



Department of Defense Legacy Resource Management Program

PROJECT 03-198

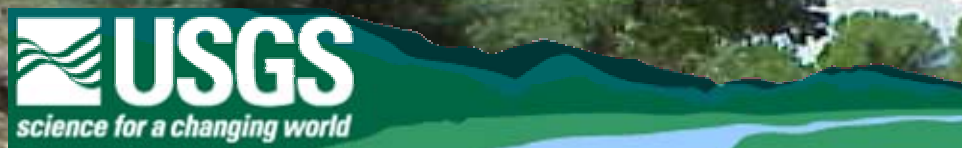
SPRNCA Water Needs Study Info for Decision-Makers

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Report Documentation Page				Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188	
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1. REPORT DATE 2010		2. REPORT TYPE		3. DATES COVERED 00-00-2010 to 00-00-2010	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE SPRNCA Water Needs Study Info for Decision-Makers				5a. CONTRACT NUMBER	
				5b. GRANT NUMBER	
				5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER	
6. AUTHOR(S)				5d. PROJECT NUMBER	
				5e. TASK NUMBER	
				5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) U.S. Army Garrison Fort Huachuca, Fort Huachuca, AZ, 85613				8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)				10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)	
				11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)	
12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release; distribution unlimited					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES					
14. ABSTRACT					
15. SUBJECT TERMS					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT Same as Report (SAR)	18. NUMBER OF PAGES 15	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT unclassified	b. ABSTRACT unclassified	c. THIS PAGE unclassified			

SPRNCA Water Needs Study Info for Decision-Makers



San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area – Water Needs Study

Background

USPP Planning Goal: Ensure an adequate GW supply to meet the reasonable needs of both the area's residents and property owners (current & future) and the SPRNCA

- Detailed reports at:
<ftp://www-ftp.tucson.ars.ag.gov/rscott/>
- SOW jointly developed with USPP
- To be integrated, reviewed and published as a USGS report
- **Intent:** Provide information and tools to policy and decision-makers regarding the hydrologic requirements of the SPRNCA and potential management actions that may be taken to reduce the consumptive water uses within the SPRNCA without resulting in any negative effects on riparian resources

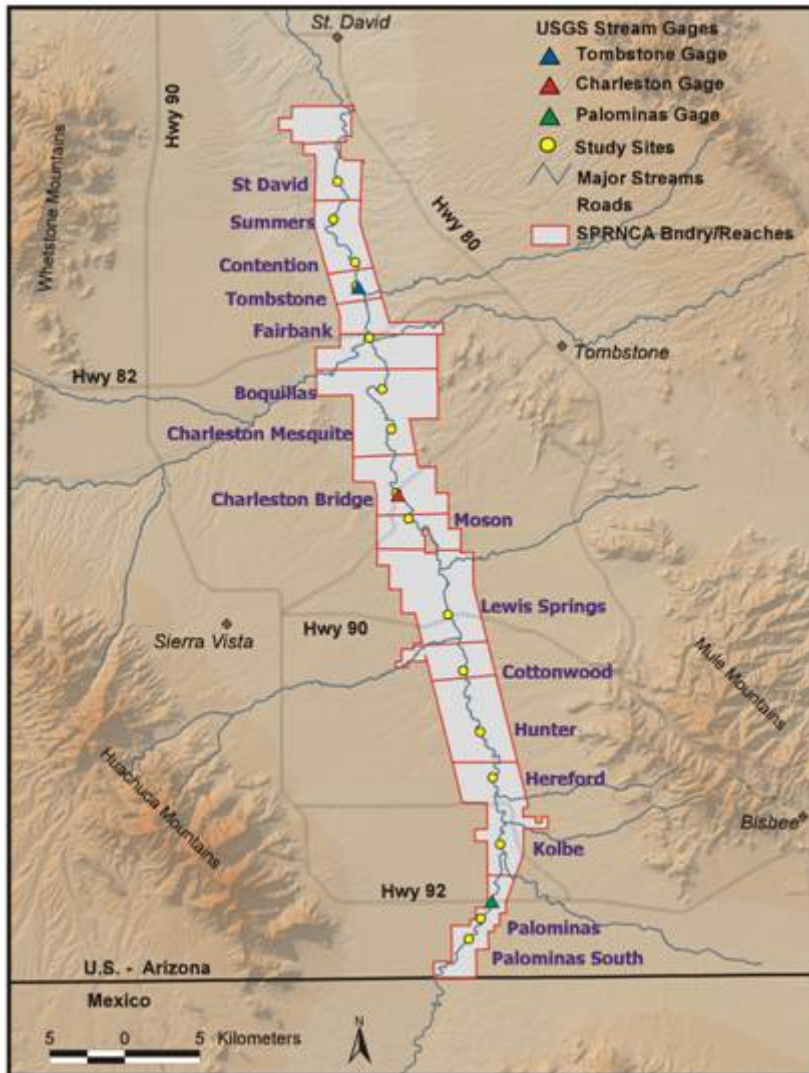


Primary Objectives

- Determine the water needs of riparian vegetation, through the riparian growing season and throughout the SPRNCA to ensure its long-term ecological integrity
- Quantify the total water use of riparian vegetation within the SPRNCA
- Determine the source of water used by key riparian plant species within the SPRNCA



Hydrological Monitoring & Analyses



SPRNCA Boundary and the Riparian Corridor

Riparian Corridor was based on

1. Digital Elevation Model (DEM) contours at 6 - 9 meters above river bottom
2. Vegetation from 1997 NALC Land Cover Map and Joe Watts/Army Corps of Engrs Map 2000
3. Aerial photographs

3 0 3 6 Miles

Classification of reaches into condition classes

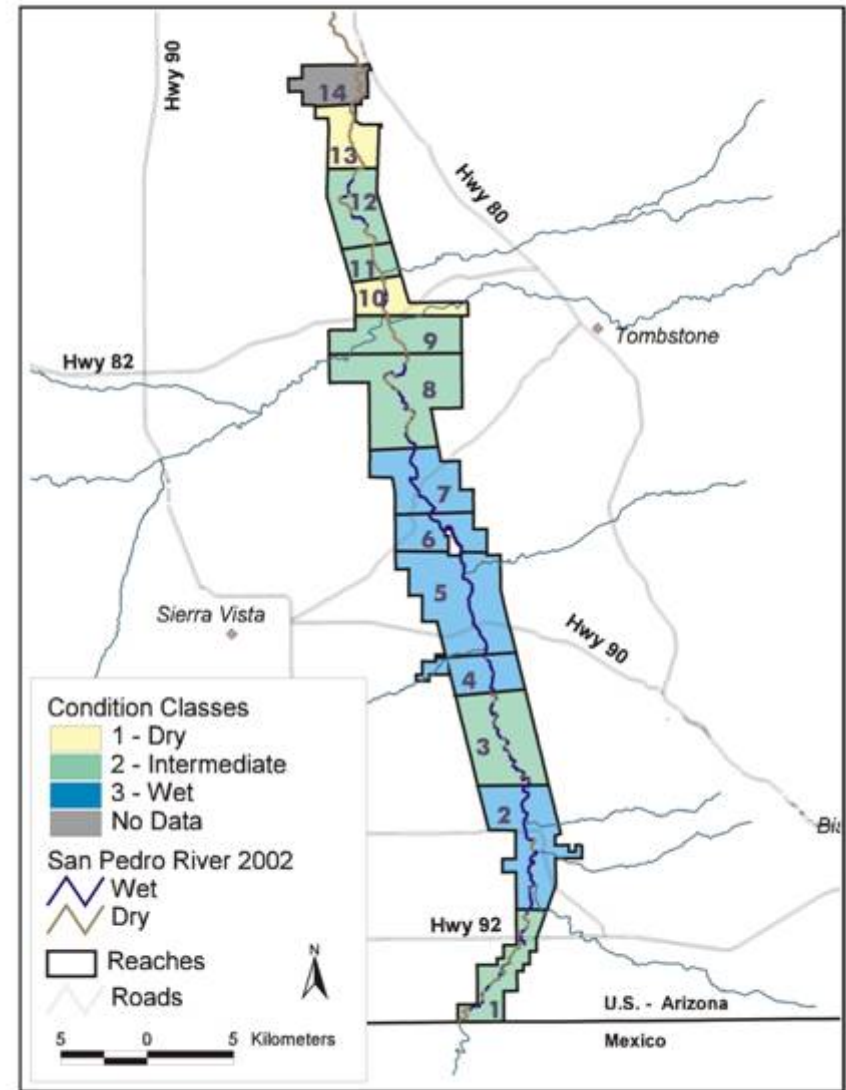
Vegetation assessment model

A model was developed that places sites into one of three condition classes, based on field collection of nine bioindicators (Veg. variables). Each bioindicator is sensitive to changes in SW or GW hydrology.

Each condition class is reflective of different levels of ecosystem functional capacity.

The assessment model can be used to track changes in the abundance of each condition class over time.

“State of the SPRNCA”



Hydrologic Characteristics of each Condition Class

Cond. Class (CC)	Flow Permanence ⁽¹⁾	Dry Seasonal Max. Depth to GW (ft) ⁽²⁾	GW Fluctuation (ft) ⁽³⁾	Percent of SPRNCA ⁽⁴⁾
1	Intermittent-Dry (< 60%)	Deep (> 11.5 ft)	Large (> 3.3 ft Diff. between monthly max and min)	9%
2	Intermittent-Wet (60% to 95%)	Moderately Shallow (8.2 - 11.5 ft)	Moderate (1.7 to 3.3 ft)	49%
3	Perennial (> 95%)	Shallow (< 8.2 ft)	Small - Stable (< 1.7 ft difference)	38%

(1) 0% = no flow the entire year, 100% = surface flow entire year

(2) Dry-season mean as averaged across the floodplain

(3) As averaged across the floodplain

(4) 4% of the SPRNCA has not yet been adequately sampled

Condition Class 3 (wettest)



38% of SPRNCA

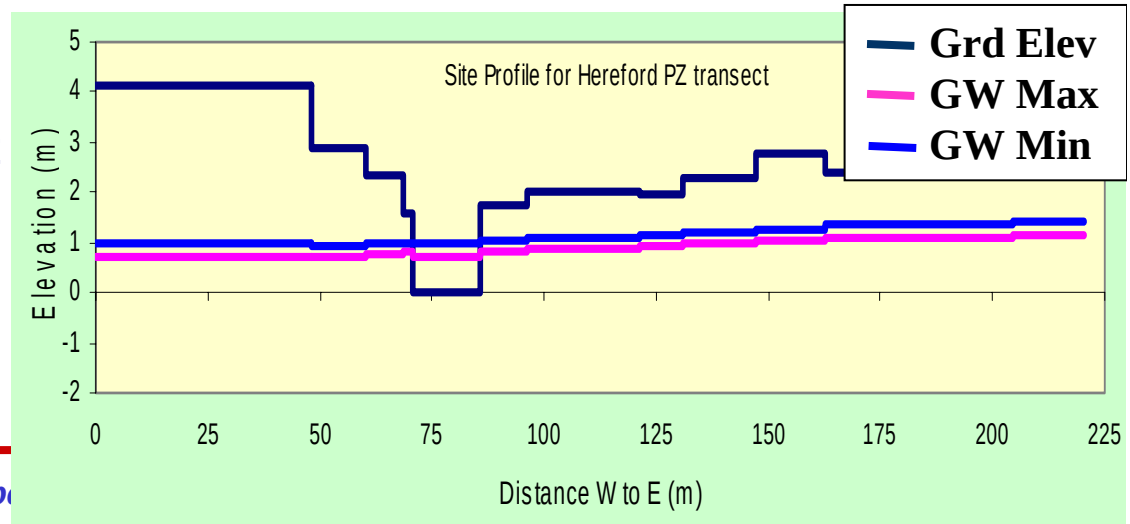
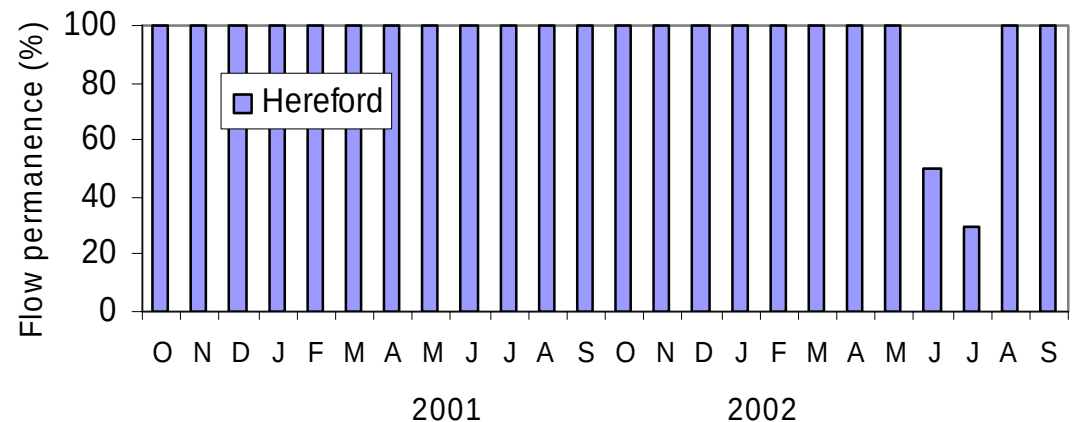
Perennial or near-perennial
stream flow (present >95% of
time)

Shallow ground-water (mean
depth of <2.5 m across floodplain
during dry season) with little
seasonal fluctuation (<0.5 m/yr)

Tall, dense, multi-aged
cottonwood-willow forests

Tamarisk subdominant or absent

Channel lined by dense
herbaceous cover



Cond. Class 2 (intermediate)

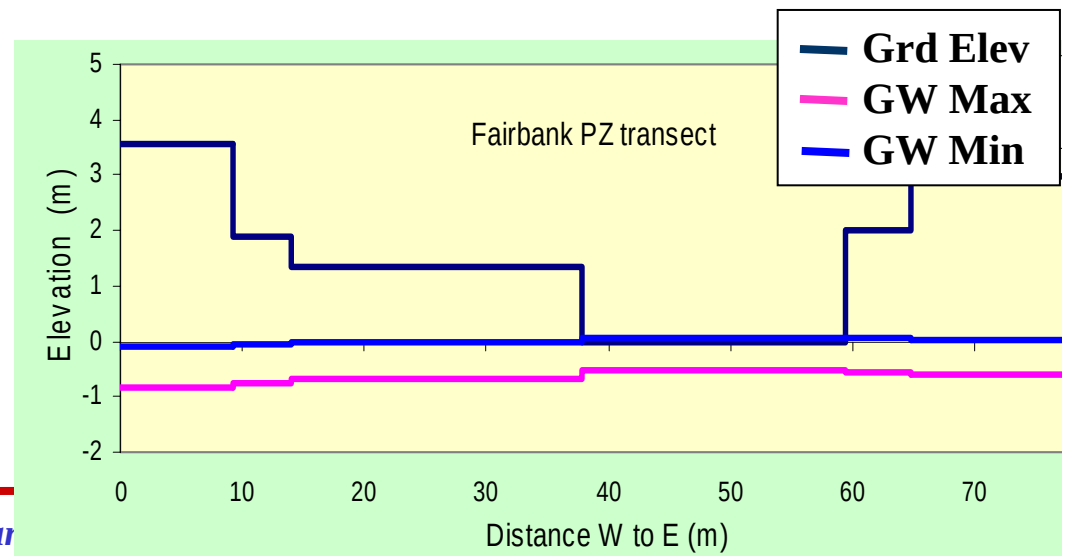
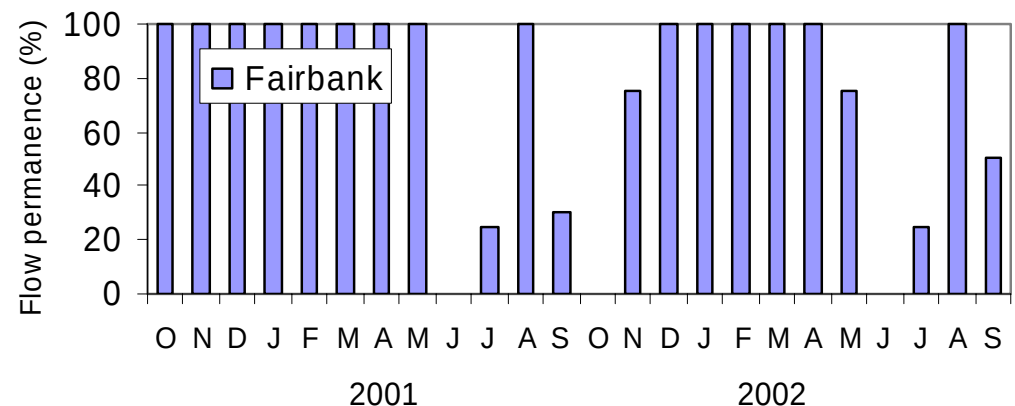
49% of SPRNCA

Stream flow present 60%-95% of time

Moderately deep and fluctuating ground water

Tamarisk has increased, although cottonwood-willow still dominant.

Streamside herbaceous cover is reduced, and mesic herb species have replaced hydric species.



Condition Class 1 (driest)

9% of SPRNCA

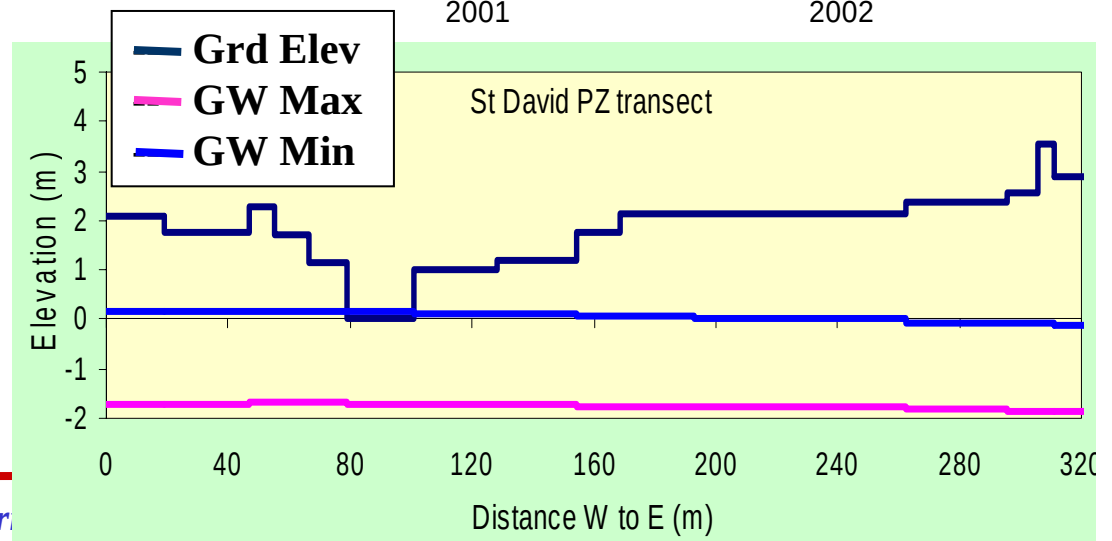
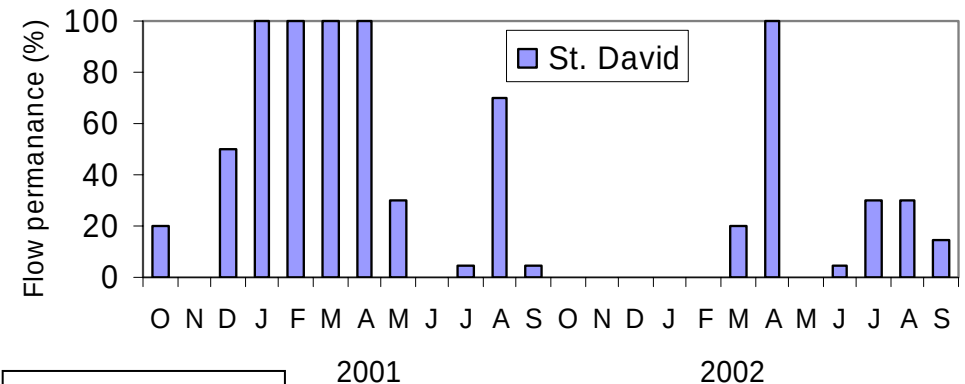
Stream flow present <60% of time

Deep (>3.5 m in dry season) and highly fluctuating (>1 m/yr) GW

Tamarisk dominant

Short shrublands with limited upper canopy cover

Sparse streamside herbaceous cover, dominated by mesic species such as bermuda grass



2003 Riparian Water Use – SV Subwatershed

Water Use - Main stem from Intl. Border to Tombstone Gage for Riparian Corridor

Cover Type	Veg. Area (ac)	CU [acre-ft yr ⁻¹]	2003 ET/unit area (ft)
Mesquite	1790-2400	4044-5443	2.3 *
Cottonwood/Willow (Perennial)	630	1981	3.2
Cottonwood/Willow (Intermittent)	290	389	1.3
Sacaton (< 3 m to groundwater)	280-410	486-718	1.7
Open Water	110	421	4.0
Salt Cedar	2.7 – 7.5	6-17	2.3
Total		7328-8969	
Corell et al. (1996)		7700 *	
Goodrich et al. (2000)		6590 **	

** * Ranges due to classification procedure employed by the Army COE.

All but Salt Cedar rounded to nearest 10 ac

** ** Using baseflow information from Palominas, Charleston, and Tombstone Gages

Variability in Riparian Water Use and Climate

High interannual variability in climate will translate to a similar amount of variability in the riparian GW use

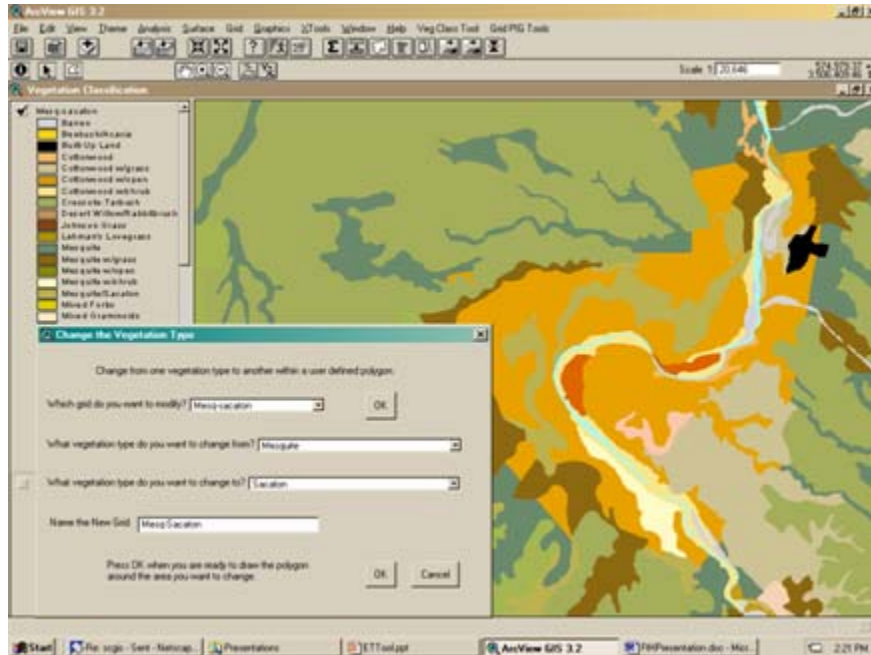
Mesquite Water Use Rates per Unit Area

2001	2.2 ft/yr
2002	1.7 ft/yr
2003	2.3 ft/yr

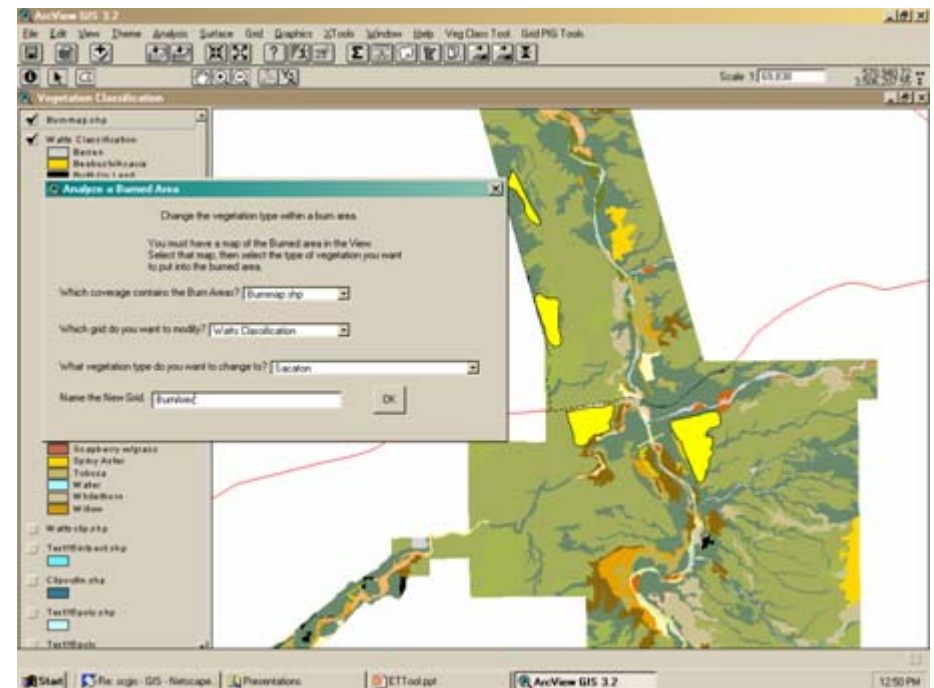


Large flow events (like October 2000) also impact the system's hydrology. This event maintained a higher level of flow permanence for 12 to 18 months following the October 2000 events.

GIS-based Veg. Management and Riparian ET Tool



Example:
Change all Mesquite in user-defined area to Sacaton
(orange areas along the river)



Example:
Evaluate the effect of a prescribed burn with user-supplied polygon map of burn areas

Contact ARS to schedule a training session



San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area – Water Needs Study

Study Period Conditions (Hydro-Climatic Context)

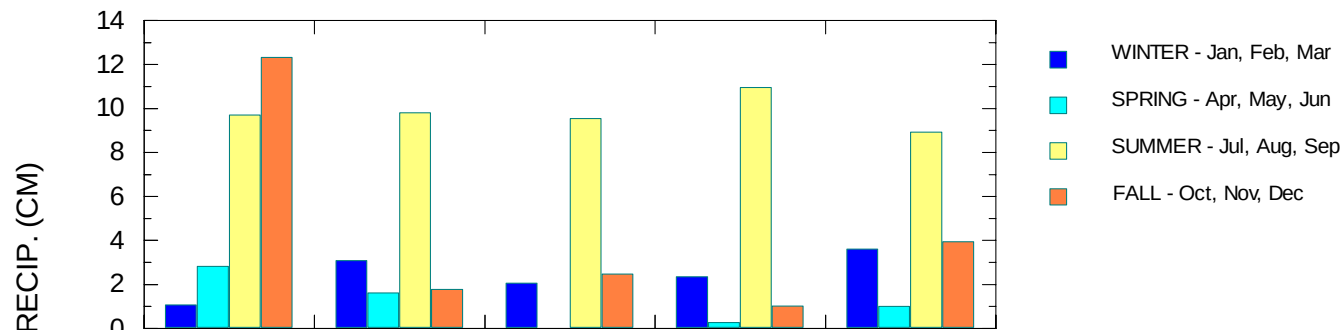
Charleston streamflow:

- Lower than average in all seasons except Spring and Fall 2000.
- Streamflows generally decrease each study year.

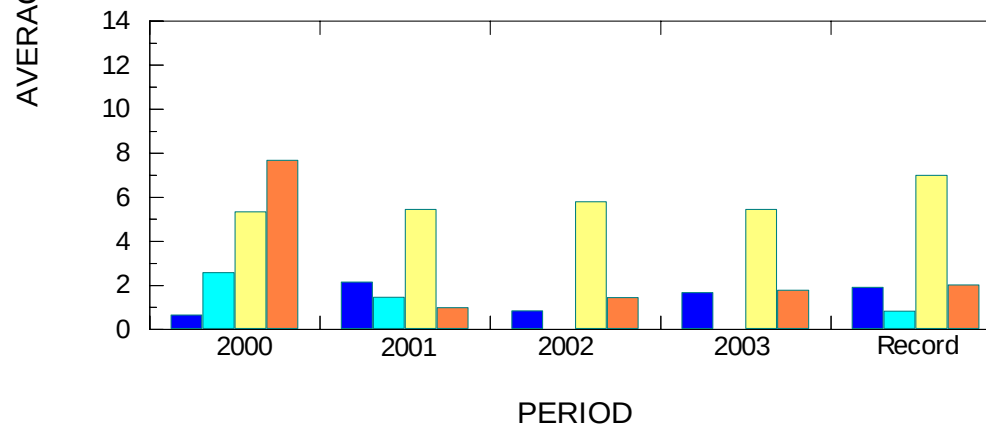
Precipitation:

- Summers above average at Coronado
- Summers below average at Tombstone

AVERAGE PRECIPITATION AT CORONADO NATL. MONUMENT



AVERAGE PRECIPITATION AT TOMBSTONE



Major Hydro-climatic Conclusions

- The magnitude of regional ground-water contribution to the stream alluvium and evapotranspiration control seasonal ground-water variability and streamflow permanence
- October 2000-sized floods play a significant role in maintaining water in the system for 12 to 18 months following the event