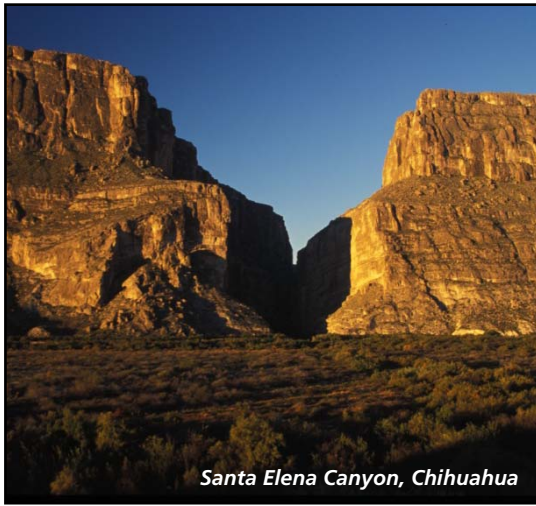
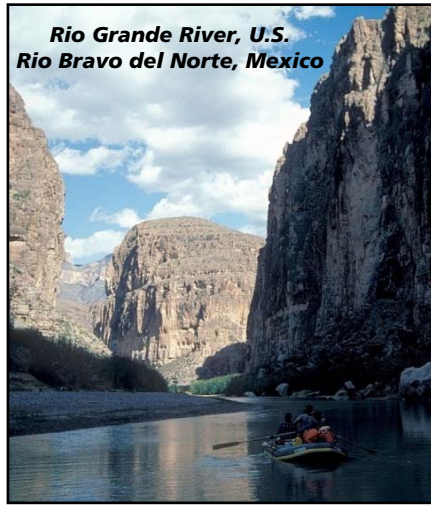




Partners in Protection: U.S. – Mexico Cooperation in the Big Bend-Rio Bravo Region



Santa Elena Canyon, Chihuahua



*Rio Grande River, U.S.
Rio Bravo del Norte, Mexico*



*Chisos Mountains
Big Bend National Park, Texas*

A Natural Area of International Significance

Along the U.S.- Mexico border in the Big Bend region of Texas and the Mexican states of Chihuahua and Coahuila, an impressive complex of parks and protected areas helps preserve the largest desert ecosystem in North America—the Chihuahuan desert. The region is one of the most biodiverse in the world—home to 446 species of birds, 3600 species of insects, more than 1500 plants, and 75 species of mammals, including black bear and mountain lions. More than 268 river miles and 2.6 million acres of land are protected in the U.S. and Mexico:



U.S. / Mexico Protected Areas

- Big Bend National Park, Texas**
- Rio Grande Wild and Scenic River, Texas**
- Rio Bravo del Norte Natural Monument, Coahuila and Chihuahua**
- Maderas del Carmen Flora and Fauna Protected Area, Coahuila**
- Ocampo Flora and Fauna Protected Area, Coahuila**
- Cañon de Santa Elena Flora and Fauna Protected Area, Chihuahua**



Presidential Legacy

Over the years, park rangers, scientists, volunteers, and local communities have diligently preserved the spectacular landscapes and habitat on both sides of the border. When Big Bend National Park was established in 1944, President Roosevelt wrote to President of Mexico Ávila Camacho: "I do not believe that this undertaking in the Big Bend will be complete until the entire park area in this region on



both sides of the Rio Grande forms one great international park." In 1994, Mexico established two flora and fauna protected areas: Cañon de Santa Elena in Chihuahua and

Maderas del Carmen in Coahuila. In June 2009, Mexico designated Ocampo Natural Protected Area, filling the gap and forming a contiguous set of protected areas in the largest desert ecosystem of North America.

In October 2009, Mexico established the Rio Bravo del Norte Natural Monument to protect the Mexican side of the river corridor. On May 19, 2010, Presidents Barack Obama and Felipe Calderón, noting that increased cooperation between the parks and protected areas on both sides of the border would greatly benefit both countries, expressed their support for the U.S. and Mexico to work together to recognize and designate Big Bend- Rio Bravo as a natural area of binational interest.

Frequently Asked Questions

How would increased U.S. – Mexico cooperation in this area improve conservation?



Greater cooperation between U.S. and Mexican park rangers, other staff of the protected areas and researchers will improve conservation at the landscape scale, on issues such as biological monitoring, endangered species habitat conservation, climate change monitoring and adaptation, wildland fire management, and control of invasive species. Formal designation of the adjoining protected areas as a natural area of binational interest will reinforce the commitment of each country to continue protecting our shared natural heritage in perpetuity.

How would increased cooperation improve border security?

Closer relationships between park rangers, other staff of the protected areas and local communities, preservation of the rugged terrain, and restrictions on development of roads and infrastructure will impede criminal activities and illegal movement of people through the fragile desert ecosystem on both sides of the border.



Will cooperation or a formal designation in the Big Bend-Rio Bravo region mean that either country is giving over any of its management authority or responsibilities to the other country?

Both countries will continue to manage their respective parks under their own laws and policies. Any recognition and/or designation of the area is important symbolically and will facilitate greater cooperation, but ultimately each country will remain fully in control of their own parks and protected areas.



Next Steps

Fall 2010 – Consultations among park officials, scientists, local communities and other actors to develop consensus on areas of binational cooperation including:

- Protection of air and water quality
- Control of invasive species
- Management wildland fire
- Restoration of the Rio Grande/Rio Bravo ecosystem
- Restoration of degraded desert grasslands
- Reintroduction of native species

Winter 2010 through Summer 2011– Plans developed for increased binational cooperation including:

- Restoration of the Rio Grande/Rio Bravo river corridor
- Studies and projects associated with shared migratory and rare species, climate change, archeology, paleontology

Fall 2011 – Potential formal recognition and designation of area by U.S. and Mexican governments.

