

**Middle Rio Grande Endangered Species Collaborative Program**  
**San Acacia Ad Hoc Work Group Meeting**  
23 September 2010 – 12:30 PM - 3:30 PM  
Albuquerque – ISC

**Decisions**

- The August 26<sup>th</sup>, 2010 SAR work group meeting notes were approved with minor editorial changes.

**Action Items**

- Amy Louise will give the CD copy of the low flow realignment draft EIS to Jenae Maestas to post to the Program's website (since it is too large to email).
- Robyn Harrison will send the Socorro Floodplain mapping link to Tetra Tech to distribute to the work group.
- Amy Louise will check to determine if an electronic copy of the themes table with ISC responses can be provided for posting to the website with access only to workgroup members.
- Tetra Tech will update the SAR membership to reflect Ayesha Burnet is no longer participating.
- Amy Louise will inform the PIO work group that the SAR field trip has been rescheduled to November 4<sup>th</sup>.
- Yasmeen Najmi will make a bullet list of actions that were identified in the San Acacia work shop.
- Robert Padilla will schedule a Reclamation conference room for the SAR work group meeting on December 2<sup>nd</sup> from 12:30pm to 3:30pm.

**Meeting Summary**

- Gina Dello Russo brought the meeting to order and the agenda was approved with a minor change in order - the scope of work discussion was moved to directly following the action item review.
- The August 26<sup>th</sup>, 2010 SAR work group meeting notes were approved with minor editorial changes.
- The action items from the last meeting were reviewed; all actions were completed with the exception of including definitions into the Agency Response to Themes - which is in progress and expected to be completed soon.
- In a closed session, the work group members discussed the draft scopes of work. Please direct any questions to meeting attendees.
- Attendees then discussed the Agency Response to Themes table and if it was still considered a useful document. It was agreed that the table is a good internal tool for the work group but has great potential as a public tool – as long as it can be developed for release to the public. It was suggested the work group switch focus and look at the actions from the work shop instead of spending more time on the themes response. The themes

were a “first step” in understanding what abilities and/or responsibilities agencies have to address certain issues. Review of the workshop actions could be the next step

- The Agency Response to Themes table will be considered as complete as possible (for the time being) once Reclamation’s responses and the definitions have been included. The actions from the workshop could be used to find the areas (in the table) that need more “fleshing out.”
- Attendees also discussed the levee project and updates.
- The field trip, originally scheduled for October 28<sup>th</sup>, has been rescheduled to November 4<sup>th</sup>. There will not be an October meeting. The December meeting is schedule for December 2<sup>nd</sup> in Albuquerque. The work group will return to the regular schedule of the 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday of every month in the New Year.

**Next Meeting: November 4<sup>th</sup> Field Trip to Socorro; meet at the Bosque del Apache Refuge Visitor Center at 9:00am**

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**Meeting Notes – 09/23/10 12:30 PM to 3:30 PM**

- **Introductions and Agenda Approval:** Gina Dello Russo brought the meeting to order and the agenda was approved with a minor change in order - the scope of work discussion was moved to directly following the action item review.
- **Update on HR workshop:**
  - In a brief update, it was shared that the Habitat River Restoration Workshop held on September 21<sup>st</sup> 2010 went very well. There were very informative presentations and good, substantive input from attendees. Discussions focused on communication, including clarification on the definitions and meaning of commonly used terms and approaches (ex. what is meant by “restoration”). Also, the “unknowns” and uncertainties for the Middle Rio Grande were communicated as was some adaptive management.
  - It was interesting for attendees to learn that adaptive management and restoration techniques have been done in other parts of the country for years so they have a better level of certainty which is not the case in the southwest with a sand bed river system.
- **SA reach project map**
  - Gina Dello Russo shared a map (created by Ondrea Hummel at the Corps) that spatially depicts past projects; A&R recommended projects, land ownership distinctions and all overlaid with the 2005 high flow for the San Acacia Reach. The map could be useful in guiding specific discussions on projects or as a visual aid.
- **Approval of 08/26/10 SAR Meeting Minutes:**
  - The August 26<sup>th</sup>, 2010 SAR work group meeting notes were approved with the following minor changes:
    - Pg 4: second paragraph from bottom, add the word “not” in front of “...known if there are any electronic copies.”
    - Pg 6: under maintain access to river theme; reword the first bullet to read “This theme involves both legal and physical access.” At the end of that section, “...levee project plans still *being* formulated.”
    - Pg 8: end first paragraph, would prefer to limit development (.) insert period (delete the extra words: stay out of);
    - Pg 9: add “*will* clarify” to Yasmeen’s action;
    - Pg 11: program update 1<sup>st</sup> bullet “ starting in fiscal year” instead of stating
- **Action Item Review**
  - ✓ 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. – *completed;*

- ✓ 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. – *completed;*
- ✓ 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*) – *completed;*
  - The Service would not allow Reclamation to consult separately on the realignment – the operations of the low flow had to be included. This caused delay. There was also another project that Reclamation was working on at the same time and the cost estimate was off by nearly \$300 million which caused the authorization of the realignment project to be questioned. The scope was so significant regarding the potential changes in the low flow that there was a lot of uncertainty if Reclamation had the proper authority to proceed without congressional authorization.

**Action:** Amy Louse will give the CD copy of the low flow realignment draft EIS to Jenae Maestas to post to the Program’s website (since it is too large to email).

- ✓ 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*); – *completed;*
  - Unfortunately, the documents could not be found; but basically the same topics that this group discusses now were also covered in that group.
- ✓ Yasmeen Najmi will look for any documents pertaining to the San Acacia South group (active around 2001 or 2002) in MRGCD archives. – *completed;*
  - Unfortunately, no documents could be found in the MRGCD archives and David Gensler didn’t think that there was anything easily accessible.
- ✓ SAR work group members are tasked with completing their respective Agency Response to Themes by the next SAR meeting, scheduled for July 22<sup>nd</sup>. (*continued from 08/26/10 meeting*); – *completed;*
- ✓ 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. – *completed;*
- ✓ Robert Padilla will provide a copy of the FEMA handout provided at the Levee Task Force meeting this past summer. – *completed;*
- ✓ Ryan Gronewold and Gina Dello Russo will develop a draft scope of work for *Preserve riparian corridor in an undeveloped state/Floodplain Encroachment* for FY11. – *completed;*
  - There was more detail in the draft scope than was discussed with the Corps supervisors; but based on the conversation the Corps is willing and able to participate in this project.
  - As far as the time frame on this project moving forward, the scopes are currently being worked on. The projects will be presented to the EC at the October meeting. It is assumed that there will be continuing resolution so the on-going projects will be given funding priority and it is not known how much funds will be available for new projects. The funding may not come in until

- next March but the project will definitely not be initiated before the end of the year unless the Corps's funding can be applied and used.
- There is a draft initial FY11 budget spreadsheet that was created based on last year's projects and the assumed continuing resolution. However, there is potential lack of storage space for supplemental water so project scopes need to be developed and ready to go in case Reclamation can't purchase as much supplemental water this year. Those "extra" funds and any unexpended funds could then be spent on other projects.
  - ✓ Ryan Gronewold 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. – *completed;*
  - ✓ Amy Louise will provide SAR work group members with the Reclamation Contracting office Scope of Work template. – *completed;*
  - ✓ Robyn Harrison will get a status update on FEMA changes in Socorro County. – *completed;*
    - Delilah Walsh, the county manager, shared that the floodplain mapping continues but not final results are not expected until the end of the year. However, there is a Google link on the Socorro County page that is updated monthly with the progress.
    - Tech is collaborating on an arroyo floodplain plan.
    - The Land Use Commission has talked about hiring a floodplain manager for Socorro County but decided they did not like the Sierra County model in which the manager is appointed by the governor. The manager then hires people to do the work but none of them are accountable to the County. The Land Use Commission decided to instead write their own ordinance and hire their own manager. The written ordinance is expected by the end of November.
    - The Emergency Response Officer for Socorro County has been invited to the SAR work group meetings and may attend in the future.

**Action:** Robyn Harrison will send the Socorro Floodplain mapping link to Tetra Tech to distribute to the work group.

- ✓ 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. – *in process; expected to be completed by next week;*
  - The work is in progress but not all the definitions have been completed yet. The challenge is that the statements could mean something different to the different themes. In addition, not all of the workshop groups addressed all the themes.
- ✓ Tetra Tech and Amy Louise send San Acacia workshop draft notes to Yasmeen Najmi. – *completed;*
- ✓ Page Pegram will develop a draft scope of work on the White Paper Development (cost for editing or production?). – *completed;*

- **FY11 Scopes of Work – Due October 1<sup>st</sup>**
  - In a closed session, the work group members discussed the draft scopes of work. Please direct any questions to meeting attendees.
- **Agency Response to Themes**
  - It was again stressed that this response to themes table is strictly for internal SAR work group use only and not to be distributed electronically to others outside the regular work group members. Attendees discussed how to address the concern of inappropriate distribution; suggestions included (1) using only hard copies (which could be a difficulty); (2) posting the file as pass-word protected to the website to limit access; and (3) only recording general notes without specific details.

**Action:** Amy Louise will check to determine in an electronic copy of the themes table with ISC responses can be provided for posting to the website.

**Action:** Tetra Tech will update the SAR membership to reflect Ayesha Burnet is no longer participating.

- Reclamation’s response to themes is in process but is not available yet. Attendees discussed the purpose behind the table and if the document was still considered a useful tool to determine “hot spots” or intersections between agencies. The purpose of developing the table was an attempt to try to respond to and use the work shop as a tool to move forward. In addition, there is benefit in clarifying the language that different agencies feel comfortable with in describing the response themes.
  - It was expressed that the document is viewed as helpful, but the resolution of language to make it more public (i.e., a document for public use in workshops) is important to make it truly useful. There is concern that people participating in the workshop didn’t understand the intersection of the involved agencies.
  - It is also beneficial to capture the current agency policies, missions, statutes, etc. so people know where to appropriate direct issues. It is important to know who the “players” are.
  - It was apparent from the workshop that the public wanted to know who was from where, what they represented, and what their intentions were. The response to themes document is a really good first step as a tool for the public.
  - Attendees then discussed the levee project in terms of the possible opportunities for coordination and communication between agencies.
    - Reclamation has shared the levee set back project information with the Corps; and the Corps has been diligent in collecting all pertinent data and sharing that data with Reclamation. Both agencies collaborated on some of the stakeholder meetings. And Reclamation consulted with the Corps on the Bosque del Apache Refuge emergency levee issues.
    - The levee project is still in the planning phase. The focusing has been on trying to pick the plan that maximizes the net economic benefit. This means that levee heights, inclusion of the bridge, incorporating the Tiffany sediment basin are all still unknowns. It is assumed that anything regarding the levee set backs would probably be the same among all the plans.

- A long time ago, the lower end of the project was cut by 10 or 15 miles. The downstream end of the study area is the railroad bridge but that may not be where the construction stops.
- This project is not 100% funded, there is a cost share/maintenance portion. While the normal funding split is usually 75/25, this project is complicated since the benefits were obtained from protecting the low flow channel which is a federal benefit.
- Members also discussed the intended strategy for coordination with the Service, once the economic design is chosen (the possible mitigation, opportunities to couple construction with environmental benefits, etc.). William DeRagon can't do the effects analysis and mitigation plan until the economic plan has been selected since the details such as levee height or inclusion of Tiffany basin haven't been finalized yet.
  - The levee project is beneficial to the refuge since it will protect infrastructure, water delivery, and MRGCD works, etc. However, there would also be benefit to the valley ecosystem (ecological impacts) to have evaluated other opportunities that might be done in conjunction (ex. of filling in the low flow channel in places so that it doesn't have the same gradient; or addressing seepage rates from the river to the low flow channel with the opportunity to include underground blocks in the levee construction; etc.).
  - Once the recommended plan has been selected, then the effects will be evaluated, and then the mitigation plan will be written for those effects. Since the mitigation plan has not been started yet, there is still opportunity to have some of the "extra" environmental or ecosystem issues included or evaluated. It is believed that the Corps is close to recommending a plan which will then go out to an independent peer review as well as an internal agency review.
    - The Service shared that while the refuge has an interest in maintaining in-stream flows on the river, they also manage wetlands that get winter water from the low flow channel. Limiting seepage could impact the winter supply. That would not be the responsibility of the Corps to evaluate. But if that sort of mitigation was brought forward then the refuge would be responsible for considering the impacts. It would be an opportunity for coordination.
  - The work group then discussed the work plan and work group objectives. Expressed in the workshop notes is an action to convene another San Acacia meeting. That is included in the work group's public outreach piece. Having

a “public” version of the Agency Response to Themes Table would be ideal for this.

- The work group mission and objective is to look at what work is currently being done, how issues are being approached, is the collaboration as efficient and effective as possible, are there any people/agencies/entities that could be involved but aren't, etc. Then using this information, it is a charge for the work group to determine if there are ways of improving how issues are being addressed and to make recommendations on potential changes.
- It was suggested that maybe the work group switch focus and look at the actions from the work shop instead of spending more time on the themes response. The themes were a “first step” to understanding what abilities and/or responsibilities agencies have to address certain issues. Review of the workshop actions could be the next step to determining the linkage between what is being done currently on-the-ground, what needs to be done, who could do take the lead, and maybe develop ore specific objectives under each of the objectives to bring clarity to what the Program can or can't do. The public and local officials and stakeholders should be a part of that.
  - The Agency Response to Themes table will be considered as complete as possible (for the time being) once Reclamation's responses and the definitions have been included. The actions from the workshop could be used to find the areas (in the table) that need more “fleshing out.”
  - The work group has a responsibility to acknowledge the issues and challenges brought up in the workshop but energy should be focused on those areas that we can actually affect.

**Action:** Yasmeen Najmi will make a bullet list of actions that were identified in the San Acacia work shop.

- **SAR Field Trip**

- Due to scheduling conflicts, the SAR field trip to the Socorro area has been postponed until November 4<sup>th</sup>. Everyone interested should meet at the Bosque del Apache Refuge Visitor Center at 9:00am for regular business. Participants will then tour the ET towers, the channel widening project, River Mile 83, the Rhodes Property, and possibly more areas and points of interest.

**Action:** Amy Louise will inform the PIO work group that the SAR field trip has been postponed until November 4<sup>th</sup>.

- **Program Update**

- The EC met in a closed session on September 16<sup>th</sup>. Report outs from that meeting are not available yet. The CC will meet on October 6<sup>th</sup> to discuss the FY11 budget and LTP. The updated LTP information will be presented to the EC at the October meeting as well.
- The Database Management System (DBMS) held a final workshop on August 31<sup>st</sup>; the comment period on the data model is no closed. The contractors have compiled all comments and have begun addressing those comments. There is still a need for



raw data; the document library is significantly populated but the raw data is still lacking.

- The Adaptive Management process was awarded to ESSA, a contractor from British Columbia. The contractor will be in town on October 12<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup>, and 14<sup>th</sup> for the first meetings on the adaptive management project. There will be individual agency meetings, a field trip, and possible work group meetings scheduled for those days. Details will be sent out.
- **Next Meetings**
  - No October meeting.
  - November 4<sup>th</sup> – Field Trip to the San Acacia Reach. There will be regular business held in the morning so a note taker is requested for that portion.
  - December 2<sup>nd</sup> from 12:30 to 3:30, Albuquerque. Tentatively at Reclamation.

**Action:** Robert Padilla will schedule a Reclamation conference room for the SAR work group meeting on December 2<sup>nd</sup> from 12:30pm to 3:30pm.

**San Acacia Reach Ad Hoc Work group  
23 September 2010 Meeting Attendees**

NAME	AFFILIATION	PHONE NUMBER	EMAIL ADDRESS
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