

Executive Committee Meeting  
*January 19, 2012*

Meeting Materials:

Meeting Agenda

Meeting Minutes

Coordination Committee and Program Manager Update

America's Great Outdoors Initiative [presentation]



**Middle Rio Grande Endangered Species  
Collaborative Program  
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE  
MEETING AGENDA  
Thursday, January 19, 2012  
9:00 am – 1:00 pm**

**LOCATION: US Fish and Wildlife Service, NMESFO, 2105 Osuna Rd. NE, Albuquerque, NM**

1. **INTRODUCTIONS AND REVIEW OF PROPOSED AGENDA\*** *5 minutes*
2. **APPROVAL OF DECEMBER 8 MEETING SUMMARY AND ACTION ITEMS\*** *10 minutes*
3. **UPDATE ON FY2012 FUNDING FORECAST** (*M. Hamman*) *10 minutes*
4. **UPDATE ON SECRETARY OF INTERIOR KEN SALAZAR'S MIDDLE RIO GRANDE VALLEY INITIATIVES** (*J. Bair/M. Hamman*) *20 minutes*
5. **UPDATE FROM EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE RIP FOCUS GROUPS** *60 minutes*
  - A. **Draft Program Document\*** (*Y. McKenna/J. Faler*)
  - B. **Action Plan Development** (*R. Schmidt/J. Bair*)
- BREAK** *15 minutes*
6. **RECLAMATION and HYDROLOGY UPDATE** (*M. Hamman/J. Wilber*) *10 minutes*
7. **USACE UPDATE** *10 minutes*
8. **USFWS and BIOLOGY UPDATE\*** (*L. Robertson*) *10 minutes*
9. **COORDINATION COMMITTEE/PROGRAM MANAGER REPORT\*** *30 minutes*

(*B. Wyman, Y. McKenna*)

  - A. **Cost Share Report through FY2011\***
  - B. **Executive Committee member updates**
  - C. **Workgroup updates – MPT 2010 Monitoring Report, 2011 Accomplishments\***
  - D. **EPA MS4 Watershed Based Permit Pilot update**
10. **OTHER BUSINESS/ANNOUNCEMENTS**
  - A. **Panel Presentation on Peer Review Results of Population Estimation and Monitoring scheduled for **February 16, 2012 from 12:30 to 4:30 pm****
11. **PUBLIC COMMENT**
12. **NEXT SCHEDULED EC MEETING – FEBRUARY 16, 2012 @ RECLAMATION from 9:00 am to 12:00 pm**

*\*Denotes read ahead material provided for this topic*

**Members**

ABCWUA  
ISC  
NMDA  
Sandia Pueblo  
UNM

APA  
Isleta Pueblo  
NMGF  
Santa Ana Pueblo  
USACE

CABQ  
NMAGO  
MRGCD  
Santo Domingo Tribe  
USFWS  
Reclamation

**Middle Rio Grande Endangered Species Collaborative Program**  
**Executive Committee Meeting**  
**Thursday, January 19, 2012**  
**9:00 am – 1:00 pm**

**Action**

- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) will verify if they will be able to give a presentation on recovery criteria at the February 16<sup>th</sup>, 2012 EC meeting by Monday, January 23<sup>rd</sup>. ✓Verified; the Service will be able to present on February 16.
- The Coordination Committee (CC) will reprioritize the current FY2012 work plan of activities using \$2M as the base funding and scale projects up to \$3M. ✓CC agreed on \$2.4M in required FY12 activities at February 1 meeting.

**Decision**

- The December 8<sup>th</sup>, 2011 EC meeting summary was approved with no changes.

**Requests/Recommendations**

- The Executive Committee (EC) requests that the Secretary's Committee for the Middle Rio Grande (MRG) Conservation Initiatives (the Committee) provide the Program with more focused questions and recommendations along with definitions of conservation, education, and recreation in the context of the Committee to assist the EC in considering how to move forward in regard to Secretary Salazar's challenge to develop a partnership and plan encompassing conservation, recreation, and education opportunities on the Middle Rio Grande.
- The EC recommends that the Recovery Implementation Program (RIP) Document and RIP Action Plan focus groups coordinate as soon as possible to ensure that the Program Document and Action Plan will be cohesive. ✓First joint meeting was held on January 31 and others are planned.
- EC members were asked to provide comments on the draft RIP Program Document to Yvette McKenna over the next few weeks; the Program Document focus group will begin responding on today's questions and concerns in a revised draft document.
- EC members were encouraged to attend the Panel Presentation on Peer Review Results of the Population Estimation and Monitoring following the EC meeting on February 16<sup>th</sup>, 2012.
- The Service offered to present at an upcoming EC meeting: (1) a review of the recovery criteria; (2) how and why criteria are developed; (3) how the population monitoring relates with the ability to meet the criteria; (4) discuss concerns that have been raised in terms of recovery and implementation and how they fit into the Program; and, (5) the future of the population estimation and monitoring. As the presentation will be useful in informing decisions regarding the Program becoming a RIP, the EC requests that the Service presentation be given at the February 16<sup>th</sup> EC meeting if possible.
- It was suggested that, in light of the Secretary's charge and the Program consideration of becoming a RIP, an informational presentation be given at the Pueblo Coalition meeting. Four of the six pueblos are Program signatories. *Pending – Mike Hamman is on February meeting agenda.*

**Next Scheduled EC Meeting – February 16, 2012 @ Reclamation from 9:00 am to 12:00 pm**

- Tentative Agenda items include: (1) Presentation and discussion on the draft RIP Program Document and Action Plan; (2) Feedback from the Middle Rio Grande Conservation Initiative Committee; (3) Service Presentation on the recovery criteria and

- concerns regarding how recovery and implementation fit into the Program (dependent on Service ability to meet EC requested time frame);
- Meeting to be followed by Panel Presentation on Peer Review Results of the Population Estimation and Monitoring from 12:30 to 4:30 PM at Reclamation.

**Middle Rio Grande Endangered Species  
Collaborative Program  
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE Meeting  
Thursday, January 19, 2012  
9:00 am – 1:00 pm**

**Introductions and review of the proposed agenda:** Estevan López brought the meeting to order and introductions were made. Matt Wunder was introduced as the new New Mexico Department of Game and Fish (NMDGF) Executive Committee (EC) primary representative; Brian Gleadle will be the NMDGF alternate until his retirement in July. The agenda was approved with no changes.

**Approval of December 8, 2011 meeting summary and action items:** The December 8<sup>th</sup>, 2011 meeting summary was approved with no changes.

**Update on Fiscal Year (FY) 2012 funding forecast:** As Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) is still in the internal process of allocating funds it's not known exactly how much funding the Program will be allotted but it's expected to be around \$2M - \$2.6M. The exact amount that will be budgeted to the Program is expected to be determined within the next month. Because the FY2012 work plan of activities was based on the 2011 budget (\$3.6M) due to the government being under continuing resolution, the CC will need to reprioritize the FY2012 work plan. The CC will reprioritize the FY2012 work plan of activities with \$2M as the base funding and scale projects up to \$3M in case year end funds can be allocated towards the Program.

**Update on Secretary of Interior Ken Salazar's Middle Rio Grande Valley Initiatives:**

- Dr. Benjamin Tuggle, the Service, gave a presentation on the America's Great Outdoors (AGO) Initiative.
  - It was explained that the AGO Initiative is meant to focus the collective efforts of Federal, state, local governments, and other stakeholders on a shared conservation and recreation agenda. It was explained that the AGO Initiative began with several stakeholder meetings across the country to determine conservation needs that are not driven by a Federal entity. Some of the highlights and themes from the stakeholders' meetings are that people value close-to-home places to access the outdoors and rivers, and that people want to conserve large, working rural landscapes.
  - It was emphasized that there are a great deal of opportunities to continue to enhance economical development by recreational activities on the river. Secretary Salazar wants to put a focus on the MRG and has established the Secretary's Committee for the Middle Rio Grande Conservation Initiative (the Committee) made up of Reclamation, the Service, and other stakeholders. The Committee was charged to start an initiative for conservation for the MRG and to develop a plan for the MRG that focuses on developing conservation, recreation, and education opportunities; the deadline to complete the plan is July 1, 2012.
  - The Committee has had a conference call to discuss how to coordinate ongoing conservation activities and how they can be leveraged from a recreation

standpoint. One of the options that the Committee has discussed is to adopt the Program as the overseer for implementation of the plan. There was debate within the Committee as to whether this fits into the Program's role.

- Though the Secretary's charge is large, in terms of conservation efforts the Committee is not starting from scratch. The Committee will need to coordinate efforts and the Program is one way to pull together a collaborative effort.
  - It was acknowledged that the Program has been focused and has moved expeditiously to find solutions for its endangered species obligations. The Service is pleased that the Program is moving towards becoming a RIP as they feel very strongly that a RIP provides the best mechanism for flexibility in terms of how to manage water in the MRG. It's not the intent to distract the Program from the consultation by taking on new responsibilities.
  - The Department of Interior (DOI) would like the Program to expand its role to include education, conservation, and recreation and to provide an opportunity for those types of groups to join the Program. It will be the Program's decision as to whether they will expand their role; however, because of the Secretary's mandate a conservation plan will be developed and it will have overlap with areas that the Program has an interest in.
- *Discussion/Questions*
    - EC members expressed interest in being a part of a broader plan for conservation, recreation, and education on the MRG and recognized that the Program will need to run on a parallel, if not the same, track as the Committee. However, given the Program's current focus on the consultation and the possible transition to a RIP there was hesitancy to commit to additional responsibilities at this time.
      - One opinion is that there will be more political and public buy-in if the Program expands to include recreation and that allowing the recreational community to have seats on the EC will increase collaboration between the two groups.
        - It was pointed out that Program entities have legal obligations and risks associated with those Endangered Species Act (ESA) obligations that are not shared with the recreational community.
    - EC members expressed willingness to sign on to collaborative documents or a cooperative agreement that would verify their interest in participating on some level by the July 1<sup>st</sup> deadline; however, the EC expressed preference for waiting until after the Biological Opinion (BO) is in place before they consider the contribution that these entities can make to the Program and the Program's role in the Secretary's initiative.
      - Committee representatives agreed that a broader conservation effort, such as an agreement, rather than a plan may be more realistic for the Program to meet by the July deadline. There was also agreement that it will be beneficial for the Program to wait until after the BO is in place to make a decision as opposed to having a rushed process.
      - It was pointed out that a lot of the Program's activities can be defined as conservation in one term or another. The Program will need to carefully consider how the Committee definitions of conservation, recreation, and education relate to the Program's goals and activities in the MRG.
    - It was one interpretation that the Committee could act as an advisor to the Program with the Program somehow incorporating the Committee into its

- structure. A suggested option is to repurpose the Public Information and Outreach (PIO) workgroup to overlap with the Committee.
- Something that the Committee and its agencies/entities will need to consider is the amount of time that it takes to participate in the Program and that congressional support requires a 25% non-federal cost share. There are environmental groups and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that no longer participate in the Program because they could not meet these obligations among other reasons.
  - It was pointed out that the Program will need to discuss the roles of new members and how new membership might affect the Program's goals and possibly obstinate the decision process.
- In response to a question of who will be responsible for implementation of the plan it was answered that all people with available resources will be responsible for implementation. The Committee was charged with pulling together a plan that would bring all stakeholders together but was not charged with determining who will implement the plan. The plan will be flexible in consideration that resources will be lost and gained and some elements of the plan will be far off in the future. The plan will be the beginning of the collaborative effort and implementation will follow.
  - It was pointed out that the Program has in the past, worked with agencies (for example, the Pueblos) to work recreational or cultural uses of the river into habitat projects. Expanding Program membership might be an opportunity for some of the environmental groups and NGOs to reengage with the Program. Participating in these collaborative efforts is an opportunity to get the Secretary's attention; it might not draw new resources but it may guarantee the resources that the Program already has and give the Program the opportunity to share their needs with the Secretary directly.
  - The EC requests that the Secretary's Committee for the Middle Rio Grande Conservation Initiative (the Committee) provide the Program with more focused questions and recommendations along with definitions of conservation, education, and recreation in the context of the Committee to assist the EC in considering how to move forward in regard to Secretary Salazar's challenge to develop a partnership and plan encompassing conservation, recreation, and education opportunities on the Middle Rio Grande.
- Dr. Tuggle was thanked for his presentation and was invited to attend future EC meetings.

#### **Update from Executive Committee RIP Focus Groups:**

- *Recovery Implementation Program Document Focus Group:* Yvette McKenna, Jennifer Faler, Deb Freeman, and Lori Robertson presented on the draft PD, example RIP structures, and a proposed RIP structure for the Program.
  - It was noted that the draft Program Document contains highlighted and bracketed areas that the Program Document focus group would like to call attention to for additional guidance and consideration. The draft Program Document includes language from the existing Program documents; however, some areas have been clarified and updated to incorporate some of the issues that came up with the Secretary's visit while continuing to stay true to the Program's goal of ESA compliance.
    - One significant proposed change is to the Program's name to: the Middle Rio Grande Collaborative Recovery Implementation Program. It was acknowledged that some of the changes will require changes in bylaws or legislative authorization. The focus group emphasized that each

- signatory will need to provide a representative to the PIO work group if it is to take on initiatives of the Secretary's Committee.
- The Program scope is a description of what could be the Program area (i.e., the current Program boundary). There is also the note that this doesn't preclude the Program from funding activities in areas outside of the boundary.
  - There are placeholders for the flycatcher critical habitat and for non-federal proposed activities. The Program still needs to define all the conservation measures that action agencies will take.
  - Attendees then discussed signatory criteria that would need to be met in order to be a signatory in the RIP. These criteria can be changed at the EC's discretion. There is a placeholder for a "stakeholder group" that would allow others to participate in an advisory capacity - the suggestion for a voting seat is just a suggestion.
  - Another significant proposed change is the recommendation that the Program shall seek consensus but in lieu of consensus (situations where consensus is not reached) a decision may be approved by a 75% majority vote with the option for a minority report if a non-consensus decision is made.
- *RIP Structure:*
    - The proposed structure is based on guiding principles to make the Program more streamlined, to bring the scientists closer to the decision makers, and adaptive management. The governance structure and a clearly defined decision making process are key to implementing a program where science is driving change in management actions.
    - The current structure of the Program was presented along with the organizational structures of the Platte River and the San Juan River RIPs. It was pointed out that one of the challenges with the current work group structure is getting effective interaction between management and scientists.
      - *The Platte River Recovery Implementation Program (PR RIP)*
        - The PR RIP has a Governance Committee which is a governing body similar to the EC and an Oversight Committee that addresses issues if the program is not meeting its milestones. There is the Executive Director (ED) and staff that are run through an independent 3<sup>rd</sup> party. The ED's office is very well staffed for administrative and technical purposes. The ED's office is also a direct line of communication from the Governance Committee to all the working groups of the program; they do contracting, Scopes of Work (SOWs), permitting, and take on the educational roles of the program. The PR RIP also has a Finance Committee - a non-profit contracted financial management entity.
          - There are also advisory committees for land, tech, and a science work group. Membership on the committees is very structured and the members are experts appointed by the Governance Committee.
          - When projects are funded by multiple agencies, the ED's office approves and forwards all the invoices to the entities that will be funding them.
          - In response to questions of who the committee participants are and whether they are paid positions, it was answered that most of the people on the advisory committees have staff positions from the participating

- entities. There are also individuals that serve on the committees because of their interests but they tend to not have paid positions.
- The Environmental Account (EA) manager is a Service employee who works with the subcommittees on these operations.
  - In response to a question regarding the assumption that annual cost is relative to the complexity of the program, it was shared that the annual administration costs were not exactly known (to the respondent at the time of the meeting) but the first 13 years of the program the cost was around \$300M which included land acquisition, the dollar value of water contributions, and 10,000 acres of new land.
  - In response to a question of the land status and jurisdiction, and the water rights, availability, and management when the program started, it was explained that when the PR RIP started there was a lot of private ownership along the river and already a decent amount of conservation lands and easements along the river. The principle there was to only proceed with willing buyers on a fair market basis and with land owners willing to pursue conservation easements.
    - A large amount of the water brought to the PR RIP was a result of a programmatic BO and consultation. Other parties committed to investigate operations to “retime” water which could make the water available in the habitat at key biological times (i.e., at better times for the species). Water is also leased.
  - In response to a question regarding the participation of any Native American governments, it was shared that there are no Native American governments currently involved in the PR RIP.
- *The San Juan River Basin Recovery Implementation Program (SJ RIP)*
    - The structure of the SJ RIP was only briefly covered as it had been presented in detail at a previous EC meeting.
      - The SJ RIP has one decision making body, a program office that is staffed by Service, one technical committee, a biology committee, and a standing independent peer review panel made up of independent academics.
      - In response to a question of how the financial system of the SJ RIP works, it was explained that Reclamation is a key member of the coordinating committee and develops the annual budgets with the Program Office. The funding is then allocated through their coordinating committee. Cost share is only applied to capital projects, not operating expenses, and it is 1/3<sup>rd</sup> non-federal and 2/3<sup>rd</sup> federal. There is also \$1M dollars in a



- National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) grant that is for fish screens and passages.
- It was explained that the SJ RIP coordinating committee is a combination of stakeholders and entities and that it operates on a 2/3<sup>rd</sup>s majority and not necessarily on consensus.
- *Proposed Collaborative Program RIP Structure*
- The focus group presented a proposed structure for the Program.
    - The EC would remain the governing body and the sole decision making body.
    - A RIP Manager and staff would replace the PMT and administrative components/responsibilities of the Program.
    - An Adaptive Management (AM) committee would be responsible for updating the Adaptive Management Plan and overseeing monitoring efforts. Signatories would provide staff for the AM committee membership. This would be one way to bring the scientists and the decision makers together.
    - The focus group also recommended an Independent Science Panel (Science Panel). The Science Panel would work closely with the Program and would be involved with the data synthesis. Every few years, the Science Panel would do a science audit and advise AM. There is also the option of having the Science Panel provide oversight for the Program – in this case, the Science Panel would not be as closely involved but would be able to provide a more “hard hitting” review.
    - There is an option for a “stakeholder” group for entities or individuals to be an advisory group to the Program. They may or may not have a voting seat(s). This group could be good for providing advisory support from a diversity of agendas and perspectives.
    - The Implementation Teams would be similar to the current technical work groups.
    - The current proposed structure does not include a Coordination Committee; one of the benefits to this is that delegations can be made to more groups.
- Some key decisions/points that the EC will need to consider for the Program Document and proposed structure include:
- The signatory criteria;
  - The options for RIP management:
    - Led and staffed by Reclamation, and/or Service;
    - Led and staffed by an independent 3<sup>rd</sup> party;
    - Led and staffed by a DOI position. This option could also include a variety of different staff as well. Federal and state employees could be part of the Program Management Staff for a multi-entity office. However, it is important that all the employees be accountable to the manager.

- Whether stakeholders will hold a voting seating or just participate in an advisory capacity.
- *Questions/Discussion on the RIP Document and proposed structure*
  - **Question:** Will the RIP Manager and RIP Management Staff work similarly to the Executive Director on the PR RIP? Is it the responsibility of the RIP Manager to oversee all the activities and be directly responsive to the EC?
    - **Response:** The RIP Manager will work on behalf of the EC. A key decision will be whether a Reclamation or other signatory employee will be used to represent the Program or if the Program will use a third party. However, having the RIP Management Staff all from the same entity will streamline the process.
  - **Question:** Would delegation come from the RIP Manager?
    - **Response:** The RIP Manager will have the responsibility to make sure that the EC's delegations are completed. They would facilitate EC direction/directives, but not delegate.
  - Some EC members suggested the focus group address:
    - Missing language regarding provisions for willing sellers/leasers
      - It was pointed out that the current Program documents include provisions for willing sellers and willing leasers that are missing from the draft RIP Program Document. The draft RIP Program Document also includes acquisition but not eminent domain.
    - Consistency with state water rights
      - It was suggested that state water rights be discussed in the same way as the Federal Reserved Water Rights.
    - Definitions
      - It is important to define the language because there are agencies that have the responsibility to protect assets (such as conservation corridors) but at the same time they are being charged to acquire those assets. This is a conflict of interest.
  - **Question:** Where does habitat management fall in the proposed structure?
    - **Response:** Habitat management would fall under the Implementation Teams or some standing teams that address habitat, science, and water.
  - **Question:** Did the focus group discuss other options for structure and management?
    - **Response:** The focus group capitalized on the experience of the members but did not brainstorm for all possible options or alternatives as that would be too daunting on the current timeframes.
  - **Question:** One of the issues with the current Program structure and management is that there is the lack of accountability and authority to set

necessary deadlines. Did the focus group discuss accountability and authority of individuals?

- **Response:** One of the benefits of the proposed structure is that the RIP Management and staff would be more accountable. Currently, the PMT is made up of staff from different agencies that coordinate; the PMT is also understaffed. The proposed plan would require full-time employees that are supervised by the Program Manager. The Program Staff would be accountable to the RIP Manager, who is accountable to the EC.
- **Comment:** One of the issues in working with multiple agencies is that progress can be affected by those individual agency decisions (i.e., how well they are organized, how well their policy makers are controlling their staff, etc.).
  - **Response:** A cooperative agreement would help to deal with some of those issues. The PR RIP started with a cooperative agreement but has since switched to a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).
- **Comment:** The SJ RIP has had to address the role of contractors and consultants in the budget and in terms of accountability.
  - **Response:** The roles and responsibilities of each group, including contractors and consultants, will need to be described somewhere in the Program's documents. The decision making process and elevation of issues will also need to be clearly described.
- **Question:** How would the stakeholder seat(s) work and how would the stakeholders interact with the EC?
  - **Response:** The stakeholder group would connect directly to the EC with the Program Manager coordinating. The Science Panel will interact in the same way.
- **Question:** How will the signatory criteria metrics be "checked"?
  - **Response:** The focus group left the criteria open to interpretation as it needs to be considered and agreed to by the EC.
- **Question:** Won't the proposed signatory criteria eliminate some of the current signatories?
  - **Response:** The key change in the signatory criteria is that signatories would need to be a part of the consultation – this is more stringent than the current criteria and not all of the current signatories would qualify to be signatories under the RIP. It was commented that there is a distinction between agencies who have a right to be signatory and those who have a responsibility. This may be addressed in part through the defining of signatory versus stakeholder.
  - It was commented that the proposed signatory criteria is a limiting factor and if an agency is not required to be in a consultation then they will not have a seat at the EC. This would mean that some of the current signatories, like New

Mexico Department of Agriculture (NMDA), would no longer have a seat on the EC.

- It was explained that Hilary Brinegar (the NMDA EC representative) is a part of the focus group and was able to provide solid input on the role that NMDA might have under new proposed criteria.
  - It was pointed out that agencies will still have the option of participating as stakeholders.
  - Concern was expressed that the Program has spent a lot of time touting that it was broad-based but under the proposed signatory criteria, a lot of diversity would be “lumped” into a single vote under the “stakeholder” group.
    - It was pointed out that the EC will need to determine how many seats, if any, the stakeholders would have.
- EC members were asked to provide comments on the draft RIP Program Document to Yvette McKenna over the next few weeks. The Program Document focus group will address the EC’s questions and concerns from today in a revised draft document. In February, the RIP Action Plan will be presented and the EC can prepare to make decisions on the documents in March. The Program Document focus group was thanked for their efforts.
  - *RIP Action Plan Development Focus Group*: Janet Bair and Rolf Schmidt gave an update on the progress that the Action Plan development focus group has made.
    - Some of the introductory material and some of the “meat” of the Action Plan have been developed. Currently, the focus group proposed that there be one plan for the Rio Grande Silvery Minnow (silvery minnow) and one plan for the Southwestern Willow Flycatcher (flycatcher). Each plan has element categories with on-the-ground actions and associated adaptive management actions. There is also a discussion about metrics for measuring success and effectiveness.
    - The intent is to have a draft document available for the February 16<sup>th</sup> EC meeting. The Action Plan focus group anticipates a lot of comments/feedback on the first draft edition since there are a lot of uncertainties that will need to be discussed/decided by the EC. It is assumed that there will be several iterative reviews.
    - There has been communication with the Program Manager and the Program Document focus group to make sure the Program Document and RIP Action Plan are cohesive but coordination between the two focus groups is still needed. The EC recommends that the RIP Program Document and RIP Action Plan focus groups coordinate as soon as possible to ensure that the program and action plan documents will be cohesive.
  - It was suggested that, in light of the Secretary’s charge and the Program consideration of becoming a RIP, an informational presentation be given at the Pueblo Coalition meeting. Four of the six pueblos are Program signatories.

#### **Reclamation and Hydrology Update:**

- *Hydrology Update*: Heron Reservoir is about 60% full with 228,118 ac-ft. There was an “average” diversion in 2011 that was similar to 2010. There has been some late season precipitation in the fall and winter. Diversions continued until the end of 2011.

- Diversion is now shut down for maintenance and tunnel inspections. Current Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District (MRGCD) storage is 32,900 ac-ft - most of which is MRGCD San Juan-Chama water with some Emergency Drought water.
- Before the end of 2011, former State Engineer John D'Antonio made a relinquishment of 30,000 ac-ft: 9,000 ac-ft was allocated for MRG ESA purposes to store at El Vado and the remainder was for MRGCD purposes.
  - About 1,000 ac-ft was allocated to the City of Santa Fe.
  - Abiquiu is "topped off" in conservation storage space, although some will be released and then stored again in order to move San Juan-Chama water through the system.
  - In 2011, 20,400 ac-ft of MRG ESA operational water was used and there will be about 47,000 ac-ft available as we move forward into 2012.
- **Reclamation Update:** Reclamation continues to work on the BA. With the Program moving towards becoming RIP, Reclamation is looking to wrap everything in the BA for ultimate submittal to the Service. Reclamation is still working on the water management component; looking at federal and non-federal actions and the analysis of the effects of those actions; and responding to the comments that were received. Reclamation has done additional URGWOM runs to increase accuracy. The river maintenance component and offsetting measures are also being worked on. The Program's decision to become a RIP works well with Reclamation's schedule for the BA.

**USACE Update:** In a USACE update, LTC Toni Gant was introduced. She will be replacing LTC Jason Williams in summer 2012.

- **Funding** - USACE's appropriations through last fiscal year and USACE's Program authority are included in the draft Program Document. USACE's authority is limited in that they cannot construct habitat restoration sites and cannot acquire water with funding. USACE's funding is also not cost shared. USACE's funding has been used to fund gages, the Bosque Ecosystem Monitoring Program (BEMP), and the Database Management System (DBMS). USACE currently funds one full-time Program employee. It's expected that USACE will get around \$2M for Program funding in FY12. Annually, USACE spends \$800,000 to \$850,000 on labor to participate in the Program.
- **Cochiti Deviations**- USACE has begun the process to exercise the two year option to extend deviations from Cochiti. More information should be available at the February EC meeting. The original authorization for the Cochiti deviation was for 3 years with an optional 2 years. USACE is waiting for results from the Cochiti baseline study to determine if deviations could continue beyond the 2 option years. A summary of the Cochiti baseline study is expected to be available in summer 2012.

**Service and Biology Update:** Lori Robertson reported on silvery minnow augmentation, 2011 river drying and silvery minnow salvage.

- **Silvery minnow augmentation** - In November 2011, 190,835 visible implant elastomer (VIE) marked silvery minnow were released in the Middle Rio Grande at the Isleta and San Acacia reaches. The VIE is a brightly colored implant that is injected just under the surface of the fish. It was explained that the fish were marked differently by reach where released. No silvery minnow were released at Angostura Reach. Angostura Reach has not been stocked in 4 years and if densities are acceptable (i.e., not too low) then Angostura Reach will not be stocked in fall 2012 either. Of the silvery minnow stocked in the MRG 3,000 were from the Los Lunas Refugium; 52,000 were from the City of Albuquerque BioPark; and 135,835 were from Dexter. On October 24, 2011 304,600 silvery minnow were released at Big Bend.

- *River drying and silvery minnow salvage* – During 2011, 39.8 unique river miles dried. Associated with that intermittency, 7,831 silvery minnow greater than 30 mm were salvaged. Of the total salvaged, 112 were identified as incidental take to the 2003 BO. Jason Remshardt is coordinating captive propagation and augmentation for 2012.

#### **Coordination Committee/Program Manager Report:**

- *CC Update* – The CC met on January 4, 2012 and reviewed the 2011 Work Group Accomplishments and 2012 Work Plans. There were some suggestions for RIP-associated tasks that will be incorporated into the work group Work Plans. Program signatories are in the process of assigning members to work groups. The CC also reviewed the draft Peer Review and Procedures document; this document is referenced in the draft RIP Program Document. Cost share reports through FY2011 are due to Yvette McKenna by COB today. The next CC meeting is scheduled for February 1, 2012 and the CC will be reassessing the FY2012 Program Work Plan.
- *PMT Support* - Michelle Mann (USACE) has fully transitioned into the PMT. Due to changes in PMT staff, Michelle and Stacey Kopitsch are each supporting 4 work groups and Ali Saenz is supporting the PIO work group. For the next month, Stacey will be in a developmental assignment at the Service's regional office and Vanessa Martinez will be covering her duties in the PMT.
- *Workgroup Updates* –
  - *Science Workgroup (ScW)* – Jennifer Bachus distributed three articles to the ScW work group that document Secretary Salazar's visit.
  - *Monitoring Plan Team (MPT)* – The MPT was commended for their efforts and willingness to complete the low intensity monitoring and produce a report. Ondrea Hummel and Anders Lundahl are the Co-Chairs for this work group. The monitoring efforts included measurement of 4 metrics at 20 random sites. The report for the low-intensity monitoring has been included as read ahead.
  - *Population Viability Analysis (PVA) workgroup* – The PVA last met on December 12 and 13, 2011. The work group will be requesting time on an upcoming EC agenda to discuss development of the models with respect to the BAs/BO and to describe the difference between the models. The EC may be asked to provide a list of questions and issues they would like the modelers to address.
- *Action Item Updates* -
  - The PMT was tasked with updating the EC on the final reports that have been posted to the Program website. Ali Saenz has developed a document that lists when final reports were received and where they were posted to the Program website. The document will be updated on a monthly basis.
  - The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) had a watershed-based permit pilot meeting yesterday. They are taking the permit writer from Region 6 on a tour of the MRG today to look at outfalls on the MRG. As requested, Yvette McKenna will continue to keep the Program updated on the EPA's efforts.
  - There are grants available to revitalize urban waters. The deadline for one of these grants is next week. Additional information and links are provided in the CC/PM report.

#### **Other Business/Announcements:**

- The Panel Presentation on Peer Review Results of Population Estimation and Monitoring is scheduled for February 16, 2012 from 12:30 to 4:30 pm at Reclamation. The draft

report is currently in COTR review and will likely be distributed to the EC by next week. EC members are encouraged to attend the peer review presentation which will take place following the EC meeting.

- The Service would like the EC to consider the population estimation and monitoring and how they relate to recovery. Interstate Stream Commission (ISC) has presented a critique of the recovery criteria and how it could potentially affect the Program's ability to implement a RIP over time. The Service has met with the researcher and is concerned that there seems to be a disconnect with the understanding of what was done in the critique and how that fits into the recovery plan.
- In an upcoming meeting, the Service will present (1) a review of the recovery criteria; (2) how and why criteria are developed; (3) how the population monitoring is related to the ability to meet the criteria; (4) discussion of concerns that have been raised in terms of recovery and implementation and how they fit into the Program; and (5) the future of the population estimation and monitoring. As the presentation will be useful in informing decisions regarding the Program becoming a RIP, the EC requested that the Service presentation be given at the February 16<sup>th</sup> EC meeting if possible. The Service will verify if they will be able to give a presentation on recovery criteria at the February 16<sup>th</sup>, 2012 EC meeting by Monday, January 23<sup>rd</sup>.

**Public Comment:**

- There was no public comment.

**Next Scheduled EC Meeting – February 16, 2012 @ Reclamation from 9:00 am to 12:00 pm**

- Tentative Agenda items include: (1) Presentation and discussion on the draft RIP Program Document and Action Plan; (2) Feedback from the Middle Rio Grande Conservation Initiative Committee; (3) Service Presentation on the recovery criteria and concerns regarding how recovery and implementation fit into the Program (dependent on Service ability to meet EC requested time frame);
- Meeting to be followed by Panel Presentation on Peer Review Results of the Population Estimation and Monitoring from 12:30 to 4:30 PM at Reclamation.

**Executive Committee Meeting Attendees  
January 19<sup>th</sup>, 2012, 9:00 am to 1:00 pm**

Attendees:

<i>Representative</i>	<i>Organization</i>	<i>Seat</i>
Estévan López (P) federal co-chair	NM Interstate Stream Commission	ISC, Non-
Brent Rhees	U.S. Bureau of Reclamation	Federal co-chair
Janet Bair (A)	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	Service
Ann Moore (A)	NM Attorney General's Office	NMAGO
Subhas Shah (P)	Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District	MRGCD
Matt Schmader (P)	City of Albuquerque	COA
LTC Jason Williams (P)	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers	USACE
Mike Hamman (P)	U.S. Bureau of Reclamation	BOR
Janet Jarret (P)	Assessment Payers of the MRGCD	APA of the MRGCD
Frank Chaves (P)	Pueblo of Sandia	Sandia
Alan Hatch (P)	Pueblo of Santa Ana	Pueblo of Santa Ana

John Stomp (P)	Albuquerque/Bernalillo County Water Utility Authority	ABCWUA
Matt Wunder (P)	NM Department of Game and Fish	NMDGF

*Others*

Yvette McKenna – PM	U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
Jim Wilber	U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
Jennifer Faler	U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
Ali Saenz	U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
Christopher Shaw	NM Interstate Stream Commission
Grace Haggerty	NM Interstate Stream Commission
Deb Freeman	NM Interstate Stream Commission
Rolf Schmidt-Peterson (A)	NM Interstate Stream Commission
Kris Schafer (A)	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Susan Bittick	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Michael Porter	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
William DeRagon	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Michelle Mann	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
LTC Toni Gant	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Lori Robertson	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Jennifer Bachus	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Stacey Kopitsch	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Wally Murphy	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
David Campbell	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Vanessa Martinez	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Patrick Redmond	LRPA/MRGCD
Oscar Simpson	Back Country Hunters and Anglers
Derrick Lente	MRGCD
Brooke Wyman	MRGCD
Patricia Dominquez	Senator Bingaman's Office
Nathan Schroeder	Pueblo of Santa Ana
Brian Wimberly	Pueblo of Santa Ana
Rick Carpenter	BDD/City of Santa Fe
Joe Jojola	BIA
Mathew Zidovsky	Representative Heinrich's Office
Brian Gleadle (A)	NM Department of Game and Fish
Rick Billings (A)	ABCWUA
Christine Sanchez	Tetra Tech



**Coordination Committee and Program Manager Update  
Middle Rio Grande Endangered Species Collaborative Program  
Executive Committee Meeting  
January 19, 2012**

**Coordination Committee**

The CC met on January 4, 2012 where they reviewed preliminary drafts of workgroups' 2011 accomplishments and 2012 work plans. Suggestions for specific work products and Recovery Implementation Plan (RIP) tasks will be incorporated into the 2012 work plans. Signatories are also in the process of verifying and/or assigning primary and alternate members to appropriate workgroups. The action agencies and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) were encouraged to designate primary and alternate representatives to each of the Program workgroups. The CC also discussed the draft Peer Review Process and Procedures paper that has been referenced in the draft RIP Document. All non-federal signatory entities were reminded to submit their **25% cost share reports** through FY2011 (including any back years not reported) using the template posted under Committees & Work Groups>>EC – Executive Committee>>Committee Documents>>2011 EC Meeting Read Aheads>>Dec 8, 2011 EC Read Ahead 5.A. “Cost Sharing Template” to the Program Manager by January 19, 2012. As of COB on January 18, 2012, four non-federal entities had submitted FY2012 cost share reports [NM Attorney General's Office NMAGO), NM Department of Game and Fish (NMDGF), Pueblo of Santa Ana (Santa Ana), and Albuquerque Bernalillo County Water Utility Authority (ABCWUA)]. The CC discussed dates to reschedule the Strengths-Based Leadership Training and agreed to take the online test by early February. The next CC meeting is scheduled for February 1, 2012 from 12:30-4:00 pm at Reclamation where discussion will begin on reassessing the proposed FY2012 activities in light of the actual FY2012 budget.

**Program Management Team**

With Terina Perez's departure from the PMT, the PMT is now understaffed by two positions (the non-federal and the Reclamation PMT members). PMT liaison support for workgroups is as follows: Michelle Mann, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), for the Database Monitoring System (DBMS) and San Acacia Reach (SAR) ad hoc workgroups, and the Habitat Restoration (HR) and Species Water Management (SWM) workgroups; Stacey Kopitsch, USFWS, for the Science workgroup (ScW), Population Viability Analysis (PVA)/Biology, Population Habitat Viability Assessment (PHVA)/Hydrology, and Monitoring Plan Team (MPT) ad hoc workgroups; and Ali Saenz, Bureau of Reclamation (BOR), for the Public Information and Outreach (PIO) workgroup. As part of Stacey's employee development, she'll be doing a detail with the USFWS Regional Office starting the week of January 23 and ending on February 24. Vanessa Martinez from the Regional Office will be detailed to learn more about the Collaborative Program and she will cover all of Stacey's PMT duties. The PMT will continue to provide outstanding support to the Program to the best of our abilities. We are reviewing ad hoc workgroup charters, current work plans, and schedules to best determine whether objectives have been met and the timeframe for completion. We've also encouraged the workgroups to meet less frequently (perhaps every other month) during the review of the Biological Assessments (BAs) and to ensure adequate PMT support. The PMT will also begin working on the FY2010 and FY2011 annual report. This report will include information on USACE funds and activities, and contracting officer's technical representatives (COTRs) by project.

Jericho Lewis, Contract Supervisor for the Contracts South Team, continues to assist with Albuquerque Area Office and Collaborative Program obligations while training new staff members, taking on additional responsibilities and contract oversight on major projects. Diana Herrera continues to work on: Program cost share updates, expenditure reports, water leasing obligations, and FY2012, FY2013, and FY2014 Program budgets. Chip Martin, Edward McCorkindale, and Lisa Freitas, GenQuest, and Christine Sanchez and Marta Wood, Tetra Tech, continue to assist the Program in meeting support and summaries.

## Habitat Restoration Workgroup

The HRW met on January 17, 2012 where an update on the Santa Ana Restoration Project - Bar 3 was given by Nathan Schroeder. Tetra Tech presented on the .mxd reach mapping files and the maps were reviewed and discussed. An update on the FY2012 scopes of work (SOWs) was also given. At the request of the CC, the HRW reviewed and commented on the cost reduction of the System Wide Monitoring project estimate to <\$100,000 given the project viability for this funding cycle, the timing of the DBMS, adaptive management, and RIP development. A Program report out was given which discussed: the FY2012 budget; the HRW, ScW, and MPT Co-chair monthly conference call beginning this month; EC review of the 2011 Accomplishments; and updates to the draft LTP, PMT liaison support and workgroup activities. The next HRW meeting is currently scheduled for February 21 at NM Interstate Stream Commission (NMISC).

## Science Workgroup

The ScW held a regularly scheduled meeting on January 17, 2012. Topics of discussion included the status of upcoming projects to be funded, which include a Rio Grande silvery minnow (RGSM) life history and habitat needs study, RGSM longitudinal movement study, and RGSM fecundity study. In addition to these projects, the workgroup has already completed SOWs for the continuation of RGSM spawning monitoring and the synthesis of all water quality data in the Middle Rio Grande. The water quality synthesis project is part of the effort to synthesize all RGSM data, which was a priority recommendation of the San Acacia Diversion Dam fish passage peer review panel. The next ScW meeting will be held on February 21 at the NMISC.

The federal ScW co-chair distributed the information below via email to the ScW:

News	3 new results for <b>rio grande silvery minnow</b>
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### [Salazar pushes for coordination on Rio Grande](#)

Austin American-Statesman

Federal officials are expected to adopt a new opinion that will address the needs of the endangered **Rio Grande silvery minnow** in 2013, which will affect how ...

### [Salazar Expands River Dialogue](#)

ABQ Journal

... Rio Grande water management beyond the constraints imposed by current deliberations over how to best protect the endangered **Rio Grande silvery minnow** ...

### [Salazar in Albuquerque this afternoon](#)

ABQ Journal

... Reclamation Commissioner Mike Connor) will be at the Rio Grande Nature ... in the river to meet bureaucratic targets for the **Rio Grande silvery minnow**. ...

## Monitoring Plan Team ad hoc Workgroup

The MPT last held a regular meeting on July 19, 2011. During the fall of 2011, members of the MPT conducted vegetation monitoring as part of the 2011 low intensity effectiveness monitoring effort. A final SOW has been developed for the high-intensity portion of the effectiveness monitoring program, with a focus on habitat food availability. It is anticipated that a contract will be awarded this fiscal year. The MPT has finalized the 2010 effectiveness monitoring report (posted as a read ahead) and will soon begin work on the 2011 report.

## Species Water Management Workgroup

The SWM workgroup met on January 4, 2012 where an update on the Groundwater/Surface Water Interaction Project was given. The 2011 Accomplishments were discussed as well as the 2012 Annual Work Plan. The frequency of SWM meetings was discussed and changed to every other month. Program and Agency updates were given. The next SWM meeting is currently scheduled for March 7 at Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA).

### **San Acacia Reach ad hoc Workgroup**

The SAR ad hoc workgroup will meet on January 26, 2012 where Co-chair discussions will take place. An evaluation of ability to accomplish SAR workgroup tasks will also be discussed to address SAR workgroup completion and possible disbanding. The 2012 Work Plan and interim steps will be discussed. An EC/CC presentation on accomplishments and path forward will be prepared. Recovery actions and how SAR fits into recovery efforts will be reviewed. A program update will be given. The next SAR meeting is tentatively scheduled for February 23 at BOR.

### **Population Viability Analysis (PVA)/Biology ad hoc Workgroup**

The PVA ad hoc workgroup last met on December 12 and 13, 2011. The PVA habitat group, a subcommittee of the larger group, met during the morning of December 12 to discuss the use of habitat information in the PVA models. The entire PVA group then reconvened for their regular meeting, with agenda topics that included discussion of life history data needs for the PVA models, presentations on both the RAMAS and FORTRAN timelines for work product deliverables, the process for establishing a consensus data set, and a review of the hydrology data to be used. Both PVA modelers will be providing the PVA co-chairs with a list of their data needs and requirements necessary to have functional models by the deadline of June 30, 2012. The workgroup has **requested time on the EC agenda in April** to discuss development of the models in relationship to the BAs and Biological Opinion(s) (BOs), and to compare the similarities and differences between the models that could influence differences in output. The workgroup has also **requested that the EC provide a list of questions that they would like the modelers to address** during the April discussion. The next PVA meeting has not yet been scheduled.

### **Population Habitat Viability Assessment (PHVA)/Hydrology ad hoc Workgroup**

The PHVA ad hoc workgroup will schedule their next meeting as needed via email. The workgroup sent the response letter to the PVA's August 2011 data request on December 7, 2011. Amy Louise, USACE, and Dagmar Llewellyn, BOR, are the newly appointed Federal co-chairs. The workgroup plans to schedule a joint meeting with PVA to discuss the response letter after PVA has had an opportunity to review and discuss it.

### **Database Management System ad hoc Workgroup**

The DBMS had a conference call in January 9, 2012 where the DBMS 2011 Workgroup Accomplishments were reviewed and approved. The DBMS Work Plan was reviewed and an updated version was formulated and emailed for EC approval. The transition between the Program's Website to the DBMS website was discussed and a meeting between the ad hoc workgroup, PMT, and PIO is being scheduled. A discussion on the inclusion of Southwestern Willow Flycatcher data in the DBMS was also discussed and a meeting with USFWS was scheduled. The next DBMS meeting is currently scheduled for mid-February with PMT and PIO.

### **Public Information and Outreach Workgroup**

The PMT, PIO, and DBMS will be meeting in February to address the transitioning of all public interfaces (web pages) to the DBMS in order to avoid duplication and address any questions or concerns. This joint meeting may replace the regular February PIO meeting. PIO workgroup members will formulate a process to collect 2011 and on-going media/press releases from all Program participants/signatories in response to a request to have monthly updates on press releases given to the EC. The CC has also requested that the PIO provide more detail on the number of Program-related press releases reported in the Annual Workgroup Accomplishments. PIO members are in the process of collecting details on all Program-related stories and press releases that their individual agencies published in 2011. PIO members raised a question of the existence of any other signatory's press releases and Program-related stories. There are only 4 signatories (BOR, USACE, USFWS, and NMISC) represented in the PIO workgroup so there could be other releases highlighted as well. It is requested that signatories provide a representative for the PIO workgroup, especially considering that press releases are not always done as a joint/collaborative effort. As requested by the EC, please see the related document titled Final Reports posted onto the Program website since March 2011.

**EPA MS4 Watershed Based Permit Pilot Update & Related Information**

**Watershed-Based MS4 Permit Pilot • Stakeholder Meeting**

**January 18, 2012 • 8:30 a.m. – Noon**

**NMED District 1 Offices • 5500 San Antonio NE, Albuquerque**

**Agenda**

*Estimated Times:*

**8:30 Welcome, Introductions, Meeting Overview**

**8:45 Presentation & Discussion: Local Ideas for Sector Criteria/Framework**

- Several entities in Sandoval County have been working on ideas for how to design the “sectors” that permittees will be assigned to. Chuck Thomas will provide an overview of these ideas.

**9:15 Presentation & Discussion: EPA Proposal for Sector Criteria/Framework**

- Our emerging “menu” framework calls for assigning individual permittees to one of various “sectors,” acknowledging different levels of responsibility and administrative capacity in meeting permit requirements. Nelly Smith will present a proposal for sector criteria for review and comment.

**10:30 Presentation & Discussion: EPA Proposal for Monitoring**

- Nelly will present a proposal for meeting monitoring requirements. Discussion will follow.

**11:30 Presentation & Discussion: SUSTAIN Model**

- For several years, EPA has been working on a public domain integrated software tool for “evaluating, selecting and placing BMPs in an urban watershed on the basis of user-defined cost and effectiveness criteria.” Steve Glass will provide an overview of the System for Urban Stormwater Treatment and Analysis Integration (SUSTAIN) tool.

**11:45 Review of the January 19 Tour Plan**

- Nelly will be touring the watershed Thursday to get a first-hand look at the topography and sample infrastructure examples. She will also be stopping twice for discussion with local permittees. We will review the plan for the day.

**Noon Next Meeting Date; Adjourn**

Timothy F. Karpoff [timkarpoff@msn.com]

1811 Tapia SW

Albuquerque, NM 87105

505-877-6041

**Subject:** News Release: EPA To Provide Nearly \$2 Million to Revitalize U.S. Urban Waters

**CONTACT:**

Enesta Jones

[jones.enesta@epa.gov](mailto:jones.enesta@epa.gov)

202-564-7873/202-564-4355

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

December 7, 2011

**EPA To Provide Nearly \$2 Million to Revitalize U.S. Urban Waters**

**WASHINGTON** -- The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) today announced it will provide up to \$1.8 million for projects across the country to protect Americans' health and help restore urban waters by improving water quality and supporting community revitalization. The funding is part of EPA's Urban Waters program, which supports communities in their efforts to access, improve and benefit from their urban waters and the surrounding land. Urban waters are canals, rivers, lakes, wetlands, aquifers, estuaries, bays and oceans.

Many urban waterways have been polluted for years by sewage, runoff from city streets and contamination from abandoned industrial facilities. Healthy and accessible urban waters can help grow local businesses and enhance educational, recreational, employment and social opportunities in nearby communities. By promoting public access to urban waterways, EPA will help communities become active participants in restoration and protection.

The goal of EPA's urban waters small grants is to fund projects, training and research that will advance restoration of urban waters by improving water quality and community access. These activities will also support community revitalization and improving public health, social and economic opportunities, general livability and environmental justice for residents. Examples of projects eligible for funding may include:

- Education and training for water quality improvement or green infrastructure jobs
- Public education about ways to reduce water pollution
- Local water quality monitoring programs
- Engaging diverse stakeholders to develop local watershed plans
- Innovative projects that promote local water quality and community revitalization goals

Funding proposals must be received by EPA by January 23, 2012. EPA will hold two web-based seminars on this funding opportunity on December 14, 2011 and January 5, 2012. EPA expects to award the grants in summer 2012.

EPA's Urban Waters program supports the goals and principles of the Urban Waters Federal Partnership, a partnership of 11 federal agencies working to reconnect urban communities with their waterways by improving coordination among federal agencies and collaborating with community-led revitalization efforts to improve the nation's water systems and promote their economic, environmental and social benefits.

The Urban Waters Federal Partnership closely aligns with and advances the work of the White House's place-based efforts, including the Partnership for Sustainable Communities, to revitalize communities, create jobs and improve the quality of life in cities and towns across the nation. The Urban Waters Federal Partnership also advances the work of President Obama's **America's Great Outdoors Initiative**.

Information about urban waters small grants and registration for the webinars:

<http://www.epa.gov/urbanwaters/funding>

Information on EPA's Urban Waters program: <http://www.epa.gov/urbanwaters/index.html>

Information on the Urban Waters Federal Partnership: <http://urbanwaters.gov/>

## **Water Headlines for the week of January 9, 2012**

Water Headlines is a weekly on-line publication that announces publications, policies, and activities of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Office of Water

Visit EPA's Water Is Worth It Facebook page, <http://www.facebook.com/EPAWaterIsWorthIt>, and follow our Wetlands, Oceans and Watersheds tweets at <http://twitter.com/epaowow>

### **EPA Launches Recovery Potential Screening Website to Assist Restoration Planners**

EPA announces the release of a new technical assistance tool for state and watershed-level surface water quality protection and restoration programs: the recovery potential screening website ([www.epa.gov/recoverypotential/](http://www.epa.gov/recoverypotential/)). Recovery potential screening is a flexible approach for comparing relative differences in restorability among impaired waters across a state, watershed or other area. The website provides step-by-step screening directions, restorability indicators and literature, and tools for scoring and displaying results. EPA developed recovery potential screening to help users improve their restoration programs by revealing and comparing factors that influence restoration success. The method is applicable to watershed priority setting, impaired waters listing, TMDL implementation, 319/nonpoint source control, healthy watersheds assessment, and watershed plan development. For additional information, please contact Doug Norton ([norton.douglas@epa.gov](mailto:norton.douglas@epa.gov)).



# Middle Rio Grande Conservation Initiative



## America's Great Outdoors (AGO) Initiative

A grassroots approach to protecting our lands, our waters and our history.

AGO focuses the collective efforts of Federal, state, local governments and other stakeholders on a shared conservation and recreation agenda.



# Middle Rio Grande Conservation Initiative



## America's Great Outdoors Stakeholder Listening Sessions

(51 held--10,000 participants--105,000 comments received)

### Highlights and Themes

- ❖ America's Great Outdoors offer tremendous economic benefits and mutual responsibilities
- ❖ People value close-to-home places to access the outdoors
- ❖ People value rivers
- ❖ People want to conserve our large, working rural landscapes





# Middle Rio Grande Conservation Initiative



**January 5, 2012: Secretary Salazar visits Albuquerque to discuss conservation partnership opportunities for the Middle Rio Grande**

- ❖ **Establishes Secretary's Committee for the Middle Rio Grande Conservation Initiative**
- ❖ **Challenges Committee to develop a plan for the Middle Rio Grande Conservation Partnership**
- ❖ **Focuses effort on developing conservation, recreation, education opportunities**



# Middle Rio Grande Conservation Initiative



## Secretary's Committee

**U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service**

**Bureau of Reclamation**

**Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District**

**City of Albuquerque**

**New Mexico Outdoors Coalition**

**New Mexico Backcountry Hunters and Anglers**

**New Mexico Museum of Natural History and Science**

**New Mexico Archaeological Council**



# Middle Rio Grande Conservation Initiative



## Secretary's Directive to the Committee

- ❖ Develop a Middle Rio Grande partnership and plan encompassing conservation, recreation, and education
- ❖ Adopt the MRG Endangered Species Collaborative Program as the overseer for implementation of the plan
- ❖ The Secretary will return to announce the roll-out of the Middle Rio Grande partnership and plan in July 2012



# Middle Rio Grande Conservation Initiative



## Next Steps

Based on the Secretary's directive, how do we proceed in developing the Middle Rio Grande Conservation partnership and plan?