

Middle Rio Grande Endangered Species Collaborative Program
San Acacia Ad Hoc Work Group Meeting
August 25th, 2011 – 12:30 PM to 3:30 PM
Albuquerque – Bureau of Reclamation

Actions:

- Robert Padilla will find out the exact river miles for the vulnerable levee sites.
- Terina Perez will ask Yvette if the SAR work group's request to participate in the CAPSSSE meeting can be added to the September 7th CC meeting agenda.
- Gina Dello Russo will develop a short explanation describing the meeting and why it would be beneficial for SAR work group members to attend.
- Terina will find out if there will be any PMT related issues with the ScW, HRW, and EC meetings being scheduled on the same day.

Decisions:

- The June 23rd and July 28th, 2011 SAR work group meeting minutes were approved with no changes.

Meeting Summary

- Gina Dello Russo brought the meeting to order and introductions were made. The agenda was approved with no changes.
- The June 23rd and July 28th, 2011 San Acacia Reach (SAR) work group meeting minutes were approved with no changes. It was commented that the notes from the roundtable were very thorough.
- Robert updated meeting attendees that the vulnerable levee sites are in the Bosque Del Apache Wildlife Refuge (the Ruge) and the Tiffany-San Marcial levee systems; Robert Padilla will get the exact river miles for the vulnerable levee sites.
- Attendees discussed last month's Flooplain Land Use Roundtable discussion. Attendees commented that the roundtable discussion was well attended with several federal, state, and city representatives and local landowners in attendance. Some of the ideas discussed at the roundtable were to have more stringent permitting for ordinances on the active floodplain and to have community driven solutions, such as formation of an outreach group made up of community members. The roundtable was one step in pulling in local stake holders and others perspectives to fill in gaps in the floodplain land use white paper.
 - A follow up task to the roundtable will be to get greater county involvement in addressing land use on the floodplain and more oversight of flood plain development. One suggestion was to present information on floodplain land use and information from the roundtable to the county manager and head of the county commission.
 - Attendees were encouraged to meet with the FEMA Mapping Coordinator for the state of New Mexico to update FEMA of the issues and possible impacts to endangered species and socio/economics in the SAR. Attendees were in favor of meeting with the Mapping Coordinator but would like to wait until the flood risk analysis is complete in order to provide supporting information.
 - Bill Borthwick informed attendees that the New Mexico Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management will be having a Community Assistance Program State Support Service Element (CAPSSSE) meeting with FEMA Region 6 to discuss flood plain management on October 24th -28th in Denton, Texas. As state flood plain

coordinators will be attending the meeting, Bill suggested that the work group make a presentation on the issues of flood plain management in the SAR. If the workgroup is interesting in sending representatives to make a presentation at the meeting they can make a request to be added to the agenda. It would also be possible for representatives from the work group to attend the meeting as invitees to network with the flood plain coordinators.

- The work group will first make a request to the Coordination Committee (CC) to see if SAR work group representative(s) can attend the meeting. Terina will ask Yvette if the SAR work group's request to participate in the CAPSSSE meeting can be added to the September 7th CC meeting agenda. Gina will develop a short explanation describing the meeting and why it would be beneficial for SAR work group members to attend.
- Attendees discussed that it would be worthwhile to add a socio/economic analysis to the *Floodplain Encroachment Project SOW*. Because the Refuge makes a large contribution to tourism in Socorro County and could be affected by development in the flood plain, it would be beneficial to find out if this increases community interest in floodplain land use.
- Attendees discussed making a presentation to the CC in January 2012 on the SAR work group's accomplishments and recommended steps for how issues in the SAR can continue to be addressed. The CC may decide that they would like the work group to stay together and continue working on SAR issues.
- Attendees discussed electing a non-federal co-chair. Currently the only regular work group participant who may be able to take on the role is Robyn Harrison, but it is unknown if she is allowed to take on the role of co-chair as she is not officially representing a Program signatory; Terina will find out if a work group participant who is not officially representing a signatory can be co-chair.
- Attendees were updated that the next Executive Committee (EC) meeting is scheduled for September 20th. Work group members who also participate in the Science (ScW) and Habitat Restoration (HRW) work groups asked if there will be any issues for Program Management Team liaisons with the EC meeting being on the same day as the ScW and HRW meetings; Terina will find out if there will be any PMT related issues with the ScW, HRW, and EC meetings being scheduled on the same day.

Next Meeting: September 22nd, 2011 from 12:30 PM to 3:30 PM at Reclamation

- Tentative agenda items include: (1) Presentation of the Corps' *Floodplain Encroachment Project* products;

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Meeting Notes

Introductions and Agenda Approval

- Gina Dello Russo brought the meeting to order and introductions were made. The agenda was approved with no changes.

Approval of the 6/23 and 7/28 SAR Meeting Notes

- The June 23rd and July 28th, 2011 San Acacia Reach (SAR) work group meeting minutes were approved with no changes. It was commented that the notes from the roundtable were very thorough.

June Action Item/Requests Review

- All outstanding action items with exception to one were complete.
 - In regard to the action item “**Terina Perez will continue to assist Robert Padilla in completing Reclamation’s response for the Agency Response to Themes table**” it was discussed that there is no rush in completing this action item as the Agency Response to Themes Table will be an internal working document.
- All but one work group request was completed.
 - Robert Padilla updated meeting attendees that the vulnerable levee sites are in the Bosque Del Apache Wildlife Refuge (the Refuge) and the Tiffany-San Marcial levee systems; Robert will provide the exact river miles of the vulnerable levee sites.

Action Item: Robert Padilla will provide the exact river miles for the vulnerable levee sites.

- It was not known if there was an update on the work group request “**The SAR work group Co-Chairs requested that Yasmeen verify that MRGCD has no objections/changes to the MRGCD responses in the Agency Response to Themes table.**”
 - Attendees discussed sending out reminders to work group members with action items via Microsoft Outlook in order to ensure completion of action items/requests. Attendees agreed to see if sending out work group action item reminders would be helpful for work group members.

Floodplain Land Use roundtable/Floodplain Land Use white paper

- Attendees discussed last month’s Floodplain Land Use Roundtable discussion.
 - Attendees commented that the roundtable discussion was well attended with several federal, state, and city representatives and local landowners in attendance.
 - One of the ideas discussed at the roundtable was to have more stringent permitting for ordinances on the active floodplain.
 - It was commented that more oversight by the county in terms of flood plain development may be needed.
- It was commented that one issue that Socorro County has with controlling land use in the floodplain is that they do not have Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs). Since Socorro County doesn’t have a planning and zoning department they rely on the construction division for a permitting basis when people move into a designated flood hazard area.

- It was explained that FIRMs are developed with a priority for areas with large populations near watersheds and rivers. A FIRM may be limited to the city of Socorro because it is very sparsely populated in other areas of the county.
- Though there are not currently large communities on the east side of the Rio Grande, there is the potential for more development in that area. One reason that there is potential for growth on the east side of the river is that there are no delivery ditches for farmlands and the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District has abandoned water rights in that area. The *Floodplain Encroachment Project* would evaluate what the potential for growth is and what varying levels of growth (5%, 50%, etc.) would mean for floodplain management.
 - It was briefly discussed that in the past there has been precedence for the Corps to pull back on releases from Cochiti Reservoir due to impact to a landowner. In that incidence an emergency berm was built around the landowner's house so that the Corps could continue.
- It was explained to attendees unfamiliar with the history of this project that floodplain land use came out as an important issue from a workshop held by the SAR work group. The SAR workgroup has since begun working on this issue in order to offer direction to decision makers in terms of what solutions could be available. The land use roundtable was one step in pulling in local stakeholders and others perspectives and positions to fill in gaps in the Floodplain Land Use white paper. The white paper developed by the work group will be delivered to the decision makers of the Program and then once approved it will be made public. It's hoped that the white paper will continue dialogue towards solutions.
- In the portion of the *Floodplain Encroachment Project* completed by the Corps, the Corps looked at the direction of flood routing on the Rio Grande under different flows. Using the modeling that was done for the Levee Project as the floodplain delineation they ran 5-, 10-, and 100-year flows to determine where the natural flow paths were. The remainder of the project will include a planner or developer taking the floodplain routing information and determining the level of development that would affect water management and endangered species. The *Floodplain Encroachment Project* will support the Floodplain Land Use white paper with a technical analysis of the threats and potential impacts.
- It was explained that when a FIRM is requested for an area, that area is put into a queue for a Mapping Needs Assessment. From the commencement of a coordinated contracting meeting for a FIRM it is about 2 years until the FIRM is completed. After the mapping is done there is a 90 day period for appeals, protests, and comments. If a structure is in the floodplain the owner may be required to have flood insurance, but this is not always the case; for example, some mortgage lenders require an owner to have food insurance but once the mortgage has been paid the owner can choose to forgo flood insurance.
 - It is believed that Socorro County is somewhere in the 2-year process of getting a FIRM.
 - It was also explained that Socorro County will be broken into panels for mapping and it's not likely that all the panels will be included in the FIRM as some areas of the county are sparsely populated.
- It was commented that though there were representatives from Socorro County at the roundtable, the county commissioners were not in attendance.
 - A follow up task to the roundtable will be to get greater county involvement in addressing land use on the floodplain and more oversight of flood plain development. One suggestion was to present information on floodplain land use and information from the roundtable to the county manager and head of the county commission.
- The roundtable also included discussion on proactive, community driven solutions, such as formation of an outreach group made up of community members in order to increase community

buy in. SAR work group may be able to assist by seeing how much community interest there is in keeping development off the floodplain and assist in outreach.

- It was commented that it will also be important to get support from the agencies that have the authority to assist landowners (NRCS, FWS, Corps) with private lands programs. Having the support of agencies who manage the river is critical in making progress. Under the authority provided by Section 1135 the Corps can plan, design and build modifications to restore aquatic habitats to areas impacted by Corps projects; it may be possible to prove that the construction of Cochiti Dam has impacted environment and has altered flows and sediment load in the SAR.
- Attendees briefly discussed fire control for the Bosque in SAR. It was said that the county fire marshal and other state and federal agencies do a good job of working together to fight fires; in the best case scenarios there are firebreaks near communities. Save Our Bosque Task Force and New Mexico Tech have tried to put in fuelbreaks, but like the floodplain issue, it is voluntary. It was commented that fire danger may have helped to keep development out of the floodplain.
- Attendees discussed that the next step will be to compile information from the roundtable and today's notes to document the ideas and perspectives that came out of the roundtable.
- Attendees discussed that the Refuge is a major draw for tourism as the visitors to the Refuge often stay at hotels and eat at restaurants in Socorro County. If the Refuge were to be impacted due to development in the floodplains this could have socioeconomic effects on Socorro County and might increase community involvement in floodplain land use.
- Attendees were encouraged to meet with Jim Orwat, the FEMA Mapping Coordinator for the state of New Mexico to update FEMA on the issues and possible impacts to endangered species and socioeconomics in the SAR.
 - Attendees were in favor of meeting with the Mapping Coordinator but would like to wait until the flood risk analysis is complete in order to provide supporting information.
- Bill Borthwick informed attendees that the New Mexico Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management will be having a Community Assistance Program State Support Service Element (CAPSSSE) meeting with FEMA Region 6 to discuss flood plain management on October 24th -28th in Denton, Texas. As state flood plain coordinators will be attending the meeting, Bill suggested that the work group make a presentation on the issues of flood plain management in the SAR. If the workgroup is interesting in sending representatives to make a presentation at the meeting they can make a request to be added to the agenda. It would also be possible for representatives from the work group to attend the meeting as invitees to network with the flood plain coordinators.
 - Attendees expressed interest in attending the meeting. For the presentation the SAR issues could be summarized with a focus on the endangered species/restoration and flood risk aspects.
 - The work group will first make a request to the Coordination Committee (CC) to see if SAR work group representative(s) can attend the meeting before the work group requests to be added to the CAPSSSE agenda. The SAR work group will see if the request can be added to the agenda for the September 7th CC meeting and will provide a summary of the request and the CAPSSSE meeting for the CC as read ahead.

Action: Terina will ask Yvette if the SAR work group's request to participate in the CAPSSSE meeting can be added to the September 7th CC meeting agenda.

Action: Gina will develop a short explanation describing the meeting and why it would be beneficial for SAR work group members to attend.

Future Funding for completing land use analysis

- The edited SOW for the *Floodplain Encroachment Project* will be submitted for consideration for FY12 funding.

- Attendees discussed that it would be worthwhile to add a task to the project that would include a socioeconomic analysis to the *Floodplain Encroachment Project* SOW. Because the Refuge makes a large contribution to tourism in Socorro County and could be affected by development in the flood plain, it would be beneficial to find out if this increases community interest in floodplain land use.

Future structure of Program work groups

- Meeting attendees were updated that the Executive Committee (EC) and the CC will be continuing to address Program structure in some of their upcoming meetings.
- Attendees reiterated that the SAR work group doesn't have a position on disbanding as not many of the work group's members have been present at meetings to voice their positions. It was discussed that meeting attendees who have voiced their positions have all voiced importance in continuing to address the issues in SAR in whatever capacity the Program can as the SAR is a unique reach of the river.

Co-chair Discussion/SAR work group timeframe

- Attendees discussed that the SAR work group charter indicates that the work group will disband in December 2011.
 - Meeting attendees discussed making a presentation to the CC in January of 2012 to highlight the work group's accomplishments and present recommended steps for how issues in the SAR can continue to be addressed. The CC may decide that they would like the work group to stay together and continue working on SAR issues.
- Attendees discussed electing a non-federal co-chair. Currently the only regularly attending work group participant who may be able to take on the role is Robyn Harrison, but it is unknown if she is allowed to take on the role of co-chair as she is not officially representing a Program signatory.

Action: Terina will find out if a work group participant who is not officially representing a signatory can be co-chair.

- It was shared that one idea that the Program Management Team has had to address low meeting attendance is for work groups to meet less frequently as this may enable more attendees to participate.
- Meeting attendees voiced the importance of continuing to meet monthly in order to move forward with projects. Attendees also voice that they would be open to having some flexibility to meet via conference call and to complete more work via email.

LTP Review

- Attendees had no changes for the the SAR work group Future Activity summaries before they are included in the draft LTP.

Open House Presentation confirmation

- The SAR work group will be giving a technical presentation for the Open House Technical Sessions on October 21st.

Program Update

- A Program update was provided as read ahead.
- Attendees were updated that the next EC meeting is scheduled for September 20th.
 - Work group members who also participate in the Science (ScW) and Habitat Restoration (HRW) work groups asked if there will be any issues for PMT liaisons with the EC meeting being on the same day as the ScW and HRW meetings.

Action: Terina will find out if there will be any PMT related issues with the ScW, HRW, and EC meetings being scheduled on the same day.

- Any additional comments on the LTP Future Activity summaries are due to Terina by August 26th.

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- Tentative agenda items include: (1) Presentation of the Corps' *Floodplain Encroachment Project* products;

**San Acacia Reach Ad Hoc Work group
25 August 2011 Meeting Attendees**

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