

**Middle Rio Grande Endangered Species Collaborative Program
Habitat Restoration Workgroup (HRW) Meeting
21 June 2011, Tuesday
12:30-3:30 pm at FWS**

Actions

- Susan Bittick will confirm that Jerry Nieto is available to present on MRG Bernalillo to Belen Flood Risk Management on July 19th.
- Susan Bittick will ask Mickey Porter to send the presentation from the webinar on the mesohabitat mapping in Big Bend to the ScW and HRW.
- Susan Bittick will ask Monika Mann to distribute the shapefile with the potential mesohabitat mapping sites to HRW and ScW.
- Monika Mann will send an email to the HRW explaining/updating the work group on the Open House/Technical Sessions agenda item.
- Anders and Rick will meet with the PIO workgroup to recommend that the Program look at reaching out to community groups and teachers.
- Anders Lundahl and Colin Lee will draft a statement on HRW's standpoint on fish passage and distribute to the work group for review.
- Ondrea Hummel will ask Jericho Lewis if federal land proposals will be received at the same time as the non-federal land proposals.

Outstanding and Continued Actions

- Peter Wilkinson will write up recommendations concerning the San Acacia Diversion Dam Fish Passage Peer Review for developing a comprehensive strategic plan.
(*continued from May 2011*)

Decisions

- The May 17, 2011 HRW meeting minutes were approved with no changes.

Meeting Summary

- Rick Billings brought the meeting to order and introductions were made. The agenda was approved with the postponement of the MRG Bernalillo to Belen Flood Risk Management Presentation by Jerry Nieto for a future Habitat Restoration Work (HRW) group meeting. Jerry Nieto may be available to present at the July 19th HRW meeting. Susan Bittick will confirm that Jerry is available to present on MRG Bernalillo to Belen Flood Risk Management to HRW on July 19th. Attendees also briefly discussed the need for a second Co-Chair.
- It was announced that John Peterson, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), will be giving a technical presentation on the LIDAR and Digital Ortho-photography datasets collected for the Program. The presentation will be on Wednesday, June 22.
- The May 17, 2011 HRW meeting minutes were approved with no changes.
- Meeting attendees performed an action item review. All action items were completed with the exception of one ongoing item; Peter Wilkinson will write up recommendations concerning the San Acacia Diversion Dam Fish Passage Peer Review for developing a comprehensive strategic plan.

- Mark Doles gave attendees an update on the status of the Bosque Farms Entrapment Alleviation project. The project has gone for public review and comments from several agencies were received. One of the comments had to do with the integrity of the levee in the area. The USACE H&H staff have discussed ways to deal with the issue and it was determined that the project will not continue until the issue is resolved. At present USACE will have a No Action plan; the public comments will be answered for EA and the issues with constructability will be cited. Once future plans include levee rehabilitation or the levee is rehabilitated USACE can then proceed with this project or a modification of it.
- Meeting attendees discussed a USACE project to contract USGS to complete mesohabitat mapping in the MRG (similar to what a USGS team did in Big Bend). It was shared that in this morning's Science Work group (ScW), meeting attendees discussed having the mapping done concurrently with the sampling done by ASIR.
 - Some attendees recommended that USACE work with HRW to include habitat restoration sites. It was also recommended that USACE communicate with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to verify that a permit is not needed because though the project is not expected to include fish handling there is the possibility for habitat/fish disturbance and the permitting process can take several months.
 - Having a question/answer session with USGS and more information on the mapping in Big Bend may be beneficial. Susan Bittick will ask Mickey Porter to send the presentation from the webinar on the mesohabitat mapping in Big Bend to the ScW and HRW. A shapefile of the river with the sites indicated was also requested. Susan Bittick will ask Monika Mann to distribute the shapefile with the potential sites to HRW and ScW.
- Attendees were updated that the Program is discussing an Open House/Technical Sessions for Fall 2011. Monika Mann will send an email to the HRW explaining/updating the work group on the September Open House/Technical Sessions agenda item. Recommendations from the HRW are for the Program to look at reaching out to community groups and local teachers instead of holding a big event. Anders and Rick will meet with the PIO workgroup to recommend that the Program look at reaching out to community groups and teachers.
- Attendees discussed the HRW future activity summaries and the San Acacia Diversion Dam Fish Passage Peer Review Recommendation #7 for a strategic plan by river reach. The future activity summaries shouldn't need to be changed much to address the peer review recommendations. Peter Wilkinson is in the process of addressing Recommendation #7.
 - Though the recommendation calls for a strategic plan by river reach several work group members recommended that that the strategic plan be system wide. It was also recommended that the strategic plan be created in-house to ensure an applicable and quality product.
 - Work group members discussed drafting a statement indicating their standpoint on fish passage. Attendees were generally in agreement that fish passage is a part of habitat restoration and can be important for the longitudinal connectivity of the river, though it may not be as important as floodplain connectivity or other issues. Anders Lundahl and Colin Lee will draft a statement on HRW's standpoint on fish passage and distribute to the work group for review.

- Attendees were updated that the RFP for habitat restoration construction for non-federal lands was released. Some members of the work group had previously requested that federal land proposals be received concurrently so they could be evaluated at the same time; Ondrea Hummel will ask Jericho Lewis if federal land proposals will be received at the same time as the non-federal land proposals.
- Attendees were updated that Rick Billings was invited by Population Viability Analysis (PVA) work group Co-Chairs to brief the PVA work group on what the HRW has been doing. Rick attended the last PVA meeting and gave them a brief synopsis of what HRW has been doing and also posed questions to the PVA work group on whether or not the PVA could help HRW to answer some of their habitat questions; Dr. Goodman (PVA FORTRAN modeler) indicated that the PVA could be useful for this. The purpose of the meeting with the PVA work group was to help build communication between the PVA work group and HRW.

Next HRW meeting July 19, 2011 from 12:30 pm to 3:30 pm at Interstate Stream Commission

- Tentative Agenda Items include: (1) MRG Bernalillo to Belen Flood Risk Management Presentation (Jerry Nieto);

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Meeting Notes

Introductions and Agenda Approval

- Rick Billings brought the meeting to order and introductions were made. The agenda was approved with the postponement of the Middle Rio Grande (MRG) Bernalillo to Belen Flood Risk Management Presentation by Jerry Nieto for a future Habitat Restoration Work (HRW) group meeting.
- Jerry Nieto may be available to present at the July 19th HRW meeting. Jerry will also present on the Bernalillo to Belen Project.

Actions: Susan Bittick will confirm that Jerry is available to present on MRG Bernalillo to Belen Flood Risk Management to HRW on July 19th.

- Attendees also briefly discussed the need for a second Co-Chair as the work group has had a single Co-Chair for over a year. It was shared that the Coordination Committee (CC) had determined that for technical work groups both Co-Chairs can be federal or non-federal if needed. The group was also briefly updated that the Executive Committee (EC) is looking at restructuring the work groups so there may be some changes.

Announcements

- It was announced that John Peterson, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), will be giving a technical presentation on the LIDAR and Digital Ortho-photography datasets collected for the Program. The presentation will be on Wednesday, June 22.

Approve May's meeting minutes

Decision: The May 17, 2011 HRW meeting minutes were approved with no changes.

Action Item Review

- Peter Wilkinson will write up recommendations concerning the San Acacia Diversion Dam Fish Passage Peer Review for developing a comprehensive strategic plan.
 - Ongoing; this action item will remain as ongoing as Peter was no present at today's meeting.
- Susan will work on having a large discussion on involving people in a project for levee reconstruction using a cost sharing approach (Entrapment Alleviation)
 - Complete.
- Rick will ask Santa Ana for a presentation progress report and will secure a financial report for the whole project.
 - Complete.
 - Santa Ana will report out at the September HRW meeting.

- Rick will have all grant recipients provide a report at a time convenient to the recipients to find out what has been accomplished and thereby help HRW develop projects downstream.
 - Complete.
 - The reports will begin in September.

Bosque Farms Entrapment Alleviation Status Update

- Mark Doles gave an update on the status of the Bosque Farms Entrapment Alleviation Project. The project has gone for public review and comments from several agencies were received. One of the comments had to do with the integrity of the levee in the area. The USACE H&H staff has discussed putting water against the levee in order to deal with this issue. In a different report that looked at the levee system the reach was identified as having lots of sloughing of the drains during larger events in 2005 and 2009. USACE's Geotech advised that more frequent inundation could cause additional problems to the riverside drain and given enough time without repairs it would go into the levee. As the issue is a foundational problem and would require more than levee reconstruction it was determined that the project will not continue until the issue with the irrigation structure or the levee has been resolved. A project of this scale would need to be long term.
 - Attendees were also notified that the Internal Agreement (IA) with Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) has expired and that some of the funding was returned to be used for other projects.
 - At present USACE will have a No Action plan; the public comments will be answered for EA and the issues with constructability will be cited. Once future plans include levee rehabilitation or the levee is rehabilitated, USACE can then proceed with this project or a modification of it.
 - It was shared that the Bernalillo to Belen Project has a study to do levee rehabilitation. The cost share partner is likely Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District (MRGCD).
 - In response to a question from a previous meeting of whether or not the Bernalillo to Belen project would include habitat restoration it was said that the group may find out when Jerry presents in July.
 - Attendees briefly discussed that there is the situation where agencies do not have ecosystem rehabilitation authority and can't add habitat restoration to a project.
 - It was pointed out that incorporating habitat restoration often increases cost share for non-federal agencies.
 - It was asked if the HRW could have a discussion with USACE Geotechnical staff about the Bosque Farms area regarding what be done to minimize flood risk and also be beneficial to the species. There may also be a need for broader discussion with all the agencies as there have been concerns voiced about keeping water in the channel.
 - It was shared that the Corps is working on the non agriculture lands on San Acacia to Bosque Del Apache and that the Bosque Del Apache Wildlife Refuge

was approached about moving the levee and the low flow back. It would require 5 to 6 feet of fill to bring the overbanking back to the channel. The Refuge was amenable to the setback but not to the addition of fill as this would separate the vegetation from the water table. The project will not move forward because without the fill it's a minnow and water trap but the project will be presented as an alternative in USACE's next Environmental Impact Statement.

- Mark Doles was thanked for his update on the project.

MRG Mesohabitat Project

- Meeting attendees discussed a USACE project that Mickey Porter is working on to contract USGS to complete mesohabitat mapping in the MRG (similar to what a USGS team did in Big Bend). The HRW and Science Work group (ScW) were asked give their preferences and recommendations from a list of potential sites.
 - It was shared that in this morning's ScW meeting attendees discussed having the mapping done concurrently with the sampling done by Jason Remshardt and ASIR. This had generally been perceived as favorable within ScW.
 - Meeting attendees thought that the monitoring sites would be fine but they also recommended that USACE work with HRW to include habitat restoration sites as the mapping may allow gaging the effectiveness of the sites.
 - It would also be valuable to see if the habitat in the MRG correlates with the habitat in Big Bend.
 - Attendees briefly discussed permitting.
 - If the mapping is planned to be done in October when ASIR and Jason will be sampling then it was suggested that USACE communicate with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (the Service) to verify that a permit is not needed because though the project is not expected to include fish handling there is the possibility for habitat/fish disturbance and the permitting process can take several months.
 - It was believed that staff will be on the bank and not in the river.
 - If the design for the USACE project is similar to other habitat mapping projects then staff will be in the water with a GPS. A concern for the Service could be whether the project will be adding disturbance on top of the disturbance caused by the monitoring. There was also concern that if a permit is needed that the timeframe for obtaining one is 6 months. .
 - It was asked if mapping during different time periods to get base flows for different seasons would be included in the project.
 - It was said this is something that USACE is considering and they have been looking at the associated costs.
 - The meeting attendees generally agreed that they would like to see the project move forward with the monitoring sites but that they would like to have some of the habitat restoration sites mapped as well. The group will be further reviewing the list of sites.

- The HRW recommend that USACE work with HRW to include habitat restoration sites and that USACE begin communication with the Service to verify that a permit will not be needed.
- It was asked if there is a way to map geomorphology on a reach wide basis.
 - Acoustic Doppler has been used to do cross sections of a reach but there has not been continuous mapping.
 - It was said that it would interesting to map reach wide and find where the minnows are.
- It was asked if it would be helpful to have USGS meet with ScW and HRW for a question/answer session and to provide more information on the habitat mapping in Big Bend.
 - It was agreed that it would be useful to have as many resources as possible.
 - It was also suggested that a spatial temporal framework for the project also be provided.
- It was also discussed that there is a continuous shifting of the sand; the mesohabitat moves around.
 - The Big Bend webinar was thought to have included information on this.

Action: Susan Bittick will ask Mickey Porter to send the presentation from the webinar on the mesohabitat mapping in Big Bend to the ScW and HRW.

- A shapefile of the river with the sites indicated was also requested.

Action: Susan Bittick will ask Monika Mann to distribute the shapefile with the potential sites to HRW and ScW.

- It was asked if the study was looking at the potential for minnow habitat above Cochiti Reservoir is being looked at as the first 5 proposed sites are above Cochiti Reservoir.
 - It was said that the proposed sites were probably a “shot gunning” of the entire area.

Open House/Technical Sessions Presentation Topics

- Attendees were updated that the Program is discussing an Open House/Technical Sessions for Fall 2011.

Action: Monika Mann will send an email to the HRW explaining/updating the work group on the Open House/Technical Sessions agenda item.

- A couple of HRW members expressed interest in having community groups (i.e. boy scouts, hikers, school children) visit restoration sites.
- It was suggested that it might be a better effort to reach out to community groups individually as opposed to holding a big event – going to the community instead of having the community come to the Program.
- It was suggested that the Program also reach out to neighborhood associations.
- Another suggestion was that the Public Information and Outreach (PIO) work group also communicate with the National Teachers Association to make information available to teachers and school children.

- It was said that in the legislation a percentage of the budget is designated for public outreach.
- HRW recommends that the Program consider reaching out to community groups and local teachers instead of holding a large event.

Actions: Anders and Rick will meet with the PIO workgroup to recommend that the Program look at reaching out to community groups and teachers.

HRW Activity Summary Relevance Review

- Attendees briefly discussed the HRW Long Term Plan (LTP) Future Activity summaries. There was general agreement from meeting attendees that there shouldn't need to be any changes for the summaries to be included in the LTP.
- Meeting attendees discussed the San Acacia Diversion Dam (SADD) Fish Passage Peer Review Recommendation #7 for a strategic plan by river reach. Attendees were reminded that Recommendation #7 had jumped out to the HRW as being relevant to habitat restoration and Peter Wilkinson is in the process of addressing this recommendation (see action item).
 - It was one opinion that there would be greater value in developing a strategic plan for the whole system because areas are always affected by what's happening upstream and downstream.
 - Though conditions change between reaches what you fundamentally want to see should be similar throughout.
 - Several HRW members voiced agreement for a system wide strategic plan.
 - There was recommendation from an HRW member that the strategic plan be created in-house to ensure an applicable and quality product.
 - It was commented that a strategic plan can only be created for things that can be managed (habitat, species, and water).
- Attendees discussed the work group's perspective on fish passage.
 - It was one opinion that many agencies might not be proponents of fish passage because of the high costs associated with the current design. Since the SADD fish passage project has been planned to be so costly those who don't think it's a critical component do not support it.
 - It was one opinion that fish passage is a part of habitat restoration. It should be recognized that longitudinal connectivity is important though it might not be more important than floodplain connectivity or other issues.
 - A fish passage brings the ability for the fish to self salvage and would make sense when dealing with drying.
 - It was the opinion of several attendees that the HRW could develop a statement for their position regarding fish passage. This could include their view on fish passage as a whole and where they view its priority.
 - It was suggested that the group look at the Isleta Dam Fish Passage report.

- Several other attendees concurred they also viewed fish passage as a form of habitat restoration.
- It was also commented that there are more natural fish passage structures available than the one proposed for SADD.
- Though fish passage is a part of the 2003 BiOp it was not known if fish passage has been included in the LTP.
- Attendees were generally in agreement that fish passage is a part of habitat restoration and can be important for the longitudinal connectivity of the river, though it may not be as important as floodplain connectivity or other issues.

Action: Anders Lundahl and Colin Lee will draft a statement on HRW's standpoint on fish passage and distribute to the work group for review.

Adding new maintenance/monitoring phase to HR work

- It was discussed that if a monitoring phase was added to habitat restoration work it might consist of questions like *Did the channel fill and will it have to be dug out?* and *Did vegetation need to be replaced?*
 - It was not known exactly what the work group was being asked to do for this agenda item. This agenda item will be postponed until it's determined what Jericho Lewis (BOR Contracting Officer) wants from the work group.
- Attendees were updated that the RFP for habitat restoration construction for non-federal lands was released.
 - Attendees were reminded that the group had discussed ways to get habitat restoration done and some members of the work group had previously requested that federal land proposals be received concurrently so they could be evaluated at the same time.

Action: Ondrea Hummel will ask Jericho Lewis if federal land proposals will be received at the same time as the non-federal land proposals.

- It was commented that some of the cost of restoration work is redoing compliance.
- It was also commented that there should be a way to evaluate and structure approaches. For example, removing an acre of salt cedar is not the same as lowering an acre to reconnect the river; in this broad perspective there should be some hierarchy of what types of restoration work the Program wants to get done.
 - USACE uses a system of hierarchy when evaluating habitat restoration projects.
 - It was asked whether or not 150 acres of habitat restoration a year is enough in a 70,000 acre system to implement adaptive management.
 - It was suggested that flood plain connectivity or some other indicator be used to measure restoration instead of acres.
 - It was suggested that in-channel habitat be focused on more as there are times when the floodplain does not connect for several years so there is the possibility that some generations spend their entire life in the channel. Putting large debris into the river can create in-channel banks, though it would be difficult to monitor.

- It was also expressed that there is still a need to review habitat restoration projects in the MRG. There needs to be a translation on what the affects of managing at the reservoir level have on the biology of the minnow.

Program Update

- Attendees were updated that Rick billings was invited by Population Viability Analysis (PVA) work group Co-Chairs to brief the PVA work group on what the HRW has been working on. Rick attended the last PVA meeting and gave them a brief synopsis of what HRW has been working on and also posed questions to the PVA work group on whether or not the PVA could help HRW to answer some of their habitat questions; Dr. Goodman (PVA FORTRAN modeler) indicated that his PVA model could be useful for this. The purpose of the meeting with the PVA work group was to help build communication between the PVA work group and HRW. The PVA work group appreciated seeing what the other work groups have been doing and how they may be able to utilize the PVA models.
- Attendees discussed the need for a workshop to review the habitat restoration that has happened in the Middle Rio Grande.
 - It was shared that the CC recently had a discussion on habitat restoration in the MRG.
 - It was also said that it might be logical to come up with some conceptual framework for habitat restoration. It would be good to get input on what types of restoration have worked.
 - Attendees briefly discussed the physical systems modeling.
 - The overall physical model will apply to any location and then the constraints in each reach are recognized.
 - It was said that one thing that was not conveyed in the physical model is that there are 2 different aspects: 1) the point and time relationships in the floodplain; and 2) the input of water and sediment. Both of these aspects need to be managed.

Next HRW meeting July 19, 2011 from 12:30 pm to 3:30 pm at Interstate Stream Commission

- Tentative Agenda Items include: (1) MRG Bernalillo to Belen Flood Risk Management Presentation (Jerry Nieto);

Potential Future Agenda Items

1. San Acacia A&R Peer Review Discussion of next steps (Gina)
2. Follow up on CC Request from workgroups for San Acacia Diversion Dam Fish Passage Peer Review Recommendations

**Habitat Restoration Work Group Meeting
21 April 2011 Meeting Attendees**

NAME	POSITION	AFFILIATION	PHONE NUMBER	EMAIL ADDRESS
Rick Billings	HR Chair	ABCWUA	796-2527	rbillings@abcwua.org
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