

**Middle Rio Grande Endangered Species Collaborative Program  
Habitat Restoration Workgroup (HRW) Meeting  
19 July 2011, Tuesday  
12:30-3:30 pm at Interstate Stream Commission**

**Actions**

- Monika Mann will distribute website login and password information to the HRW so that work group members can view the maps of potential mesohabitat mapping sites.
- Monika Mann will send an email to all HRW members to ask if they are able take on the role of work group Co-Chair.
- Anders Lundahl will implement the edits to the HRW Fish Passage Statement discussed during today's meeting and distribute to the HRW for review.
- Gina Dello Russo will begin compilation of a list of tasks that are the work group's priority tasks and a list of things like maps and historic flows that will be useful to the work group in habitat restoration planning and send to the HRW for review.
- Gina Dello Russo will attempt to address SADD Peer Review Recommendation #7 in the broad context of where the HRW plans to go and send to the HRW for review.

**Decision**

- The June 21<sup>st</sup>, 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 no changes.
- It was announced that there will be a presentation for the Science (ScW) and Habitat Restoration (HRW) work groups on August 16<sup>th</sup> from 11:30 AM to 12:30 PM (in between the ScW and HRW regularly scheduled meetings). The presentation will be from USGS and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (the Corps) on the mesohabitat mapping project. Any additional site suggestions for the mesohabitat mapping should be sent to Mickey Porter by Friday, July 22<sup>nd</sup>. The maps of the potential sites are on the Program website under Habitat Restoration Work group Documents. Monika Mann will distribute website login and password information to the HRW so that work group members can view the maps of potential mesohabitat mapping sites.
- The June 21<sup>st</sup>, 2011 HRW meeting minutes were approved with no changes.
- Attendees then reviewed the June and other outstanding action items. All but one of the June actions were completed.
- Meeting attendees discussed the need for a second Co-Chair. Concerns were voiced that signatories also need to provide regular meeting attendees to all work groups in general as the amount of active work group members has dwindled to the point where the work groups are becoming less effective. Monika Mann will send an email to all HRW members to ask if they are able take on the role of work group Co-Chair.
- Attendees reviewed and discussed the HRW Fish Passage Statement. The intention of the statement is to point out: 1) that fish passage is a habitat restoration tool; and 2) that the HRW sees fish passage as being important but not a priority at this point. Attendees discussed that the Program should set up low cost monitoring to further investigate the need for a fish passage and have a low cost evaluation of other more cost efficient/appropriate fish passage options. Anders Lundahl will implement the edits discussed during today's meeting and distribute to the HRW for review.

- Meeting attendees discussed the San Acacia Diversion Dam Peer Review Recommendation #7 (habitat restoration plan). Attendees were in agreement that a habitat restoration plan for the entire middle Rio Grande system should be developed in order for the Program to be strategic in each reach and for the work group to be more proactive in habitat restoration. The HRW would like to start doing an internal review of the past projects/ changes in the channel in order to prioritize projects for FY12.
- Gina Dello Russo presented a summary of the findings from the San Acacia A&R Peer Review and the proposed next steps for the work group to take. Attendees discussed that support from the Program and agencies will be needed in order to take some of the next steps, particularly for a systems analysis. The work group will need to have discussions on priorities in terms of what to propose for funding and what to pull funding from in order to make a system wide analysis happen. The work group agreed to compile, via email, a list of the work group's priority tasks and a list of things like maps and historic flows that will be useful to the work group in habitat restoration planning; Gina Dello Russo will begin compilation of the list and send to the HRW for review. Gina Dello Russo will also attempt to address SADD Peer Review Recommendation #7 in the broad context of where the HRW plans to go and send to the HRW for review.
- Attendees were updated that the River Mile 83 contractors are interested in presenting an update on the project to the HRW regarding the 4<sup>th</sup> alternative (change in channel location). Attendees were in favor of viewing the presentation; the contractor may be able to present at the August 16<sup>th</sup> HRW meeting.
- Attendees were reminded that the deadline to sign up for the Database Management System (DBMS) Pilot Training ends on August 22.
- The new dates for the Program Technical Sessions and Open House are October 21 -22. Some suggested topics for the technical sessions were an overview of habitat restoration in the middle Rio Grande and the 2010 Monitoring Report.

**Next Meeting: August 16<sup>th</sup>, 2011**

**Potential Future Agenda Items**

1. **August- Sandia Monitoring Update (SWCA)**
2. **August- MRG Bernalillo to Belen Flood Risk Management Presentation (Jerry Nieto)**
3. **August- USGS Big Bend Mesohabitat Mapping study presentation (Potential Joint workgroup Meeting)**
4. **August – Update on RM 83 project**

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Habitat Restoration Workgroup (HRW) Meeting  
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12:30-3:30 pm at Interstate Stream Commission**

**Meeting Notes**

**Introductions/Agenda Approval**

- Rick Billings brought the meeting to order and introductions were made.
- The agenda was approved with no changes.

**Announcements**

- It was announced that there will be a presentation from USGS and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (the Corps) on the mesohabitat mapping project from 11:30 AM to 12:30 PM on August 16<sup>th</sup>. The meeting will take place in between the Science (ScW) and Habitat Restoration (HRW) work groups' regularly scheduled meetings.
  - Any additional site suggestions for the mesohabitat mapping should be sent to Mickey Porter by Friday, July 22<sup>nd</sup>.
  - It was asked if the project will be looking at different flows
    - Current plans are to get base flows on a suite of sites this winter and then look at the sites under spring peak flows as well. Mickey is looking for sites with history and sites with contrast. The sites are probably a couple of acres in size.
    - The mesohabitat mapping project that was done in Big Bend is being used as the template for this study.
    - The maps of the potential sites are on the Program website under Habitat Restoration Work group Documents, login is required to access this portion of the site.

**Action:** Monika Mann will distribute website login and password information to the HRW so that work group members can view the maps of potential mesohabitat mapping sites.

**Approve June's meeting minutes**

**Decision:** The June 21<sup>st</sup>, 2011 HRW meeting minutes were approved with no changes.

**Action Item Review for June**

- **Susan Bittick will confirm that Jerry Nieto is available to present on MRG Bernalillo to Belen Flood Risk Management on July 19<sup>th</sup>.**
  - Complete. Jerry Nieto will be presenting at the August 16<sup>th</sup> HRW work group meeting.
- **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.**
  - Complete. The presentation is available on the Program website.
- **Susan Bittick will ask Monika Mann to distribute the shapefile with the potential mesohabitat mapping sites to HRW and ScW.**
  - Complete. A map of the mesohabitat mapping sites is available on the Program website.
- **Monika Mann will send an email to the HRW explaining/updating the work group on the Open House/Technical Sessions agenda item.**

- Complete. This information was included on the agenda under Program Updates. In the future Monika plans to include the Program updates on the meeting agenda in case she is unable to attend a meeting.
- **Anders and Rick will meet with the PIO workgroup to recommend that the Program look at reaching out to community groups and teachers.**
  - Ongoing. Rick and Anders have contacted the Public Information and Outreach (PIO) Co-Chairs via email.
  - It was explained that the intention of this action item is to increase Program and habitat restoration awareness by inviting community groups, schools, and neighborhood associations to tour habitat restoration sites. It's hoped that this will be beneficial as it's easy to see the differences between areas with out of condition habitat and areas where there has been restoration.
    - It was shared that when school children were taken out to the river to see the fish and trees on the Bosque Del Apache Refuge (the Refuge) very positive feedback was received.
- **Anders Lundahl and Colin Lee will draft a statement on HRW's standpoint on fish passage and distribute to the work group for review.**
  - Complete. The HRW Fish Passage Statement was provided to the work group as a read ahead and is on today's agenda for discussion.
- **Ondrea Hummel will ask Jericho Lewis if federal land proposals will be received at the same time as the non-federal land proposals.**
  - Complete.
  - It was shared that the Refuge has sent a letter to Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) requesting assistance in funding habitat restoration projects that would benefit the species. The Refuge will be meeting with Reclamation technical and environmental staff before proposing the projects for Program funding. It was presumed that once the projects are developed they would come to the HRW for review. Sevilleta National Wildlife Refuge is also interested in proposing habitat restoration projects.
  - Meeting attendees received an update on the TPEC for *Habitat Restoration Construction*. Seven proposals were received. One thing that all the proposals were lacking was endangered species surveys in pre-monitoring; endangered species surveys need to occur before there is construction. Maps that showed the projects in relation to other projects, past projects, and future projects would have been helpful. The proposals were ranked and Jericho will be activating the contracts in the ranked order.
    - Concern was expressed that all the funding will be used before the federal projects can be reviewed. The work group will need to work with Jericho in order to make sure that the federal projects can be evaluated in relation to non-federal projects.
  - Attendees were reminded that the HRW had unanimously agreed that funding the projects would be a 2 step process: 1) design and compliance; 2) construction and monitoring.
    - A suggestion was to fund the first step of projects in order to get more projects started since there is sometimes a large time gap between the first and second steps.
    - It might be helpful for the work group to look at maps that they utilized at the previous meeting to prioritize projects and add the funded projects. A compilation of which projects have been funded and where will be useful in prioritizing projects for FY12.

- It was asked if it would possible to get Reclamation's position on how land ownership affects the Program's projects.
  - It was believed that Reclamation still has an interest in federal lands.
  - A majority of the land is in a federal dispute.
    - If projects cannot be done on the land that is involved in the federal dispute then this takes away a large area and the areas that are left may not need any restoration work.
    - It's believed that the District has ownership of the land but that Reclamation has an easement there.
- Attendees discussed how the HRW would evaluate their own project proposals in relation to other proposals that are received.
  - All the projects should be evaluated in the same way and it should be ensured that all agencies involved are at the table for ranking.
  - Some attendees were in favor for being able to dictate projects as opposed to putting out proposals.
  - The work group may need to talk to Jericho and the Coordination Committee to see if the HRW would be unable to evaluate projects if they have put forth a proposal.

#### **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)**
  - This item will be discussed during today's meeting.

#### **HRW Co-Chair Discussion**

- Meeting attendees discussed the need for a second Co-Chair.
  - Each agency needs to see if they've had someone serve as an HRW Co-Chair yet.
  - It was discussed that the Executive Committee (EC) has been looking at restructuring the Program so there will likely be a change to the work group structure.
  - Concerns were voiced that signatories also need to provide regular meeting attendees to all work groups in general as the amount of active work group members has dwindled to the point where the work groups are becoming less effective.
  - Cutting HRW meetings to every other month may make it easier for work group members to attend.
  - Attendees agreed that an email should be sent to all HRW members asking if they can be workgroup Co-Chair.

**Action:** Monika Mann will send an email to all HRW members to ask if they are able take on the role of work group Co-Chair.

- Rick Billings will also be raising this concern at the next CC meeting.

#### **HRW Fish Passage Statement**

- Attendees were reminded that the HRW Fish Passage Statement came about from the HRW's inability to answer the CC's questions regarding the San Acacia Diversion Dam (SADD) Fish Passage Peer Review Recommendations and a comment made at the latest adaptive management planning session that "fish passage is dead". The intention of the statement is to point out: 1) that

fish passage is a habitat restoration tool; and 2) that the HRW sees fish passage as being important but not a priority at this point.

- It was discussed that the fish passage structure that was evaluated in the SADD Fish Passage Peer Review was a significantly developed concept of a fish passage that may have had components that were unnecessary. The high costs associated with the proposed fish passage structure may have been one reason that agencies that didn't see fish passage as a priority were opposed. Something more cost effective could have been developed as the area shouldn't need a fish passage that would operate over 1000 cfs. Anecdotal evidence shows that a fish passage that would operate from 0 to 250 cfs would be more appropriate as it's believed that fish don't move upstream when flows are higher than 500 cfs.
- Attendees discussed the CC's question of if/how the SADD Fish Passage Peer Review Recommendations would change their current/future activities.
  - Once suggestion from attendees was to increase monitoring to see if the fish are piling up on the downstream apron of the dam.
    - It was said that the science of fish movement seems to be lacking. Large numbers of fish have been seen on the downstream apron but it's not believed that the fish would move upstream for any reason other than drying. A study by Platania and Dudley indicates that a small percentage of minnow move upstream.
    - It was suggested that low cost monitoring for this time of year should be set up as it may be possible for the SADD to be managed differently to allow fish to be able to pass. The fish's energetic ability and the environments affects on the fish's ability to move change throughout the year.
    - It was said that the purpose of fish passage should be for longitudinal connectivity and drying but not for genetics. Only a couple of fish every generation need to move in order to maintain the genetics and that is taken care of, intentionally or not, by the salvage program.
  - Meeting attendees agreed that suggested next steps should be included with the Fish Passage Statement.
  - It was said that since the SADD is older it may good to look at how the facility could be modernized.
  - It was asked if the RPA for a SADD Fish Passage is being evaluated for the new Biological Opinion (BO).
    - The Service is reviewing everything that was included in the 2003 BO but since the HRW Service representative is not directly involved with the BO process the specifics of this are not known.
- It was shared that the Reclamation Biological Assessment (BA) was delivered to the Pueblos and will be released to the Program on August 18<sup>th</sup>.
- Attendees discussed that though a peer review may add weight or help inform a project the Program needs to be careful about thinking that all the recommendations from a peer review need to be followed. As long as there is documentation as to why an action was taken or not taken then there is professionalism.
- One of the high costs associated with the SADD Fish Passage was for transportation of sediment off the site. It was shared that technical people working on the Platte River have been trying to work on methods to put sediment into the system and manage it through the lower reaches.

- It was commented that this is one area where a system wide analysis would be useful; it would ensure that sediment is not added to an area that has difficulty handling sediment.
- It was suggested that the phrase "...such as lateral floodplain connectivity..." be removed from the paragraph as the paragraph does not explain lateral floodplain connectivity and other issues well enough. The work group would need to have more thorough discussions if they wanted to say what issues would be more important than fish passage. It was commented that the HRW needs to be involved in discussions on other types of connectivity, other types of fish passage structures, and subreach analyses that would look at the whole middle Rio Grande system.
- Attendees agreed that the next steps to be included with the Fish Passage Statement be that the Program set up low cost monitoring to further investigate the need for a fish passage and that there be a low cost evaluation of other more cost efficient/appropriate fish passage options.

**Action:** Anders Lundahl will implement the edits discussed during today's meeting and distribute to the HRW for review.

### **SADD Fish Passage Peer Review Recommendation #7**

- Meeting attendees discussed the San Acacia Diversion Dam Peer Review Recommendation #7 (habitat restoration plan by reach). Attendees were in agreement that a habitat restoration plan for the entire middle Rio Grande system should be developed in order for the Program to be strategic in each reach and for the HRW to be more proactive in habitat restoration.
  - Different strategic aspects for each reach should be highlighted. Tools that will be needed for a systems wide analysis would be information on projects that have been done, changes in the channel in the last 20 years, and flows for the last 20 years. It was thought that this information could help the work group to take advantage of the opportunities in each reach and evaluate them for priority. It was commented that a fish passage could fall into these evaluations.
  - It was shared that Reclamation will be releasing a maintenance strategy for 11 reaches on the Rio Grande sometime this fall.
  - The work group would like to start taking an internal look at the habitat restoration work that has been done in the middle Rio Grande in September 2011 in order to prioritize projects for FY12.

### **San Acacia A&R Peer Review Discussion of next steps**

- Gina Dello Russo presented a summary of the findings from the San Acacia A&R Peer Review and the proposed next steps for the work group to take (*For details please see the presentation materials*).
  - Attendees discussed that support from the Program and agencies will be needed in order to fill in data gaps about the reaches and determine where the best places for habitat restoration are.
    - It was suggested that the HRW discuss their priorities in terms of projects they recommend to be funded as the work group may need to delay funding other projects in order to make the proposed next steps happen.
    - It was commented that the HRW needs to be strong in their recommendation for getting a systems wide analysis funded as the work group has put it forward as a priority but the project was set to the side to be a part of the adaptive management process.

- It was discussed that one of the concepts in the presentation was to look at the risks, factor, and trends in each reach and how they can be affected.
  - With the right tools the work group could look at the capacity of the reaches to address the risks and analyze causality.
  - It was commented that there might be similar approaches to dealing with the issues in Isleta and San Acacia reaches as both reaches seem to have some of the same issues with channel narrowing and sediment.
  - It was commented that Recommendation #7 could be put into the larger concept of a systems wide analysis for the entire middle Rio Grande system. Since the results from the San Acacia Peer Review echo previous concerns of the HRW they could be used to add weight to HRW priorities.
- It was suggested that the Program may need to take a further step back, beyond creating a restoration strategy, and come to consensus on the biological aspects of the minnow and flycatcher as it's difficult to have a discussion on the intricate parts of habitat restoration when there is not agreement on the life of the species.
- It was discussed that during low water years, when there is long term drought, the water events are the drivers in terms of what can be done. Water is critical for riparian and aquatic systems so there cannot be non-water solutions. The key is being opportunistic in the higher water years.
  - There are 2 kinds of water: 1) water in the system that is owned by someone; and 2) water that is available for purchase/lease and can be used.
  - It was discussed that there may be ways to adjust the management of water in order to make it more efficient ("turning knobs" differently each year and evaluating the outcome). There needs to be an assumption of the positive impact that "turning the knobs" will have and then the impacts can be measured and "the knobs" readjusted.
- It was suggested that the work group work towards getting technical products that will allow the HRW to be more proactive in habitat restoration. The work group agreed to compile, via email, a list of the work group's priority tasks and a list of things like maps and historic flows that will be useful to the work group in habitat restoration planning.

**Action:** Gina Dello Russo will begin compilation of a list of tasks that are the work group's priority tasks and a list of things like maps and historic flows that will be useful to the work group in habitat restoration planning and send to the HRW for review.

- Recommendation #7 may also be able to be addressed in the broad context of where the HRW plans to go.

**Action:** Gina Dello Russo will attempt to address SADD Peer Review Recommendation #7 in the broad context of where the HRW plans to go and send to the HRW for review.

- It was commented that with habitat restoration there is a sense of how the system will respond but it's not known how the species will respond. If the habitat has a certain structure and water availability you can say that it can provide for a certain number of territories but you don't know if the species will arrive there and like it. This is how communication with the biologists will help in tweaking habitat.
- It was asked if the current number of nesting pairs in the refuge is sustainable.
  - If there were 10 straight years similar to this year there is concern about the availability of the willow community as the groundwater drops in the Refuge. Opportunities to create larger patches of flycatcher habitat that would be sustainable for 10 or 20 years should be considered. It was hoped that the opportunities for flycatcher habitat downstream of the refuge will be looked at.

Flycatchers like secluded areas where there is not a lot of traffic. These factors will need to be taken into consideration when looking at the system to see where the best places for flycatcher work are. It's also important that not all work is done in the same area in case something happens to the habitat.

- It was questioned whether the system could be managed to maintain some longer term trend of the species rather than waiting for big sediment and hydrologic issues to develop. Would it be possible to manage the system very lightly and provide a term where there is some overbanking every year as opposed to heavy overbanking some years?

### RM 83 last alternative Update

- Attendees were updated that the River Mile 83 contractors are interested in presenting an update on the project to the HRW regarding the 4<sup>th</sup> alternative (change in channel location). Though the contractor was advised by Reclamation to begin the work they feel uneasy and would like the opportunity to present the details of the 4<sup>th</sup> recommendation to the HRW. A representative for the contractors has said there would be 8 feet of head cutting and this raises flags because it is downstream of flycatcher nests and Gina would like more clarification on the analysis for that projection.
- Attendees were in favor of receiving of update from the contractor; the contractor may be able to present at the August 16<sup>th</sup> HRW meeting.

### Program Update and FYI Items

- DBMS Pilot Training scheduled for Sept 21, 1pm-5pm and Sept 27, 8am-12pm at USACE.
  - An email with registration instructions was sent on June 24th. Sign up ends on August 22<sup>nd</sup> and space is limited.
- AWRA Annual Water Resources Conference, November 7-10, 2011 in Albuquerque, NM. Stephen Kissock's abstract *Hydraulic and Geospatial Analyses of Stream Engineering and habitat Restoration near Los Lunas, NM* was accepted as an oral presentation.
- The CC requests that the work group Co-Chairs review the draft General Peer Review Procedures and send any edits or comments to Yvette McKenna by July 27<sup>th</sup>.
- The Bosque from Cochiti to Socorro has been closed until further notice. MRGCD and the City of Albuquerque request that non-emergency work in those areas be postponed.
- TPEC evaluations for the Habitat Restoration RFP will be on July 14<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup>
- New dates for the the Open House and Technical Sessions are Oct 21(Technical Sessions)-22(Open House) at the Rio Grande Nature Center.
  - The workshops will be: Age and Growth, Fish Health (Joel Lusk), Tamarisk Beetle/SWFL, General Discussion on SAR issues (Lunch presentation), RGSM Genetics, and Ground Water/Surface Water Interaction.
  - There is one space left and the HRW has been asked for a recommendation for a presentation.
    - One suggestion was an information presentation on habitat restoration to include how the HRW looks at the system, techniques the work group has found to be useful, and an overview of projects the work group has done and where they would like to go.
    - The 2010 Monitoring Report was another suggestion.

- It was announced that the ISC, Reclamation, and the Corps will be hosting a congressional delegation to tour the middle Rio Grande.

**Next Meeting: August 16<sup>th</sup>, 2011**

**Potential Future Agenda Items**

5. August- Sandia Monitoring Update (SWCA)
1. August- MRG Bernalillo to Belen Flood Risk Management Presentation (Jerry Nieto)
6. August- USGS Big Bend Mesohabitat Mapping study presentation (Potential Joint workgroup Meeting)

**Habitat Restoration Work Group Meeting  
19 July 2011 Meeting Attendees**

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