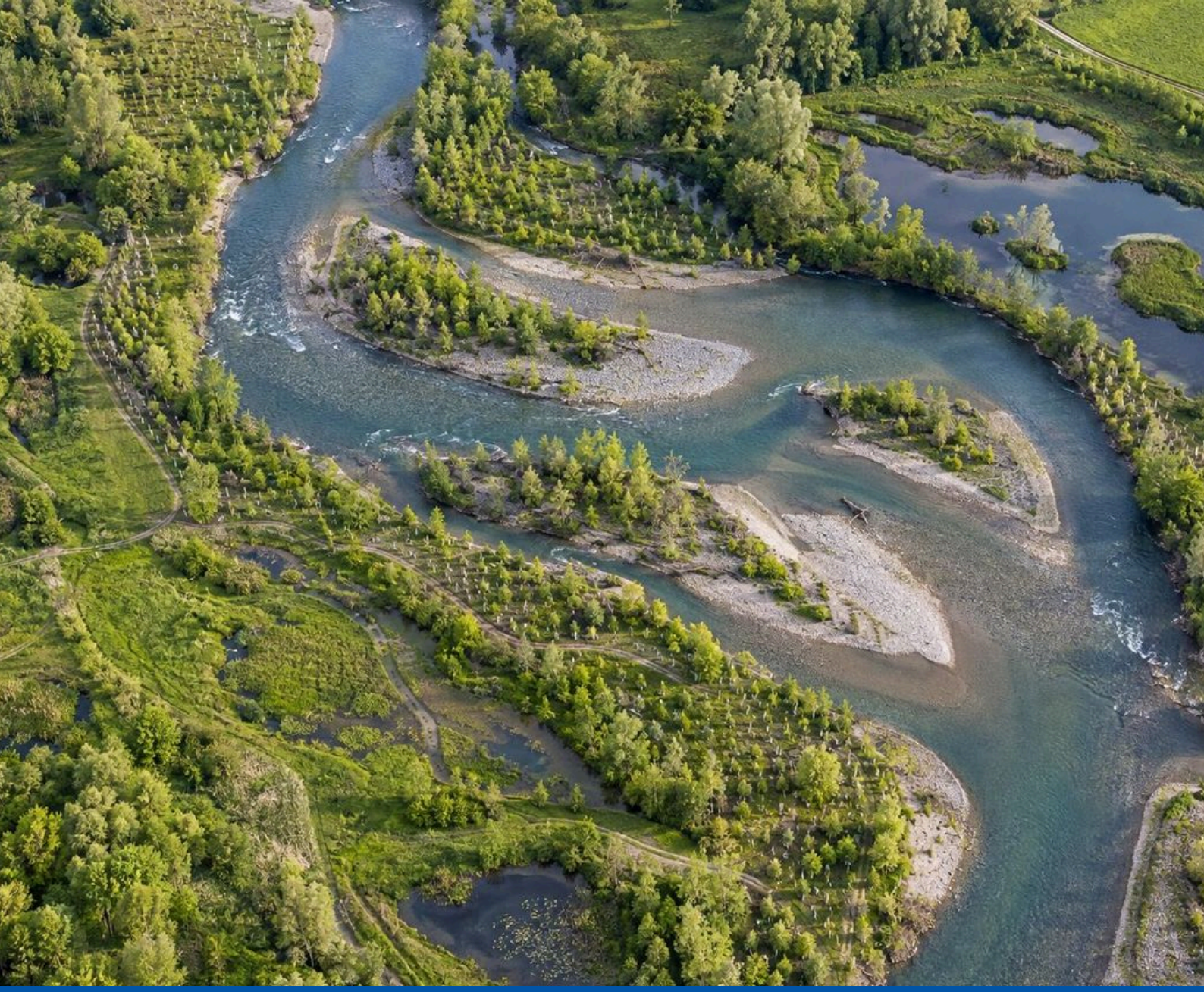


CAUCE FOUNDATION

Annual Report 2025

Giving the Alcarrán room to be a river again

The Cauce Foundation and the Alcarrán valley are fictional: every name and figure in this report is invented. Photographs generated with diffusion models.

A river given room

We restored 9.8 kilometres of bank, more than in any year since the foundation began, and the river answered with its cleanest water on record.



Inés Barrera, director

When the foundation was set up in 2014, the Alcarrán ran between earth banks pushed up by bulldozers after the floods of the 1970s. Its gravel bars had been dredged for building, its poplars cut for paper, and in summer whole reaches below Valtierra stood still and green. Ten years on, a walk along the same banks tells another story. In 2025 we took down two more of the old embankments, planted 41,000 willows, alders and ash trees, and gave the river back 64 hectares of floodplain where it can spread when it rises.

None of it would have happened without the 1,240 volunteers who came out on cold Saturdays to plant, to pull invasive cane and to count birds, or without the 37 farmers who agreed to let a strip of their land go wild along the water. Their patience is the foundation's real capital. Several of them told us this year that the river now floods their fields less often, not more, because the water has somewhere else to go.

The monthly samples our volunteers take at nine stations show the result. Nitrate fell for the fourth year running, dissolved oxygen in August stayed above the level trout need at every station for the first time, and the otter, gone from the middle valley since the 1980s, left its tracks at Fuentelsaz in October.

2025 IN THREE NUMBERS

9.8 km
of river bank restored, against 7.4 in 2024

41,000
native trees and shrubs planted by volunteers

€1.86 m
spent on the river, 87 cents of every euro we raised

Next year we start on the hardest reach of all, the four kilometres through the town of Alcarrán itself, where the river runs in a concrete channel. The council has given us the land; the design is ready. I hope you will walk it with us.

Inés Barrera, director

Work along the river

Two embankments taken down, three side channels reopened and a weir removed at the old mill of Somaén.

The foundation works in reaches: stretches of a few kilometres where the land on both banks belongs to owners who have agreed to the plan. In 2025 we worked on five of them (**Table 1**), from the headwaters above Fuentelsaz down to the confluence with the Jalón, and restored more bank than in any year before (**Figure 1**).

Embankments and side channels

At Valtierra and Maluenda, machines removed 2.6 kilometres of earth embankment and spread the material over the old fields, so that the bank now slopes gently into the water instead of standing as a wall. Below Valtierra the river had cut three side channels before it was straightened; we reopened them, and by the autumn floods they were carrying water again.

The weir at Somaén

The weir at the old flour mill, 2.3 metres high, had stopped fish moving upstream since 1904. The mill's owners gave it up to us in 2024, and in July a crew took it down over three weeks of low water. By December the river had washed the trapped sediment downstream and shaped a run of riffles and pools where the millpond stood.

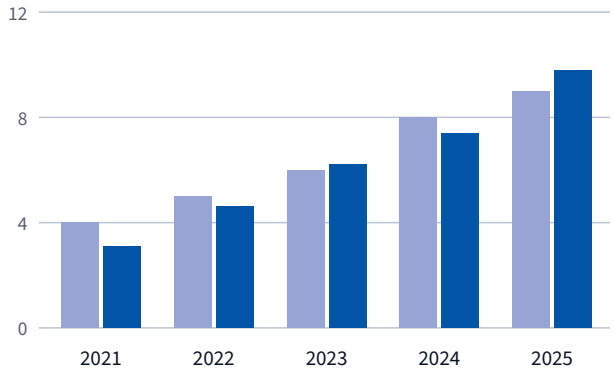


Figure 1. River bank restored each year, in kilometres: ■ done and ■ planned.

Planting

Volunteers planted 41,000 trees and shrubs in 46 working days between November and March, all of them grown from cuttings and seed collected in the valley. Willow and alder go nearest the water, ash and poplar behind them. The bank restored each year has risen steadily since 2021, and for the first time it went beyond what the plan called for.

Project	km	Volunteers	€ thousand
Valtierra: embankment removed, three side channels reopened	3.4	410	612
Maluenda: embankment removed, willow strip	2.1	260	355
Somaén: mill weir removed	0.6	40	288
Fuentelsaz: headwater fencing and planting	2.4	330	174
Jalón confluence: cane cleared, planting	1.3	200	91
All projects	**9.8**	**1,240**	**1,520**

Table 1. The year's projects.



Volunteers planting willow stakes on the bank at Valtierra, in March.

“We came for one Saturday in 2019. Now the willows we planted are taller than our children, and the river runs clear under them.”

MARTA AND JORGE SANZ, VOLUNTEERS AT VALTIERRA

Cleaner water

Nine stations, sampled every month by volunteers and checked twice a year by an independent laboratory.

Water quality is the measure we care about most, because it tells us whether the river is working as a river. Volunteers sample nine stations on the first Sunday of each month and test them on the bank for temperature, dissolved oxygen, nitrate and phosphate. Twice a year an independent laboratory takes its own samples at the same points, and the two sets of readings have agreed within 5% since 2022.

Nitrate fell to an average of 11 milligrams a litre, from 19 in 2021 (**Table 2**). The largest fall was below Maluenda, where a willow strip now stands between the river and the fields that drain into it. Phosphate is falling more slowly, because much of it lies in the old sediment and is released when the river moves it.

In August, the hardest month for a river in this valley, dissolved oxygen stayed above 7 milligrams a litre at every station. Trout need about 6. A survey by the regional fisheries service in September counted brown trout at seven of the nine stations, against three in 2021.



A monthly water sample at the Fuentelsaz gauge.

Station	Nitrate 2021	Nitrate 2025	Oxygen, August 2025
Fuentelsaz	9	6	9.1
Torrehermosa	12	8	8.6
Somaén	15	10	8.2
Valtierra, above	18	11	7.9
Valtierra, below	22	12	7.6
Maluenda	27	13	7.4
Alcarrán bridge	24	14	7.2
Alcarrán mill	21	13	7.3
Jalón confluence	23	14	7.1
Average	**19**	**11**	**7.9**

Table 2. Nitrate and dissolved oxygen at the nine stations, in milligrams a litre.

Accounts

Income rose by 11%, and 87 cents of every euro went to work on the river and to schools.

The foundation's income for the year was 2.14 million euros (**Table 3**). Monthly donors gave 1.12 million, 6% more than in 2024. Grants from public bodies and the new agreement with the regional water company brought in 0.81 million, and the rest came from legacies and the sale of willow cuttings to other projects.

We spent 2.04 million euros (**Figure 2**). Work on the river, from earthmoving to the nursery, took 1.52 million, and the schools programme, which brought 3,100 pupils to the river this year, 0.34 million. Administration and fundraising cost 0.18 million, 9% of spending. The surplus of 0.10 million goes to the reserve for the works in the town of Alcarrán.

The accounts were audited by an independent firm and approved by the board of trustees on 12 March 2026. The full accounts can be requested from the foundation's office.

€ thousand	2025	2024
Monthly donors	1,120	1,057
Grants and agreements	810	690
Legacies and other income	210	180
Total income	**2,140**	**1,927**
Work on the river	1,520	1,410
Schools programme	340	300
Administration and fundraising	180	170
Total spending	**2,040**	**1,880**
Surplus for the year	**100**	**47**

Table 3. Income and spending, in thousands of euros.



75 % Work on the river

17 % Schools

9 % Running costs

Figure 2. Where each euro we spent went in 2025.

With thanks

The foundation's work rests on the people and organisations who gave their time, their land and their money in 2025.

We thank the 6,800 monthly donors who give us the freedom to plan years ahead, and the 1,240 volunteers who gave 19,600 hours to the river. We thank the 37 farmers and landowners who signed agreements to let the bank go wild, and the families who left the foundation a gift in their wills.

What we saw

Volunteers recorded 112 species of bird along the restored reaches, among them the kingfisher at all five, the penduline tit nesting in the willows at Valtierra, and a pair of black storks feeding in the reopened side channels in spring. The otter's tracks at Fuentelsaz in October were the first sign of it in the middle valley for forty years.

Partners

- Alcarrán Town Council
- Jalón Valley Water Company
- Regional Fisheries Service
- University of the Valley, Department of Ecology
- Valtierra Irrigation Community



A kingfisher on a willow at Valtierra, one of those planted in 2019.

Cauce Foundation

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Printed in four colours and one fifth ink, PANTONE 286 C, on uncoated recycled paper.