the Rio Grande Silvery Minnow from extinction. When the fish are mature enough to survive on their own, they will be reintroduced into the wild. The refugium was one of five projects from across the nation to be judged by a panel of ACE engineers from three states.

"This facility is the first of its kind ever constructed," said Vice President of Fish Pro Ken Ferjancic. "The idea of this facility is to simulate the middle Rio Grande habitat of the minnow. This award not only signifies the hard work and diligence that was put into the project, but it draws positive attention to efforts to ensure the minnow's survival."

Phase One of the project was funded jointly by the New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission and the City of Albuquerque at a cost of \$1.1 million, which included design and construction of the building and catchment ponds, as well as the operation and maintenance costs for one year.

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Phase Two, which added 12 holding tanks, lab space, and netting for predator control, was funded by federal grants from the Bureau of Reclamation at a cost of \$640,000. The City of Albuquerque Biological Park provided the land for the facility as well as staff to manage and operate it. In addition, the City of Albuquerque obtained a \$300,000 Challenge Grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, by using the funds provided by the Interstate Stream Commission as matching funds.

“This is an example of what can result when government agencies and private contractors pull together in a cooperative effort to find innovative solutions to endangered species issues facing our state,” said State Engineer John D’Antonio. “This success reflects the commitment of the State Engineer and the Interstate Stream Commission to preservation of species.”

The Office of the State Engineer is charged with administering the state's water resources. The State Engineer has power over the supervision, measurement, appropriation, and distribution of all surface and ground water in New Mexico, including streams and rivers that cross state boundaries. The State Engineer is also Secretary of the Interstate Stream Commission and oversees its staff.

The Interstate Stream Commission is charged with separate duties including protecting New Mexico’s right to water under eight interstate stream compacts, ensuring the state complies with each of those compacts, as well as water planning.

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