

Middle Rio Grande Endangered Species Collaborative Program
Habitat Restoration Workgroup Meeting
16 February 2010 – 12:00pm-3:00pm
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Decision

The December 15, 2010 Habitat Restoration (HR) meeting minutes were approved with no changes.

HRW approved a grant reallocation request from Santo Domingo to use leftover funds towards plantings. HRW also approved a time extension on the grant so that plantings can occur during Spring 2011.

Actions

Monika Mann will compare the HR suggestions to the report review process with the PMT suggestions, and will discuss the edits with the PMT.

Monika Mann will determine the approximate length of time for peer review, then contact Cheryl Rolland regarding a time extension for the River Mile 83 report.

Cheryl Rolland will contact Jericho Lewis regarding funding for a workshop to address alternatives for River Mile 83.

Ondrea Hummel will contact Jericho Lewis regarding comments on the Velarde Reach A&R.

Monika Mann will send an email to the HR asking for volunteers for workgroup co-chair.

Monika Mann will send the LTP schedule to HR.

Meeting Summary

- Rick Billings called the meeting to order and introductions were made.
- The workgroup briefly discussed the process for HR deliverable review. The workgroup had recommended a 6-8 week review period; the Program Management Team (PMT) proposes shortening the review period to 4-5 weeks. The workgroup felt that the review period should be: 2 weeks - contractor to send responses to comments with how they would address them; 1 week – Program review of responses; possibility to schedule meeting to discuss comments; 2 weeks from date of meeting – contractor submits draft final report; 1 week – Program review of draft final; 1 week – contractor prepares and delivers final report.
- HR considered reports to recommend for peer review. A concern was that peer review process can be written in to future scopes of work, but any reports that are out now will probably need a time extension to allow for peer review. Suggestions of reports to peer review were the Velarde Reach Analysis and Recommendations (A&R) and the River Mile 83 reports.
- The workgroup discussed a grant reallocation request from Santo Domingo Pueblo. NEPA regulations changed in October of 2008; after which an exemption was filed for and approved so that the project was not subject to NEPA. As funds were allocated for NEPA compliance at the early stages of the project, there is now an excess of funding. Santo Domingo Pueblo requests that those funds be used towards plantings. The HRW approved the Santo Domingo request for budget modification, as well as a time extension to allow for plantings in spring 2011.
- Cheryl Rolland updated the workgroup on the status of the River Mile 83 report. After comments were received from reviewers, it was determined that the contractor had not given two habitat restoration alternatives. The contractor revised with 3 options for adding alternatives: 1) realignment – would be very similar to current realignment 2) expand project area to allow for more possibilities, and 3) partial

development, extending outside the project area. The reviewers determined option 1 to be the only viable option; this decision was communicated to the contractor and is incorporated in to the report. A suggestion was to have a workshop to address which alternative to pursue.

- A discussion took place regarding the Velarde Reach A&R review process. Additional comments were received as the contractor was incorporating comments. The review team did not have a chance to see the additional comments before they were addressed by the contractor. The incident should be discussed so that what occurred can be avoided in the future. The topic will be added to the March agenda to allow time for the comment table be emailed to the review team.
- The workgroup discussed recommended future activities. A spreadsheet was updated during the meeting and will be submitted at the upcoming Coordination Committee (CC) meeting.
- The draft Effectiveness Monitoring Plan (EMP) plan RFP should be out this week some time.

Next HRW Meeting March 16, 2010 12:00pm to 3:00pm at COE

Meeting Minutes

Introductions and Changes to Proposed Agenda

- Rick Billings called the meeting to order and introductions were made around the table.
- Jill Wick has stepped down as HRW co-chair, Monika Mann will lead her items on the agenda.

Approve December 15th, 2009 meeting minutes

- The December 15, 2009 Habitat Restoration (HR) meeting minutes were approved with no changes.

HR Deliverable/Report Review Process

- At the December HR meeting, the workgroup discussed timeframes for reviewing reports. Monika Mann presented HR suggestions of a 6-8 week review period to the Program Management Team (PMT). The PMT recommend that rather than 6-8 weeks, the review be 4-5 weeks. During a brief discussion, the HR recommends that the review be: 2 weeks - contractor to send responses to comments with how they would address them; 1 week – Program review of responses; possibility to schedule meeting to discuss comments; 2 weeks from date of meeting – contractor submits draft final report; 1 week – Program review of draft final; 1 week – contractor prepares and delivers final report.
 - A concern was that current projects do not have this review built in to the scopes of work. Going forward, the workgroup can include it in scopes but for projects already done a time extension will have to be done.

Recommendations on Deliverables/Reports for Peer Review in 2010

- The PMT is asking for the workgroups to propose projects for future peer review. The Program peer reviewed the San Acacia A&R already; a meeting is scheduled for February 24, 2010 to discuss the results and more particularly, the process.
 - It was suggested that the Velarde Reach A&R be peer reviewed. It would be more helpful to peer review them before they are finalized but if that is the case it will take additional funding.
 - Another suggestion was to peer review the River Mile 83 report because a time extension is already being done on it.

Santo Domingo Grant Reallocation Request

- The Pueblo of Santo Domingo are requesting a grant reallocation to used leftover funds for plantings. The funds were originally slated as NEPA compliance. Reclamation asked for an exemption to NEPA compliance after a change of regulations occurred and became effective October 18, 2008. The exemption was approved resulting in a surplus of funds on the project that had been meant to cover NEPA compliance. The Pueblo requests these funds be used towards additional planting, which is within scope.
 - It was also suggested that a time extension be granted to the project in order to complete the planting in spring of 2011.
- The HRW recommends that the Santo Domingo Pueblo grant reallocation request be approved with a time extension.

COTR Training Take Aways

- Workshop on grant procedures was recently held; the handouts from the meeting were posted to the Program website.
- It was stressed during the workshop that working closely with the Contracting Officers Technical Representative (COTR) is critical during scope writing; so that better scopes can be written in a shorter amount of time.

2008/2009 Annual Report

- The PMT liaisons are helping with coordination of the annual report. COTRS may be asking for information such as photos and maps for projects.

Update on RM 83 Channel Realignment/ reviewer report out

- A brief summary was distributed to meeting attendees; a copy of the full report was also made available for reference during the meeting.
- The report was received on December 18, 2009. Reviewers concluded that the contractor hadn't fully met the requirements of the task order. The task order specified that two habitat restoration alternatives be developed. One of the contractor's alternatives was removal of the sediment plug, which is not a habitat restoration project.
- The contractor didn't dispute and gave ideas for a second restoration project that could be added. It is very limited what can be done in that area; to develop another realignment it would have to be very similar with merely different twists. Expanding the project area would open up more realignment possibilities- but it would require more money and time. The contractor also suggested doing a partial development that would extend outside of the original project area.
 - The reviewers decided it would be best not to expand outside the project area. Other discussion occurred about whether it should cover more than just realignments, but it was decided that the task order suggested only realignment alternatives. Given those two decisions, only one option was left, to realign with roughly the same realignment as the first and to bring in fill dirt to avoid the formation of a temporary lake.
 - The contractor received the feedback and is currently working on adding the second realignment alternative. Preliminary comments indicate a concern that not enough attention was given to how the species are affected, or to how conditions are improved for the two listed species. Some other

concerns were about incomplete development of alternatives, incomplete development of cost, and that the State Engineer protocol for computing depletions was not followed.

- It was suggested to hold a workshop with the public to discuss options for river mile 83. It is unknown if funds are available for a workshop; Cheryl Rolland will follow up with the Contracting Officer (CO) regarding funding.

Draft Velarde Reach A&R

- The draft Velarde Reach Analysis and Recommendations (A&R) report was reviewed in July 2009. Late comments were received by the CO on September 21, 2009. As the comments were considered important enough to be addressed by the contractor; finalization of the report was delayed until responses were received. Concerns have been raised regarding the process followed when these late comments were received. The original review team was not informed that the comments came in and therefore were not able to discuss their validity before the contractor was asked to respond. Another concern was that the contractor was not compensated for incorporating the additional comments other than to print copies.
 - It was suggested that the topic be tabled since the CO was unable to attend this meeting.

Albuquerque A&R Update

- The workgroup discussed late in 2009 the Albuquerque Reach A&R update. The review team met with the contractor and discussed the comments. Approval was gained from both the Coordination Committee (CC) and the HRW for a contract mod to make sure we had the correct Rio Grande Bosque. Rio Rancho was going to contact us a second time, we sent out a draft map to look at how the shape files would be. It was suggested to consider different color coding when looking at existing Program projects. It was decided that the map should be simplified with project locations for Effectiveness Monitoring Plan (EMP) sites all one color. Existing MRG Bosque Plan and proposed projects will be a different color from EMP projects.

Potential future activities to be incorporated into LTP

- The CC is asking each workgroup to develop ideas for potential projects for future years that could be included in the Long Term Plan (LTP). The workgroup initially attempted to do this last week and developed a list of recommended activities. Any workgroup members that wish to represent HR at the CC meeting are welcome to attend. The LTP attempts to follow the recovery plan for the two endangered species. It is understood that as of now, the list of recommended future activities is considered a “wish list” from each workgroup.
- Where is EMP listed?
 - There is already a list of ongoing projects, as the EMP could potentially be a 10 year project, it was added.
- What is meant by Agricultural Restoration under item 7.1.A.9 Program Management
 - Attendees were thinking of how to get other entities involved in the Program. It was considered as almost an outreach/coordination.
- It was suggested that a workshop (listed under 7.1.A.2) is important, and the Science Workgroup (ScW) should be involved.

- Another suggestion was to breakdown the future LTP projects into three categories: 1) beneficial to the Rio Grande Silvery Minnow (RGSM), 2) beneficial to the Southwestern Willow Flycatcher (SWFL) and 3) beneficial to both species.
 - Most projects will potentially benefit both, but the topic should be looked at more closely. That topic may be something to bring up at the CC meeting so that all workgroups can consider things that would benefit both species.

Co-chair volunteers?

- Jill Wick has stepped down as co-chair; Monika Mann will email a request for volunteers.

Announcements (ALL)

- It is unknown if the EMP Request For Proposal (RFP) went out, if not then it should be out soon.
- Volunteers may be needed for the Technical Proposal Evaluation Committee (TPEC) for the EMP. Further information will be distributed via email when more information is available.

***San Acacia Reach Peer Review Presentation, February 24, 2010, 9:00 – 12:00 Reclamation Rio Grande Room**

Habitat Restoration Work Group Meeting 16 February 2010 Meeting Attendees

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