



**For immediate release:**

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## **Los Lunas Silvery Minnow Refugium's First Release to Rio Grande**

**(LOS LUNAS, New Mexico)** — About 5,500 Rio Grande silvery minnow from the Los Lunas Silvery Minnow Refugium were released by the US Fish and Wildlife Service into the Rio Grande yesterday near the La Joya Wildlife Refuge, south of Belen, announced the New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission, following completion of the Phase III testing of that facility, which is operated by the state agency.

About 10,000 one month old fish, called fry, were stocked into the Los Lunas Silvery Minnow Refugium in June of this year as part of Phase III testing of the fish culture systems. The phased testing is required in the permit issued by US Fish and Wildlife Service. The outdoor refugium being tested is a 400-ft long stream with ponds and overbank areas that provide similar habitat to what is found on the Rio Grande. The fish ate what naturally grew in the refugium.

Prior to their release, the fish were weighed and measured to assess their growth over the 5-month long period they were in the refugium. Health analyses were also done by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service specialists.

"This is a very exciting milestone for us. Phase III is the final test before we are fully certified by the US Fish and Wildlife Service and can start producing fish for augmentation and reintroduction to help recover the silvery minnow. We were really impressed at how healthy the fish looked growing in an environment that is similar to the natural river system," said Refugium Assistant Manager Alison Hutson.

For more information, please contact Julie Maas, at (505) 383-4095.

(Photos are available upon request)

*The nine-member 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 investigating, conserving and protecting the waters of the State, in addition to water planning.*

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