

TWO BIRDS, ONE WALL

Thu Jan 16th, 2020 | Categories: [Environmental Law](#) |

In the late seventies, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service began buying pieces of land along the Texas-Mexico border. This collection of land, assembled over decades into 135 individual tracts of nearly 105,000 acres, were part of an effort to protect the Rio Grande Valley of Texas from development and farming. Although the area has since become a quagmire of illegal immigration and drug smuggling, it is also one of the most biologically diverse areas on the continent. Over the years, the land has become revegetated with native plants and repopulated with wildlife.

All of which underscores the shame of dissecting the Lower Rio Grande Valley National Wildlife Refuge with 110 miles of border Wall, running it straight through the mouth of a river delta. According to the Fish and Wildlife Service, The Wall may impact over 8,000 acres of its land, including a barrier that might affect animals that live in or range along the river. Some of the species potentially affected are found [nowhere else in the United States](#).

But the land along the border, having been purchased by the federal government, is easily repurposed. Elsewhere on the Texas border, construction of The Wall has been slowed by the inconvenience of its ownership by private parties. It takes time to requisition private property via eminent domain.

This is not the first time the government has tried to place borders along this land. In the 2000s, 55 miles of border fence was constructed in the Rio Grande valley, some of which crossed these wildlife areas. Although wildlife protection groups objected to that wall, there were at least gaps in the length of the wall. These gaps allowed for wildlife to pass through, and during flood season, water could drain. This Wall is nearly twice the height of previous walls, and there are no breaks in it, which could prove disastrous for both wildlife and vegetation.

According to [NPR](#), the Department of Homeland Security has moved mountains to get The Wall built, "[suspended\[ing\] 31 federal laws](#) -that protect environmental and cultural features" of the land. It should be some Wall.