

## FOREWORD

The papers in this Special Issue are a product of a Symposium on Semiarid Riparian Ecosystems sponsored by the Rocky Mountain Chapter of the Society of Wetland Scientists at the 18<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the Society, June 3–5, 1997 in Bozeman, Montana, USA. The Symposium consisted of 24 invited speakers and 21 contributed posters. All participants were encouraged to submit manuscripts for this Special Issue, but manuscripts were not required to cover the same material presented in the Symposium. Manuscripts were then subjected to the normal peer review process of *Wetlands*. Therefore, this set of sixteen papers is more a continuation of the Symposium than a Proceedings.

This Symposium demonstrates a gradual shift in focus of riparian researchers in the western United States. Past meetings have focused on documenting riparian diversity and threats to these ecosystems (e.g., Warner, R.E and K.M. Hendrix. 1984. *California Riparian Ecosystems*. University of California Press, Berkeley, CA, USA). Such work fostered public and private efforts to protect and restore riparian habitats. The challenges of riparian protection and restoration (Briggs) have, in turn, prompted researchers to study the processes that maintain riparian ecosystems. Although the important work of documenting riparian diversity will continue for many years, most of the papers in this Symposium focus on physical processes, especially those promoting establishment of the dominant trees (usually *Populus sp.*).

Many authors in this Special Issue emphasize the

importance of flow variability for maintaining riparian ecosystems (Auble and Scott, Merigliano, Osterkamp, Patten, Rood et al., Shafroth et al.). Recognition of the importance of floods is leading to reexamination of the downstream effects of dams (Dominick and O'Neill, Friedman et al., Johnson) and to prescriptions for managed floods to mitigate for those effects (Mahoney and Rood). Livestock grazing continues to be a contentious issue more than 60 years after passage of the Taylor Grazing Act (Feller). A more recent concern is the effects of introduced species, especially the shrub tamarisk (*Tamarix sp.*; Everitt, Gladwin and Roelle, Smith et al., Stromberg).

Publication of this Special Issue was sponsored by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Wetland Institute; the U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Reclamation, Great Plains Region; the U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management, Montana State Office; the U.S. Department of the Interior, U.S. Geological Survey, Midcontinent Ecological Science Center; and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region VIII. We thank all the participants in the Symposium and the many people who helped organize it, especially Lee Ischinger, Meeting Chair, and Gary Davis, Chair of the Symposium Sponsors Subcommittee.

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