

**Middle Rio Grande Endangered Species Collaborative Program
San Acacia Ad Hoc Work Group Meeting**

26 August 2010 – 12:30 PM - 3:30 PM

Albuquerque – ISC

Decisions

- The June 24th, 2010 SAR work group meeting notes were approved with (1) a typo correction on pg 2: “review of *competed*” will be corrected to “review of *completed*”; and (2) reference to the “ISC workshop notes and results” will be corrected to “the Program’s San Acacia workshop notes and results.”

Action Items

- Once permission is given, Gina Dello Russo will provide the SAR work group with the link information to private lands work and saltcedar control database.
- Tetra Tech will provide Monika Mann with the hard copy (CDs) of the Draft Programmatic EA on non native vegetation control for inclusion to the DBMS.
- Robert Padilla will provide the “Top Down ESA” report/documentation from Reclamation for inclusion in the database references; Robert will contact the Denver office for electronic copies, if available. *(continued from 08/26/10 meeting)*
- If found, Gina Dello Russo will draft a short write up summarizing the contents of the San Acacia South documents. Gina will contract Drew for any hard copies or notes that might be available. *(continued from 08/26/10 meeting);*
- Yasmeen Najmi will look for any documents pertaining to the San Acacia South group (active around 2001 or 2002) in MRGCD archives.
- SAR work group members are tasked with completing their respective Agency Response to Themes by the next SAR meeting, scheduled for July 22nd. *(continued from 08/26/10 meeting);*
- Page Pegram will edit the ISC version of Agency Response to Themes leaving blanks where responses cannot be referenced to other, approved documents; the revised version will be emailed to the SAR work group.
- Robert Padilla will provide a copy of the FEMA handout provided at the Levee Task Force meeting this past summer.
- Ryan Gronewald and Gina Dello Russo will develop a draft scope of work for *Preserve riparian corridor in an undeveloped state/Floodplain Encroachment* for FY11.
- Ryan Gronewald will discuss the *Preserve riparian corridor in an undeveloped state/Floodplain Encroachment* work with the Corps’s hydrology team to determine if it would be feasible to include under internal contracting with the Corps and possible cost estimates for the work.
- Amy Louise will provide SAR work group members with the Reclamation Contracting office Scope of Work template.
- Robyn Harrison will get a status update on FEMA changes in Socorro County.

- Using San Acacia workshop notes, Yasmeen Najmi clarify and add definitions (where appropriate) to the Agency Response to Themes matrix. Where appropriate, the theme titles will be expanded with language taken directly from the workshop participants.
- Tetra Tech and Amy Louise send San Acacia workshop draft notes to Yasmeen Najmi.
- Page Pegram will develop a draft scope of work on the White Paper Development (cost for editing or production?).

Meeting Summary

- Gina Dello Russo brought the meeting to order and the agenda was approved with no changes. The work group approved the finalization of the June 24th meeting notes with 2 changes: (1) a typo correction on pg 2: “review of *competed*” will be corrected to “review of *completed*”; and (2) reference to the “ISC workshop notes and results” will be corrected to “the Program’s San Acacia workshop notes and results.”
- Attendees reviewed previous action items. All but 3 items were completed; those ongoing items will be carried over until the September meeting.
- The work group then reviewed the updated Agency Response to Themes. Members discussed the hesitancy of agencies to put responses in writing especially for topics where there are no existing official agency policies; concerns included (1) the possibility of the “internal use only” document being distributed outside the work group where responses could be misconstrued; (2) responses might not be official policy but could be taken as precedent setting; and (3) constituents might mistake a response of support to indicate financial responsibility.
 - The work group compared and discussed agency responses in Section A.
 - The discussions of Section A themes lead to actions to develop FY11 scopes of work. Page Pegram will develop a draft scope of work on the White Paper Development (cost for editing or production?); Ryan Gronewald and Gina Dello Russo will develop a draft scope of work on the *Floodplain Encroachment*. Other studies are not ready for scope development until the remaining themes have been reviewed with all agency responses.
 - Scopes of Work are due October 1st.
- In the Program updates, it was shared that the EC will be meeting on Monday, August 31st. Stating in the new fiscal year, Brent Rhees (Reclamation) will be the new federal co-chair appointment. The CC has continued working on the Long-term Plan (LTP) and reviewing work group future activity summaries. A special database workshop has been scheduled for Tuesday August 31st for continued explanation of the data model. A San Acacia Diversion Dam Fish Passage Peer Review field tour is scheduled for September 9th. Carpools will leave from Reclamation at 8:30am for the field tour. Participants will meet back at Reclamation at 12:30pm for an afternoon session with the peer review contractor to discuss the panel experts and question development.

Next Meetings

- 09/23/10 SAR regular meeting at MRGCD in Albuquerque from 12:30 to 3:30
- 10/28/10 SAR Field trip; details to be determined

Upcoming Meetings

- EC August 30th, 9:00am – 1:00pm at Reclamation;
- DBMS Workshop, August 31st, 8:30am in Reclamation's Rio Grande Room;
- SWM September 1st, 10:00am – 12:00pm at BIA;
- CC September 8th, 9:30am - 4:00pm at Reclamation;
- PIO September 9th, 9:00am – 11:00am;
- San Acacia Diversion Dam Fish Passage Peer Review Project Field Tour September 9th, meet at Reclamation at 8:30am for carpool; 12:30pm meeting with the peer review contractor at Reclamation – afternoon session open to all interested including other contactors
- DBMS September 13th, 1:00pm – 2:00pm at Corps;
- EC September 16th, 9:00am - 4:00pm at Open Space;
- River Habitat Restoration Workshop September 21st, 8:30am to 4:00pm at COE;
- ScW September 21nd, 9:00am – 11:30am at ISC;
- HRW State of the HR Workshop September 22nd, 8:30am – 3:30pm at ISC;
- CC September 22nd 1:00 pm – 4:00 pm;
- SAR regular meeting September 23rd, 12:30 – 3:30 in Alb at MRGCD;
- SAR field trip tentatively October 28th, Socorro – Details to be determined;
- PVA December 6th – 7th, 8:30am – 4:30pm on 6th and 8:30 12:30 on 7th

Meeting Notes – 08/26/10 12:30 PM to 3:30 PM

- **Introductions and Agenda Approval:** Gina Dello Russo opened the meeting. The agenda was approved with no changes.
- **Approval of 06/24/10 SAR Meeting Minutes:**
 - The June 24th, 2010 SAR work group meeting notes were approved with (1) a typo correction on pg 2: “review of *competed*” will be corrected to “review of *completed*”; and (2) reference to the “ISC workshop notes and results” will be corrected to “the Program’s San Acacia workshop notes and results.”
- **Action Item Review**
 - ✓ Tetra Tech will confirm that Robyn Harrison’s email has been updated to robynjharrison@gmail.com for SAR work group communications and will make sure Yasmeen Najmi’s email hasn’t been accidentally removed from the email list. – *completed*;
 - ✓ Tetra Tech will distribute the May 27th SAR meeting notes to attendees for any final comments or corrections. If no feedback is received by COB on Friday, July 2nd, the notes will be finalized as is. – *completed*;
 - ✓ Gina Dello Russo will search her archives for any Save Our Bosque Task Force and San Acacia South documents that might need to be included in the database references. – *completed*;
 - An email request was sent to past contacts who participated in the private lands work but no responses have been received yet. ○ the information; Eileen Grevey Hillson’s information will be included in the saltcedar control database and the GIS effort is moving forward to see what has been treated and when.

Action: Once permission is given, Gina Dello Russo will provide the SAR work group with the link information to private lands work and saltcedar control database.

Action: Tetra Tech will provide Monika Mann with the hard copy (CDs) of the Draft Programmatic EA on non native vegetation control for inclusion to the DBMS.

- Robert Padilla will provide the “Top Down ESA” (*EIS for the San Marcial reach that Chris worked on*) report/documentation from Reclamation for inclusion in the database references. – *ongoing*;
 - There is a hard copy available, but the Denver Office will be contacted to determine if there is an electronic copy.
- If found, Gina Dello Russo will draft a short write up summarizing the contents of the San Acacia South documents. – *ongoing*;
 - Hard copies of information may be available but it is not known if there are any electronic copies. Although many of the same agencies participated back then, it was with different people. Reclamation spear-headed the early group and it might be possible that Drew (from Reclamation) still has notes that can be referenced.
- ✓ Tetra Tech will search the Program archives for any San Acacia South and Bookclub documents. – *completed*; nothing was found

- ✓ Tetra Tech will send out a reminder email to SAR members asking for any known documents from the San Acacia South group (active around 2001 or 2002). – *completed;*

Action: Yasmeen Najmi will look for any documents pertaining to the San Acacia South group (active around 2001 or 2002) in MRGCD archives.

- The work group discussed how most of the Middle Rio Grande (MRG) project documents including specs, designs, annual updates, etc. from the 1950s and 1960s are located at the Albuquerque office and since they are considered public domain, should be available. However, Reclamation is in process of scanning many of the past documents. One would need to know exactly what information was sought in order to make a request. It is assumed that most of this information will not be included in the Program's new database.
- ✓ Tetra Tech will confirm with Steve Harris that his assigned action from the May 27th SAR meeting (*he was to contact Mark Doles with a list of documents that were suggested to be added to the Program database*) was completed. – Email sent to Steve. – *completed;*
- SAR work group members are tasked with completing their respective Agency Response to Themes by the next SAR meeting, scheduled for July 22nd. – *ongoing;*
- ✓ Tetra Tech will check if the initial *Facilitate Establishment of new, large SWFL populations in areas where none exist* future activity summary has been drafted or not. – *completed;*
- ✓ Tetra Tech will forward PVA June 28th meeting agenda to Gina Dello Russo. – *completed;*
- ✓ Tetra Tech will remove “draft” water mark and reference to “draft” and “review” from the 05-27-10 Work Group Objectives and then finalize the document with the 05-27-10 date. – *completed;*
- ✓ Page Pegram will distribute the old WAM's White Paper on the SA Reach to work group members. – *completed; sent on July 20th*
- **Agency Response to Themes**
 - The work group continued discussion on the hesitancy of agencies to put responses in writing especially for topics where there are no existing official agency policies; concerns included (1) the possibility of the “internal use only” document being distributed outside the work group where responses could be misconstrued; (2) responses might not be official policy but could be taken as precedent setting; and (3) constituents might mistake a response of support to indicate financial responsibility. This hesitancy is one reason it is taking longer to have the themes table completed.
 - According to ISC process, everything has to be approved by the Commission. ISC was able to respond to themes by referencing language from previously approved documents. Any theme or topic that could not be referenced to other approved documents has been left blank.

- It wasn't necessary for each agency to respond to each theme, only those topics that the agency had a position on or interest in.
- Attendees discussed how it is helpful to know which items/themes are the most controversial so that the work group can be sensitive and respectful while planning and discussing and at the strategy/recommendation level.
- Attendees really liked the citing of other agency documents to support responses and discussed how citing existing documents would make the white papers more robust considering the intended public audience.
- The intention of the response to themes was to guide the work group to areas of overlap, shared interest, and high priorities in order for the work group to move to planning and strategizing solutions and recommendations using the identified links between agencies. The work group is optimistic that they can complete Objective 2 Task 4 soon (Report Out on Priorities and Agency perspectives with expected products to include the development of the white papers on themes, agency perspectives, concerns, current strategies).

Action: Page Pegram will edit the ISC version of Agency Response to Themes leaving blanks where responses cannot be referenced to other, approved documents; the revised version will be emailed to the SAR work group.

- Agency by agency, the work group then reviewed themes contained in Section A.
 - *Theme: Maintaining access to river:*
 - This theme involves both legal and physical access; agencies might clarify current policies along with issues or conflicts with that policy (ex. illegal dumping), etc.
 - ISC: while there is no existing ISC policy on this theme, in general, the ISC representative on SAR believes it is important.
 - COE: The Corps attempts to maintain recreational access. A certain portion/percentage of a project can receive federal funding toward recreation/access. But the Corps is not a land management agency and thus relies on coordination with other agencies for actual permission. The levee project plans are still being formulated. .
 - *Theme: Sustain river habitat:*
 - ISC: understands the importance of sustaining river habitat to promote the recovery of listed species.
 - FWS: critical habitat for species is designated by the Service. The Service promotes the improvement of habitat and supports making sure that the river corridor is protected; especially considering how important it is to other wildlife species as well. Protecting the diversity of the various habitats helps reduce the likelihood of having to list other species. The Service is responsible for abiding by the Migratory "Bird Treaty and the Refuge Improvement Act. It was clarified that the refuge system is

involved in land management which is not usually managed for individual species. Endangered species are the heart of the refuge but not the whole. There is policy, in the ES for this region, regarding using partnerships as the mechanism for working on private lands. Use of government equipment and staff is prohibited except as staff consulting and advising on collaborative efforts.

- COE: The Corps has programs to help sustain and restore river habitat. There needs to be a local sponsor who cost shares and maintains the project once done. There is the General investigation (GI) program for project by project authorization and a continuing authorizing program with 206 (riparian ecosystem) and 1135 (riparian restoration downstream of a COE project; with a 65/35 cost share split). Any riparian restoration project in this reach could need 3 different authorities.
- *Theme: Preserve riparian corridor in an undeveloped state:*
 - ISC: is concerned with development in the riparian corridor to the extent it affects upstream flood control operations. The ISC generally does not support development in the riparian corridor that further reduces safe channel capacity.
 - FWS: focuses more on the wildlife impacts although flood control and safety is also a concern. None of the authorizations or policies deal with control, water delivery, or water ops. But the Service recognizes it as a common goal with benefits.
 - MRGCD: development is restricted on MRGCD property and they don't generally sell property for development. The exception is only for limited and low-impact development that could withstand flooding. Private property is regulated by counties or cities.
 - FEMA has authority to limit/restrict what can be built; and FEMA coverage is changing in Socorro County so it will be included/covered. Elevating a building up doesn't result in much since any overbanking flow could still get trapped behind or wash out access roads and footers. There are a lot of undetermined effects that could result including wildlife fragmentation.
 - The changing FEMA coverage only impacts those who need a mortgage and thus insurance; it will be expensive so that may be a deterrent. But anyone who can and is willing to pay cash can basically do "whatever they want."
 - The county commission can use the FEMA maps to limit permits for certain areas and other land owners could challenge development if there is a chance of their properties being harmed as a result.
 - The work group discussed a potential scope of work (SOW) to develop a Collaborative Program position paper summarizing concerns and impacts resulting from development on the

floodplain. The product could be presented to the county commissioners for information sharing. The project would benefit from having both the FEMA and URGWOM maps. A contractor could be used to pull all this together in terms of locations where action agencies would prefer development.

- Between Escondida and the refuge could be a key area. Testimony from land owners participating in the easement program (opportunity to restore the bosque while living there) could be included. Both the hazards and the restoration goals for a healthy river are important especially considering that the area depends on tourism for income.
- A scope of work will need to be drafted based on the future activity summary which is very general. The SOW will need to have specifics about sources of information to gather. A potential Phase I is the analysis and a Phase II could be the public outreach and/or workshop. The public outreach could include a visit with the land use committee, county manager, county commissioners, etc. A suggested task for the analysis phase could be to help determine where “floodplain” boundaries should be delineated.

Action: Robert Padilla will provide a copy of the FEMA handout provided at the Levee Task Force meeting this past summer.

Action: Ryan Gronewald and Gina Dello Russo will develop a draft scope of work for *Preserve riparian corridor in an undeveloped state/Floodplain Encroachment* for FY11.

Action: Ryan Gronewald will discuss the *Preserve riparian corridor in an undeveloped state/Floodplain Encroachment* work with the Corps's hydrology team to determine if it would be feasible to include under internal contracting with the Corps and possible cost estimates for the work.

Action: Amy Louise will provide SAR work group members with the Reclamation Contracting office Scope of Work template.

Action: Robyn Harrison will get a status update on FEMA changes in Socorro County.

- *Theme: Floodplain Encroachment and development in valley/zoning*
 - The work group reviewed how the original issue was discussed at the San Acacia workshop. There were specific concerns about arroyo flooding. While “floodplain” can be defined in terms of the active floodway, arroyos provide water in low flows, provide sediment, and can flood. For purposes of this theme, attendees agreed to define “floodplain” as the floodway. It is assumed that the FEMA floodmaps will define the floodway outside the spoil bank levee system because it is not an engineered levee.
- ISC: does not generally support development in the floodplain that further reduces safe channel.

- FWS: The Service considers the railroad bridge as an encroachment since it impinges on the ability of the river to pass high flows and sediments. In terms of...
- COE: is considering the bed of the river to be at the elevation it was in 2002 so the railroad bridge is definitely still an impediment considered in the levee project. From an operations standpoint or restricting flows out of Cochiti, the river bed is lower today and thus not considered an impediment.
- BOR: concerning encroachment, Reclamation's standpoint is similar to ISC's. Reclamation would like to limit encroachment as much as possible even though they don't have the authority to actually do the restricting.
- *Theme: Sustain existing river/riparian processes*
 - The work group discussed the lack of long-term studies for improved strategies. Although some of the issues might be dealt with under other Program analyses, it is very vague in terms of current and future water use. There is also no information on what it takes to sustain a healthy riparian ecosystem. There are currently no "error bars" or ranges defining what it might take in terms of water use to achieve a healthy system.
 - The work group also discussed what is meant by "sustaining existing" river riparian processes. "Existing" can be problematic if those processes are determined to not be beneficial.
 - After reviewing the terminology developed from the workshop, members agreed to add a definition to this theme explaining how the work group interprets it and the expected measurement(s).
 - It was suggested to change this theme title to "promote healthy river systems" or "sustain healthy river systems."
 - ISC: supports sustaining healthy river/riparian processes while maintaining current and future water uses.
 - FWS: does address river processes and the current state of the ecosystem. Can assist by removing impediments to the system to the extent safely possible. Analysis need to help determine benefits of actions and how could possibly assist.

Action: Using San Acacia workshop notes, Yasmeen Najmi will clarify and add definitions (where appropriate) to the Agency Response to Themes matrix. Where appropriate, the theme titles will be expanded with language taken directly from the workshop participants.

Action: Tetra Tech and Amy Louise send San Acacia workshop draft notes to Yasmeen Najmi.

- *Theme: Invasive vegetation encroachment on the river*
 - Members discussed that "vegetation" may not necessarily imply just exotics; it depends on goals of restoration. For example, bar

or channel widening would result in the removal of all vegetation. For the purposes of this theme, it is assumed that the vegetation (native and exotics) is lumped all types for all locales.

- ISC: supports the control of invasive vegetation where vegetation encroachment is detrimental to compact deliveries and safe channel capacity.
- MRGCD: also participates in activities to help control vegetation encroachment
- COE: removal of invasives are usually a part of COE projects
- FWS: the Service's standpoint is to implement projects in a staged approach for needed habitat and vegetation replacement. The Service also acknowledges that saltcedars, while not native, can support the flycatcher and a staged replacement can be critical. The Service encourages developing a recommended implementation schedule to help projects succeed. Including specifics such as areas, acreages, types of habitat affected, etc. can make it easier to evaluate restoration proposals and affects on wildlife.

- **FY11 Scopes of Work**

- All FY11 SOWs are due October 1st.
- The SAR work group agreed to develop 2 scopes for FY11:
 - White Paper Development: funding could be applied to editing or production of the white papers; and
 - Floodplain encroachment.

Action: Page Pegram will develop a draft scope of work on the White Paper Development (cost for editing or production?).

- **Program Update**

- In the Program updates, it was shared that the EC will be meeting on Monday, August 31st. Starting in the new fiscal year, Brent Rhees (Reclamation) will be the new federal co-chair appointment.
- The CC has continued working on the Long-term Plan (LTP) and reviewing work group future activity summaries. A special database workshop has been scheduled for Tuesday August 31st for continued explanation of the data model.
- A San Acacia Diversion Dam Fish Passage Peer Review field tour is scheduled for September 9th. Carpools will leave from Reclamation at 8:30am for the field tour. Participants will meet back at Reclamation at 12:30pm for an afternoon session with the peer review contractor to discuss the panel experts and question development.

- **Next Meeting**

- The work group discussed the tentative field trip to Socorro in September but since FY11 scopes of work are due by October 1st, it was agreed that the field trip will be postponed until October.
- The September meeting will be a regular business meeting in Albuquerque from 12:30pm to 3:30pm at MRGCD. . Potential float trip in May. Field trip postponed to tentatively October 28th
- **Announcements:**
 - A *River Habitat Restoration Workshop* has been scheduled for September 21st, 8:30am to 4:00pm at COE. Reclamation's Denver office was paid by the Program to host this workshop. The Technical Services division does a lot of dam removal and fish passage restoration work. The workshop focus is on river restoration techniques, methods, and treatments and an overview of the state of practices with an emphasis on the Program's active restoration in the Middle Rio Grande. It will provide an opportunity to talk about uncertainties, longevity, functionalities, and confidence in performance of restoration techniques and to share case studies and experiences.
 - The work group was update on the status of the River Mile 83 expansion – the CC and EC approved the most expensive option proposed and an RFP was issued for the expanded downstream SOW to incorporate existing data and hydraulics.

**San Acacia Reach Ad Hoc Work group
26 August 2010 Meeting Attendees**

NAME	AFFILIATION	PHONE NUMBER	EMAIL ADDRESS
Gina Dello Russo	FWS/Co-chair	575-835-1828	gina_dellorusso@FWS.gov
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Robert Padilla	Reclamation	505-462-3626	rpadilla@usbr.gov
Robyn Harrison	Festival of Cranes	575-517-0291	robynharrison@gmail.com
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