HUMAN / NATURE INTERFACE

BALANCING HABITATS ALONG THE COLORADO RIVER CORRIDOR

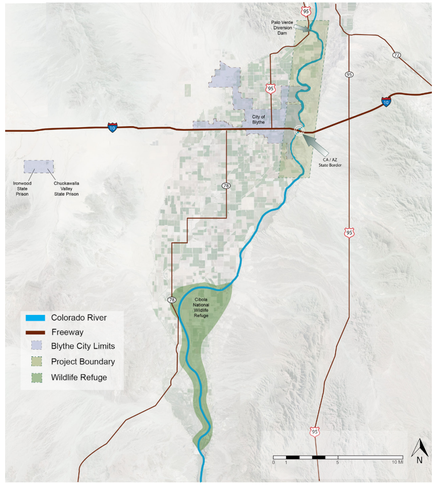
NATURAL SYSTEMS REVITALIZATION

DESCRIPTION

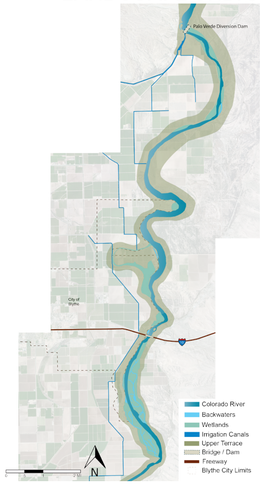
This site converts underutilized parcels at the intersection of the 10 Freeway and Colorado River into visitor's center / nature park / trail destination for both Blythe locals and long-distance road-trippers, enhancing the visibility of the river at the 10 Freeway crossing. A dramatic pedestrian bridge over the freeway is intended to capture the imagination of passers-by. The commanding view from the bridge heightens the viewer's understanding of the river as a regional resource. Wetland restorations build on the protocols of the Multi-Species Recovery Plan.

REGIONAL MAP

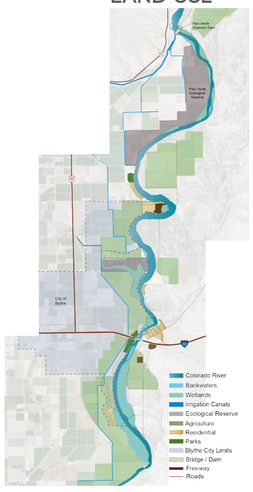
LOCAL CONEXT



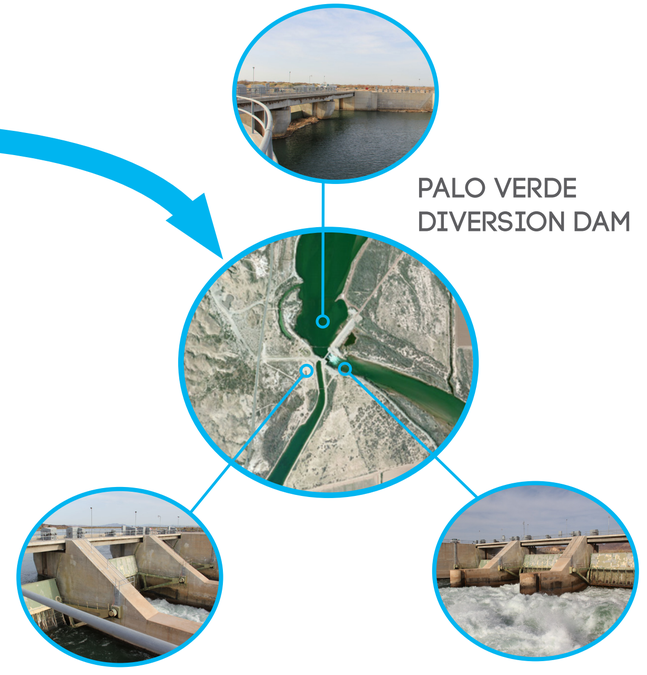
LANDSCAPE UNITS



LAND USE



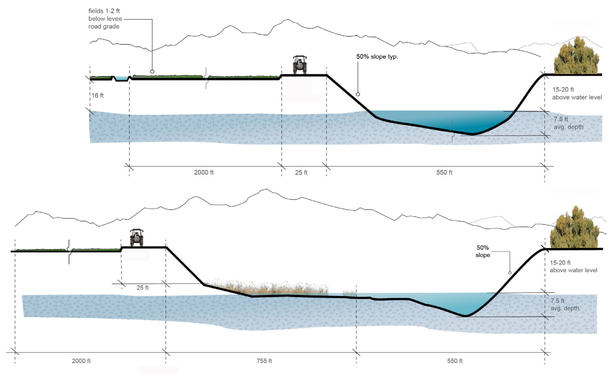
HYDROLOGY



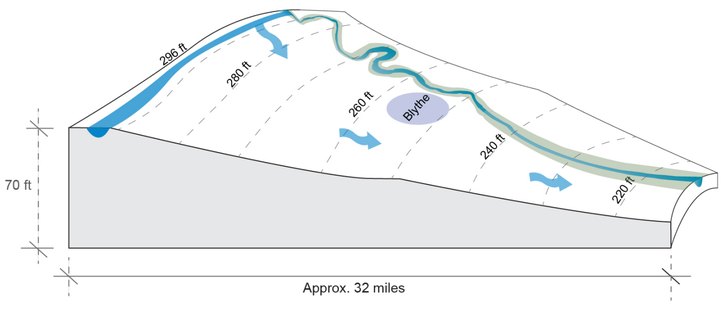
BACKGROUND

Blythe, California, surrounded by the Palo Verde Valley, is an important agricultural center in the Southwest and the halfway point between Phoenix, Arizona and Los Angeles. Years of water depletion for agricultural and municipal use have left the river corridor severely altered, threatening plant and wildlife habitat. Various efforts are underway to restore natural processes to this region, including the Palo Verde Ecological Reserve north of Blythe, and the Cibola National Wildlife Refuge to the south.

RIVER ANALYSIS



A closer look at restoration efforts underway in the area. The Palo Verde Ecological Reserve and Cibola National Wildlife Refuge are current projects in the region converting agricultural fields to riparian re-vegetation zones that mimick what once grew in the Colorado River's flood plain, restoring habitat for native wildlife. Existing canals used for irrigation now irrigate these new habitats.



IRRIGATION

The success of the agricultural industry is due largely from the ease of obtaining water from the Colorado. The Palo Verde Diversion Dam (pictured above), diverts river water into a main canal where it is dispersed into a network of canals. Using only gravity, seasonal crops are flood-irrigated due to a 70 ft loss in elevation over the 32 mile stretch of the valley. This system is managed and monitored by the Palo Verde Irrigation District and the Bureau of Reclamation, respectively.

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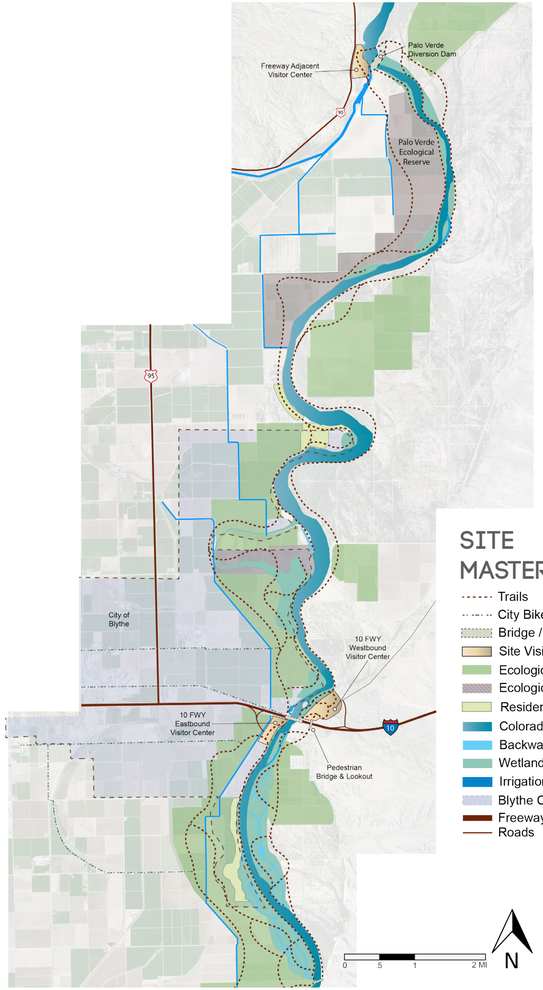


SITE MASTER PLAN

- Trails
- City Bike Path
- Bridge / Dam
- Site Visitor Center
- Ecological Reserve (expanded)
- Ecological Reserve
- Residential (preserved)
- Colorado River
- Backwaters
- Wetlands
- Irrigation Canals
- Blythe City Limits
- Freeway
- Roads

visitor centers

Several facility structures welcome weary travelers, Bythe residents, and recreational enthusiasts with educational galleries that discuss Colorado River channelization and resulting environmental repercussions. Site maps highlight key areas of interest.

pedestrian & bicylcle bridge

Maximum site exposure: Visible from over a mile away - this bridge not only captures the imagination of weary travelers, it also links north and south site trails and provides elevated views of the entire site and river system, exposing visitors to its ecological issues

agricultural buy-back

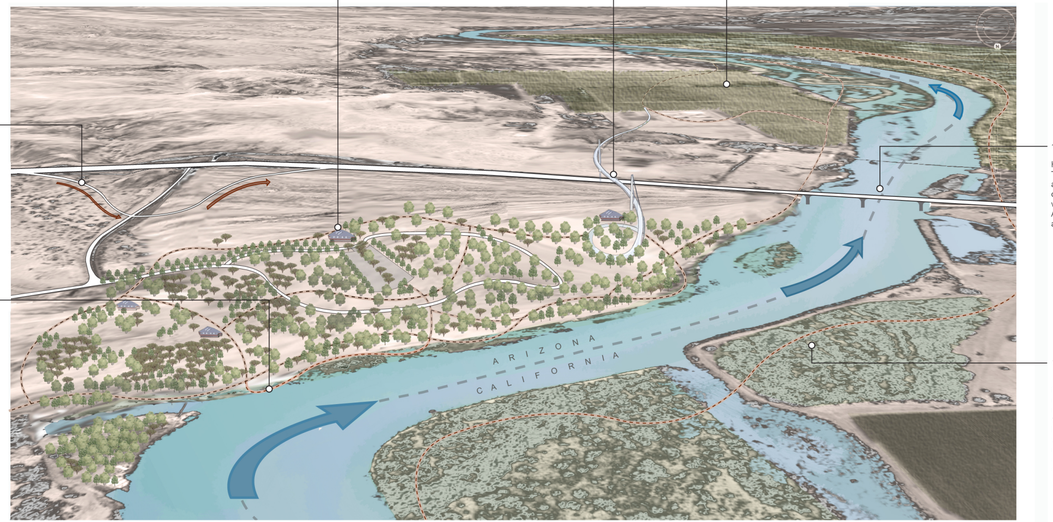
Following the efforts of the Palo Verde Ecolgoical Reserve and Cibola National Wildlife Refuge, river-adjacent agricultural fields within the site are dedicated re-vegetation zones planted with typical riparian trees including *Baccharis salicifolia, Populus fremontii, Proposis pubescens, and Proposis glandulosa*. Existing irrigation canals used for agriculture will be used to flood-irrigate the new plantings intended to restore riparian wildlife habitat up and down the river's banks.

freeway exit ramp

Site use efficiency is maximized with exit ramps providing direct access to the site, creating a recreational alternative to the typical rest stop.

trail system

Local trails at the visitor center give rest stoppers the chance to move and stretch on both dry and wetland trails. These trails are linked to both the pedestrian bridge as well as the entire site's extensive trail system which features educational signage throughout intended to enlighten all users to the river's damaged state.



10 freeway bridge

Heavy traffic, extensive reach: The midpoint between Phoenix and Los Angeles, this bridge carries more than 9 million vehicles per year across the AZ/CA state border from as far away as Florida.

wetland enhancement

The river's channelization and flow reduction have dwindled its natural floodplains and the resulting habitat. Remnant wetlands throughout the site will be enhanced and protected. Wetland bridge paths linked to main trails guide visitors through and call attention to this fragile ecological area.

NW SITE VISITOR CENTER: 1 of 3 typical visitors centers found throughout the site, all visible and easily accessed from high-traffic freeways

RIVER WETLAND DOCK Appreciation and respect for natural processes.

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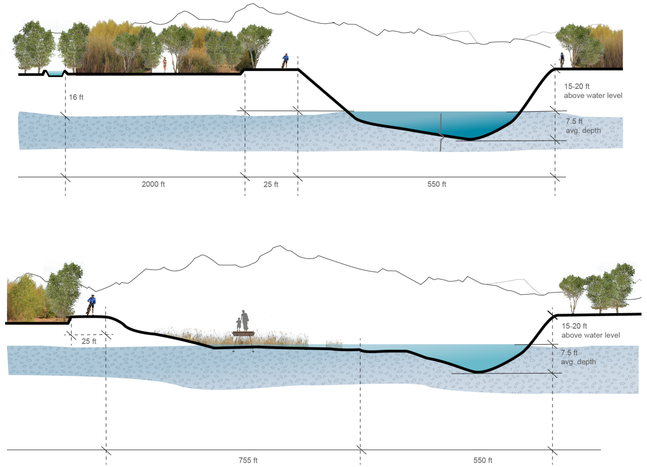
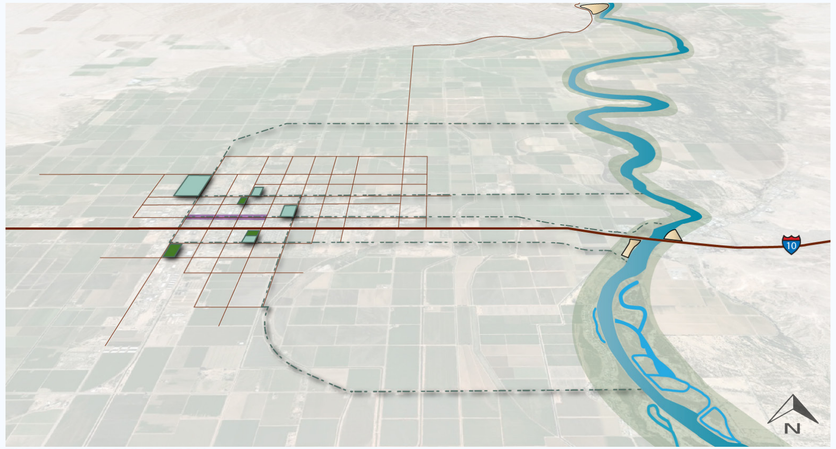


RIVER LEVEE ROAD TRAIL: Existing levee maintenance roads double as trails that lead users through expanded riparian re-vegetation dotted with educational signage teaching about Colorado River ecological issues.



THE BLYTHE CONNECTION: Blythe's close proximity to the site demands a dedicated network of bike paths connecting them. Local residents can use any number of paths that lead them easily and safely to various locations within the site from the city's main commercial center, parks and schools. The system will revitalize the community, foster physical recreation and promote use of the site.

Existing wetlands are remediated and enhanced with bridge paths, allowing users closer access to the river's edge.

PEDESTRIAN & BICYCLE BRIDGE: A highly visible link between the northern and southern halves of the expansive site.