

Middle Rio Grande Endangered Species Collaborative Program
San Acacia Reach (SAR) Ad Hoc Work Group Meeting
January 26, 2012 12:30 - 3:30 PM
Albuquerque – Bureau of Reclamation

Actions

- Gina Dello Russo will distribute the Floodplain Encroachment SOW to the SAR workgroup.
- Ryan Gronewold will check with his supervisor to see if he can attend the February 1st CC meeting to answer any questions the CC may have on the Floodplain Encroachment project.
- ✓ Michelle Mann will email the draft Program Document and the presentation of the proposed structure to meeting attendees. *Completed 2/1/12*
- Gina asked workgroup members to verify that their agency's primary and alternate workgroup members are included on the SAR mailing list.
- ✓ Tetra Tech will distribute the SAR mailing list to the workgroup. *Completed 1/26/12*
- ✓ Tetra Tech will pass Ayesha Burdett's request to be removed from the SAR mailing list to Ali Saenz. *Completed 1/26/12*

Ongoing Actions

- Robert Padilla will talk to Jim Wilber about (1) correcting the Floodplain Encroachment Project cost estimate (\$30,000 not \$55,000); (2) the 2003 BO reference in support/justification for the project; (3) what are the potential changes with the Program restructuring and becoming a RIP and where does the SAR work group fit in (Ongoing, 12/6).
- Ryan Gronewold will PDF the floodplain maps and will distribute both the maps and the shape files to SAR members for reference purposes (Ongoing, 12/6).
- Terina Perez will electronically distribute the Program Update once it becomes available (Ongoing, 12/6).
- Gina Dello Russo will ask George Dennis for his FEMA contact. (*continued from 10/27/11*)

Decision

- The December 6th, 2011 SAR workgroup meeting notes were approved with no changes.

Meeting Summary

- Gina Dello Russo brought the meeting to order and the agenda was approved.
- The December 6th, 2011 SAR workgroup meeting notes were approved with no changes.
- Meeting attendees reviewed the December and all ongoing action items. All but 4 of the actions were completed or are no longer needed.
- Meeting attendees discussed the workgroups ability to complete or bring to a closure SAR workgroup tasks. Due to the short timeframe that the workgroup has before disbanding, meeting attendees agreed that the best steps to take to close out the workgroup are to: 1) write short summary papers (around 1 page) on each of the white-paper topics that gives a brief description of the issue, any steps that the SAR workgroup has taken, and potential next steps to address the issue; 2) complete the Flood Plain Encroachment project to the extent possible; and, 3) report/present on the progress the workgroup has made to the Coordination Committee (CC)/Executive Committee (EC). Meeting attendees also developed a timeline for closing the projects.
 - Timeline:
 - Floodplain Encroachment project:
 - Scenario 1: Complete Phase 1 (identifying current conditions) - Phase 2 (modeling future conditions) *is not* funded
 - Ground-truthing completed by May 2012

- Report completed by June 2012

Or,

- Scenario 2: Complete Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the project *is* funded
 - Products from Phase 1 are handed over to a contractor by June 2012.
 - Phase 2 completed by December 31st, 2012.
- Gina Dello Russo will distribute the Floodplain Encroachment SOW to the SAR workgroup.
- Summaries of white-paper issues
 - Draft 1 of the summaries completed by March 2012
 - Final summaries completed by June 2012.
- Report/Presentation to the CC/EC
 - If Phase 2 of the Floodplain Encroachment project *is not* funded – July 2012.

Or,

- If Phase 2 *is* funded – December 2012.
- Attendees agreed that since the workgroup is winding down there is not a need to elect a second Co-Chair. Yasmeen Najmi volunteered to assist Gina with Co-Chair duties if needed.
- Program Update:
 - The next CC meeting will be on February 1st, 2012 from 12:30 to 4:00 pm. The meeting will focus on reprioritizing the FY2012 work plan of activities.
 - Attendees agreed it would be beneficial for a workgroup member to attend the CC meeting to advocate for funding Phase 2 of the Floodplain Encroachment project. Ryan Gronewold will check with his supervisor to see if he can attend the CC February 1st, CC meeting to answer any questions the CC may have on the Floodplain Encroachment project.
 - The EC last met on January 19th, 2012. The EC discussed Secretary Salazar's visit and viewed Recovery Implementation Program (RIP) draft Program Documents and a proposed structure. Michelle Mann will email the draft Program Document and the presentation of the proposed structure to meeting attendees.
 - The Population Estimation and Population Monitoring peer review presentation will be on February 16th, 2012. Because space is limited anyone who would like to attend the presentation should RSVP to Ali Saenz (Program Administrative Assistant).
- Gina asked workgroup members to verify that their agency's primary and alternate workgroup members are included on the SAR mailing list. Tetra Tech will distribute the SAR mailing list to the workgroup. Ayesha Burdett has asked to be removed from the SAR mailing list – Tetra Tech will pass her request to the Ali Saenz.

Next Meeting: Thursday, April 26th, 2012

- Because the workgroup is winding down meeting attendees agreed that they did not need to continue meeting on a monthly basis. If the group needs to meet before April 26th a conference line is available.
- Tentative agenda items: 1) Discuss draft summaries of white-paper topics;

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Introductions and Agenda Approval

- Gina Dello Russo brought the meeting to order and the agenda was approved.

Approval of December 6th, 2011 SAR Meeting Notes

Decision: The December 6th, 2011 SAR workgroup meeting notes were approved with no changes.

Action Item Review

- **December 6th, Actions:**
 - **Ryan Gronewold will provide Gina Dello Russo with a description of the Corps' Floodplain Project/Product (for use in the SAR FY12 scope of work) by tomorrow (12/07/11).**
 - Complete
 - **Gina Dello Russo will update the Floodplain Encroachment Scope of Work (SOW) with the Corps project description and provide to Ryan for review by Friday (12/09/11).**
 - Complete.
 - **Ryan Gronewold will review the draft Scope of Work edited by Gina and provide comments/revisions back to Gina by Monday (12/12/11).**
 - Complete.
 - **Gina Dello Russo will submit the revised FY12 Floodplain Encroachment Scope of Work to Yvette McKenna on Monday (12/12/11). In the email, Gina will include a cost estimate correction for the project (\$30,000 not \$55,000).**
 - Complete.
 - **Robert Padilla will talk to Jim Wilber about (1) correcting the Floodplain Encroachment Project cost estimate (\$30,000 not \$55,000); (2) the 2003 BO reference in support/justification for the project; (3) what are the potential changes with the Program restructuring and becoming a RIP and where does the SAR work group fit in.**
 - The status of this action item is not known.
 - **Ryan Gronewold will PDF the floodplain maps and will distribute both the maps and the shape files to SAR members for reference purposes.**
 - The status of this action item is not known.
 - **Ryan Gronewold, Page Pegram, and potentially Robert Padilla offered to help Gina Dello Russo with a day-trip ground-truthing event sometime between December 21st and the New Year.**
 - Gina did not complete any ground-truthing and the workgroup will discuss strategies for completing the ground-truthing during today's meeting.
 - **SAR members were asked to look at the list of issues that the work group was going to address/discuss and recommend which topics to focus on next, should the work group continue.**
 - Complete. The workgroup will discuss how the workgroup should proceed during today's meeting.
 - **SAR members will consider what the realistic potential is for actually addressing the remaining SAR goals and objectives.**
 - Complete.

- **Terina Perez will electronically distribute the Program Update once it becomes available.**
 - The status of this action item is not known.
- **Terina Perez will update the 2011 Work Group accomplishments.**
 - Complete.
- **SAR members will review their respective agency perspective narratives in the Draft Floodplain Land Use White Paper. Comments and revisions should be emailed to Gina Dello Russo and copied to Marta Wood and Terina Perez.**
 - Complete.
- **Robert Padilla and Terina Perez will review and complete the Reclamation Response to Themes.**
 - The status of this action item is not known.
- **Page Pegram will send the link to the Socorro FEMA maps posted on the internet to SAR members.**
 - Page searched for the maps and was unable to locate the website. Because the maps are still draft that have not been posted to the FEMA website. *Note: Robyn Harrison was able to locate the flood maps and the website link was distributed to meeting attendees.*
- **Ongoing/Continued Action Items:**
 - **Robert Padilla will meet with Jim Wilber and Terina Perez to discuss the future (continuation) of the SAR ad hoc work group. (continued from 10/27/11)**
 - This action item is no longer needed. The future of the workgroup will be discussed during today's meeting.
 - **Gina Dello Russo will ask Socorro residence (local folks) for their positions on floodplain encroachment and will check if NRCS would be comfortable sharing their position for inclusion in the Floodplain Land Use white paper. (continued from 10/27/11)**
 - Incomplete. Gina was unsure how to proceed with this action item. Attendees agreed that this might be more appropriate for Socorro County and county land managers to accomplish and not necessarily the Program.
 - **Robert Padilla will review, edit (as necessary/appropriate), and condense (if needed, into 2 or 3 paragraphs) the Reclamation paragraph(s) in the Floodplain Land Use white paper. (continued from 10/27/11)**
 - This will be discussed during today's meeting. This action item is no longer needed.
 - **Gina Dello Russo will ask George Dennis for his FEMA contact. (continued from 10/27/11)**
 - Ongoing. Gina has asked George for his FEMA contact and has not yet received a response. Gina will follow up on this action item.
 - **Gina Dello Russo will talk to Bear and the County Commissioners for their positions/perspectives on floodplain land use (for inclusion in the white paper). (continued from 10/27/11)**
 - Save Our Bosque Task Force (SOBTF) has given a presentation to the county commissioners in the past so at some point County Commissioners have heard about the concerns with floodplain land use.
 - It was commented that it's difficult to say what the public and other agencies positions on a topic are and that it might be more appropriate to just include the issues that were voiced at the workshop in the white paper and point out the steps that the Program has taken in regard to those issues.

Evaluation of ability to accomplish SAR workgroup tasks (SAR workgroup completion and disbanding)

- Meeting attendees were reminded that the workgroup has previously discussed the pros and cons of disbanding and whether or not the workgroup should continue. The workgroup had generally felt that they could disband as there are other venues that SAR issues can be addressed at. Because it's not likely that any additional projects for the SAR workgroup will be funded, given the current budget, attendees agreed that the workgroup could bring their projects to completion and disband. The projects that the workgroup will need to bring to a closure or finish are 1) the white papers; 2) themes papers – internal product; 3) Floodplain Encroachment project.
 - One suggestion to bring the white paper to a close is to write short summaries for each of the white paper topics that were not addressed. The summaries could provide background information in case the Program or some other venue decides to pick up the issues in the future.
 - It was suggested that the summaries also include possible next steps for addressing the issues and possible agencies or venues that may have an interest in addressing or continuing discussion on the issues.
 - SOBTF and the committee that was created by Department of the Interior (DOI) Secretary Salazar might be venues for some of the issues.
 - Attendees were reminded that the workgroup had also previously discussed making a presentation to the Coordination Committee (CC)/ Executive Committee (EC) to show the progress that the workgroup has made.
 - The workgroup discussed their ability to finish the Floodplain Encroachment project/white paper to the extent possible. Depending on whether or not the second phase of the project is funded in FY12 the workgroup will either: 1) finish up Phase 1 and bring the project to a close, or 2) hand over products from Phase 1 to a contractor and Phase 2 will be completed.
 - The first phase of the Floodplain Encroachment project was completed by the Corps. The first phase used LIDAR mapping and inundation data to identify current conditions on the floodplain and features that might affect flood routing.
 - Ground-truthing of phase 1 of the project still needs to be completed.
 - The SOW for phase 2 of the Floodplain Encroachment project was submitted to the Program for potential funding. Phase 2 of the project would be to model future scenarios to identify issues related to floodplain encroachment including: water delivery efficiency, stranding fish or negatively impacting endangered species habitat, potential scouring if a feature blocks an area from being inundated, flood risk management, and ability to inundate overbanks.
 - As a part of Phase 1 of the project Ryan looked at velocity during the hydrograph but did not look at velocity after the hydrograph had receded. Though Ryan did not look at the declining limb of the hydrograph and those features that disconnect flow return as a part of Phase 1 this can probably be done under the current SOW.
 - Because dealing with floodplain encroachment is a conservation measure in the 2003 Biological Opinion (BO) meeting attendees agreed that it would be beneficial for a member of the SAR workgroup to attend the upcoming CC meeting to advocate for funding Phase 2 of the project and answer any questions the CC members may have about the portion of the project completed by the Corp.
 - Since the Corps completed Phase 1 of the project it was suggested that Ryan Gronewold attend the CC meeting, as he is most knowledgeable on

Phase 1. Ryan agreed to attend the CC meeting but he will need to check with his supervisor to make sure he can attend.

Action: Ryan Gronewold will check with his supervisor to see if he can attend the February 1st CC meeting to answer any questions the CC may have on the Floodplain Encroachment project.

- Ryan shared that he has taken a new position with the Corps and is now the Rio Grande Basin Coordinator. Though Ryan will have new duties he will still be involved with the Program.
- Due to the short timeframe that the workgroup has before disbanding, meeting attendees agreed that the best steps to take to close out the workgroup are to: 1) write short summary papers (around 1 page) on each of the white-paper topics that gives a brief description of the issue, any steps that the SAR workgroup has taken, and potential next steps to address the issue; 2) complete the Flood Plain Encroachment project to the extent possible; and, 3) report/present on the progress the workgroup has made to the Coordination Committee (CC)/Executive Committee (EC).
- Attendees discussed the white paper topics and brainstormed ideas for what could be included in each summary.
 - Agricultural sustainability:
 - It was suggested that the summary discuss that agricultural sustainability is multifaceted and is affected by land availability and the state of the market. In order to write in-depth on the issue the workgroup would need to know more about where things stand in Socorro and what people procuring local food feel the real issues are as there may be specific issues that the people in Socorro are focusing on and water may not be a big issue right now; for example, the current issue may be that not enough people are growing and demand cannot be met.
 - It was also suggested that the summary could include the number of acres that were formerly farmed but that are now developed and no longer available for farming. It was shared that there is a presentation for Bosque Farms that uses aerial photos to show how much of the land that used to be farmed is now developed.
 - Yasmeeen Najmi and Robyn Harrison volunteered to work on the agricultural sustainability summary.
 - Low Flow Conveyance Channel (LFCC) and levee system:
 - It was shared that the Corps has a project on the levee system. There are recommended plans that the Corps is moving forward with in order to meet end of year construction awards.
 - One suggestion was to include the recommended plans in the summary; however, since the plans have not been officially approved they will not be included.
 - It was one opinion that since the LFCC is old and now serves a purpose that it was not originally constructed for that it should be reevaluated to see how well it is serving its current purpose and whether it can be improved.
 - It was suggested that the summary include suggested analyses that would look at how much of a contribution LFCC has on river drying especially when considered with other factors that contribute to river drying (i.e. evaporation, bank seepage, evapotranspiration, etc.).
 - One of the current uses of the LFCC is to help drain the valley for farmers. Since there are also riverside drains that serve that purpose analyses could look at how much of a role the LFCC plays in drainage and how flexible you have to be with alignment, management, or capacity of the LFCC to serve the purpose of drainage.

- It was commented that the LFCC might be more important now for water delivery than for drainage.
 - The LFCC also captures return flows for the Refuge.
 - It was shared that the Corps has asked questions to Reclamation about the benefits of reconstructing the levees, the preference for a full levee, and the value of those structures. It was asked whether those questions had been posed to other agencies as well.
 - It was explained that the questions were specific to Reclamation as a part of the review of the economics for the levee work and are an attempt to justify the benefits of the levee.
 - It was asked if looking at the LFCC would include a single channel concept at some point. The river is elevated above the LFCC and that is what causes some of the issues with the LFCC. It was also asked if there has been an evaluation of the LFCC's history and what its original functions were as opposed to how it's functioning now.
 - None of the meeting attendees were aware of an evaluation that looked at how the LFCC is currently functioning. That type of analysis might lead to a single channel concept.
 - There is a description of the LFCC, that describes how much water is salvaged but it's not believed that anyone has looked out how much MRGCD and the Refuge utilize the LFCC.
 - It was suggested that the analyses that the workgroup discussed today be included in the summary as suggested next steps.
 - It was also suggested that the summary mention a few statements of why the LFCC was built and how it is functioning now. The summary should also mention that it's not currently known how many acres in total are being irrigated by the LFCC and that though there is information on groundwater that shows loss of water from the river to the LFCC there have been no analyses that tie the two together. There are also no studies that show that the ability to recover minnow is exacerbated by water lost to the LFCC nor are there studies that determine how critical the LFCC is for irrigation purposes.
 - Ryan volunteered to develop the LFCC summary.
- Sediment transport:
 - Meeting attendees discussed that sediment issues in the SAR are widespread and include transportation, sediment load, plugs, sediment starved areas, erosion, and aggradation.
 - It was suggested that aspects of all 3 subreaches and how each reach functions in terms of sediment management be included in the summary. There could be a short description of each of the subreaches and then a description of the issues in each subreach in terms of sediment movement and trends of plugs.
 - It was pointed out that there is also the question of whether sediment plugs are good or bad.
 - It was said that Reclamation reacts to sediment issues differently as some of the risks associated with sediment pose risk to the structural integrity of the levee.
 - Though there is a diversity of issues on the river one suggestion was to focus the summary paper on the issues that are important for the Program such as endangered species interests. How do flood control issues, aggradation, plugs, etc. affect the species?

- It was commented that the summary should stress that sediment needs attention and that the reach needs to be looked at as a whole when analyzing the affects that actions will have in regard to sediment.
 - Jason volunteered himself and Robert to develop a summary for sediment transportation.
 - Habitat restoration
 - As habitat restoration is being addressed to a much greater degree within the Habitat Restoration Workgroup meeting attendees agreed not to develop a summary paper on this issue.
 - Adjudication and water rights
 - Page Pegram volunteered to develop a summary paper for adjudication and water rights.
 - The summary can include a description of what adjudication is and can take information from the workshop notes on what some of the issues with adjudication and water rights are.
 - The summary could also pose questions as to how the loss of water rights in the valley might affect endangered species or what would be the affects if the water was allocated elsewhere and never made it to Socorro.
- Attendees further discussed the steps that need to be taken to bring the Floodplain Encroachment white paper and project to a close.
 - SAR members should review their agency perspectives to make sure that they are concise and clear as some of these sections need to be shortened. SAR members should also see if there are ways to fine tune the section that discusses issues brought up at the roundtable.
 - Attendees discussed using a tiered approach to complete the ground-truthing of the identified features on the LIDAR mapping:
 - First, SAR workgroup members would review the maps to see if they can determine what some of the features are based on their own field experience.
 - It was asked what the potential is for using the Corps' jetty jack mapping that was completed.
 - The jetty jack maps can be used, however, the jetty jack mapping is very broad and only indicates where the jetty jack fields are and does not pin point the exact location of each jetty jack.
 - It was explained that ground-truthing the LIDAR mapping would include: 1) identifying if a feature is actually there; 2) identifying the feature; and 3) getting estimated dimensions of the feature. This information would be input to the LIDAR map as a GIS attribute.
 - Next, Socorro County staff and emergency management people who know the area well can look at the maps to assist in identifying features. This is one way to get the county involved.
 - Lastly, the workgroup can take trips to the field to locate any other structures. Field days would depend on how much is identified by looking at the maps.
 - It was explained that ground-truthing would only include identifying features that are in the overbank area from Escondida through the Refuge and will be limited by what can actually be accessed in the field.
- Attendees then developed a timeline for bringing the projects to a close:
 - Floodplain Encroachment project:
 - Scenario 1: Complete Phase 1 (identifying current conditions) - Phase 2 (modeling future conditions) *is not* funded
 - Ground-truthing completed by May 2012

- Report completed by June 2012

Or,

- Scenario 2: Complete Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the project *is* funded
 - Products from Phase 1 are handed over to a contractor by June 2012.
 - Phase 2 completed by December 31st, 2012.

Action: Gina Dello Russo will distribute the Floodplain Encroachment SOW to the SAR workgroup.

- Summaries of white-paper topics
 - Draft 1 of the summaries completed by March 2012
 - Final summaries completed by June 2012.
- Report/Presentation to the CC/EC
 - If Phase 2 of the Floodplain Encroachment project *is not* funded – July 2012.

Or,

- If Phase 2 *is* funded – December 2012.

Co-Chair Discussions

- Attendees agreed that since the workgroup is winding down there is not a need to elect a second Co-Chair. However, because workgroup Co-Chairs now have monthly conference calls Gina may need assistance in taking the conference calls and with other co-chair duties. Yasmeen volunteered to assist Gina with Co-Chair duties if needed.

2012 Work Plan and interim steps

- The timeline for bringing the projects to a close are the steps that the work group will take in 2012. If the work group needs to create a formal work plan it will be developed based on that timeline.

Program Update

- The next CC meeting will be on February 1st, 2012 from 12:30 to 4:00 pm. The meeting will focus on reprioritizing the FY2012 work plan of activities.
- The PMT met on January 25th to look at the priorities of the work plan.
- The EC last met on January 19th, 2012. The EC discussed Secretary's Salazar's visit and viewed the Recovery Implementation Program (RIP) draft Program Document and a proposed RIP structure. The EC will hold off releasing the Long Term Plan (LTP) until the RIP Program Documents and Action Plan have been developed. The next EC meeting is on February 16th, 2012.
- The Population Estimation and Population Monitoring peer review presentation will be on February 16th, 2012. Because space is limited anyone who would like to attend the presentation should RSVP to Ali Saenz (Program Administrative Assistant).
- The Database Management System will be tested again in April 2012 and will be released in June 2012.
- Gina asked workgroup members to verify that their agency's primary and alternate workgroup members are included on the SAR mailing list.

Action: Tetra Tech will distribute the SAR mailing list to the workgroup.

- Ayesha Burdett has asked to be removed from the SAR mailing list -Tetra Tech will pass her request to the Ali Saenz

Action: Tetra Tech will pass Ayesha Burdett's request to be removed from the SAR mailing list to Ali Saenz.

Recovery actions and SA reach fits into recovery efforts

- Gina Dello Russo was unable to call into the first Co-Chair conference call; however, she did receive a Power Point presentation on a RIP structure in preparation for the meeting.
- Meeting attendees had an interest in viewing the RIP structure presentation and the draft Program Document.

Action: Michelle Mann will email the draft Program Document and the presentation of the proposed structure to meeting attendees.

Next Meeting: Thursday, April 26th, 2012

- Because the workgroup is winding down meeting attendees agreed that they did not need to continue meeting on a monthly basis. If the group needs to meet before April 26th a conference line is available.
- Tentative agenda items: 1) Discuss draft summaries of white-paper topics;

**San Acacia Reach Ad Hoc Work group
26 January 2012 Meeting Attendees**

NAME	AFFILIATION	PHONE NUMBER	EMAIL ADDRESS
Gina Dello Russo	FWS/Co-chair	575-835-1828	gina_dellorusso@fws.gov
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Robyn Harrison	landowner	575-517-0291	robynjharrison@gmail.com
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