

**Middle Rio Grande Endangered Species Collaborative Program
Habitat Restoration Workgroup (HRW) Meeting
21 February 2012, Tuesday
12:30-3:30 pm at Interstate Stream Commission**

Actions

- HRW member comments on the SAR maps are due to Ondrea Hummel by Friday, March 2nd, 2012.
- Robert Padilla will find out if the shapefiles from Reclamation's suitability monitoring can be provided to the HRW (*Ongoing 12/13/11*).
- Gina Dello Russo, Rick Billings, and/or Danielle Galloway will follow up with Yvette McKenna regarding the HR Construction SOW and letter to Federal Government land managers.

Decision

- The January 17th, 2012 meeting notes were approved with no changes.

Meeting Summary

- The meeting was brought to order and introductions were made. The January 17th, 2012 meeting notes were approved with no changes.
- All but one of the January action items were completed or addressed during today's meeting.
- Gina Dello Russo gave a presentation to update the workgroup on the ET Tower Transition Project on the Bosque Del Apache National Wildlife Refuge (the Refuge). The project site is located mid-Refuge and is around 60 acres. The presentation showed a comparison of woody vegetation and stem density in 2009 and 2011. Between 2009 and 2011 the percentage of woody vegetation has generally decreased and there has been a decrease in stem density of about 50%, mostly in Tamarisk and Cottonwood, with the stem density of shrub species remaining about the same.
- Attendees were updated that the Program will be getting \$1.6M in Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) funding in 2012 with the potential for \$2.4M - \$2.6M. Attendees were informed that due to the strained budget it's not likely that any new projects for habitat restoration or science will be funded and the workgroup co-chairs were advised to contact the Program Manager to see if SOWs are still needed. Attendees discussed that though it is unfortunate that no new projects will be funded this year this may give the workgroup the opportunity to review the projects they have completed, visit habitat restoration sites, and use the reach maps to look for potential project areas and begin initial design of future projects.
- It was shared that a Recovery Implementation Program (RIP) Program Document and a RIP Action Plan are being developed and are expected to be released to the Executive Committee (EC) for review and discussion at their March 28th, 2012 meeting. It's currently planned for the EC to make a decision on becoming a RIP at the April EC meeting. The potential RIP structure is being discussed as a part of the Program Document. Meeting attendees discussed that with the Program potentially becoming a

RIP and changing structure it would be good to have a “report card” for the work that has been completed so far by the Program and HRW.

- Meeting attendees discussed the potential for beetle monitoring during 2012. It was shared that Deb Hill and Hira Walker have been working to track beetle sightings in New Mexico. Though there is no formal protocol for beetle monitoring in New Mexico as of yet, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (the Corps) and other agencies could look for the beetle during upcoming flycatcher surveys and other types of monitoring. It was shared that the Corps will be meeting with Reclamation to discuss the Scope of Work (SOW) for this year’s flycatcher monitoring; attendees agreed that it would be beneficial to see if procedure for beetle monitoring could be included in the SOW.
- Mark Horner and Walt Kuhn from Tetra Tech presented an updated version of the .pdf draft San Acacia Reach (SAR) maps. The updated maps now include completed projects for the Refuge, revised categories for displaying inundation depths, more condensed vegetation classifications, channel widths, channel profiles, and cross section surveys. There will be one more round of revision to the draft SAR maps; HRW member comments on the SAR maps are due to Ondrea Hummel by Friday, March 2nd, 2012.
- As part of the Program Update it was shared that the Coordination Committee has approved a list of projects for the FY12 work plan but has not yet prioritized the projects. It was also shared that the Public Information and Outreach and the Database Management System (DBMS) workgroups have met to discuss replacing the Program website with the DBMS.

Next Meeting: March 20th, 2012 from 12:30 PM to 3:30 PM at ISC

- Tentative agenda items include: 1) Manipulating the San Acacia Reach GIS products to start reach review and evaluation; 2) discussion on the next steps for reach mapping including what more for this reach and next reach; 3) what products HRW can provide as transition to possible new structure moves forward; 4) what a baseline report card for Program habitat restoration might look like

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21 February 2012, Tuesday
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Meeting Notes

Introductions/Agenda Approval

- The meeting was brought to order and introductions were made.
- The agenda was rearranged so that the draft SAR maps would be presented later in the meeting.

Announcements

- There were no announcements.

Approve January 17th, 2012 HR meeting minutes

Decision: The January 17th, 2012 meeting notes were approved with no changes.

Action Item Review

- **As follow up to the action item “Grace Haggerty will check with Chris Stageman to determine options to decrease the predicted spread of depletions between Office of the State Engineer (OSE) & ET toolbox Gina Dello Russo will ask Grace for the equation that is used to calculate new net depletions.**
 - Grace was thanked for sending a summary document that described the State Engineer’s policy on depletions. This action item is to address follow up questions on how the Office of the State Engineer (OSE) will calculate a new net depletion if it is determined that a new net depletion will come from a habitat restoration project.
 - Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) calculated depletions from a sediment plug at the Bosque Del Apache National Wildlife Refuge (the Refuge) using the most recent OSE calculations and the ET Toolbox and there was a 60% difference in depletions between the two methods. The HRW would like a summary of the OSE calculation to see how the OSE calculation compares to the ET Toolbox calculation.
 - Grace explained that the OSE calculation is essentially an open water evaporation calculation. The calculation uses information from river gages near the site and the OSE will often go to the site as well.
 - Possible differences between the two calculations may be:
 - The OSE calculation doesn’t recognize any changes in vegetation being additive back to depletions
 - The ET Toolbox calculation may use a crop coefficient or pro rate evaporation over a year.
 - A summary of the OSE calculation can be provided to the HRW and the OSE calculation can be reviewed if needed.

- ✓ **Michelle Mann will work with the Science Workgroup (ScW) and Monitoring Plan Team (MPT) Program Management Team (PMT) Liaison to find a location for the HRW meetings as all three of the those workgroups meet on the same day and there are several people who attend all of the meetings.**
 - Complete. The ScW, MPT, and HRW will continue to meet on the 3rd Tuesday of every month at Interstate Stream Commission (ISC).
- **Robert Padilla will find out if the shapefiles from Reclamation's suitability monitoring can be provided to the HRW (Ongoing 12/13/11).**
 - Status unknown.

Presentation on the ET Tower Project

- Gina Dello Russo gave a presentation to update the work group on the ET Tower Transition Project on the Refuge. *For specific details please refer to actual presentation materials.*
 - The project site is located mid-Refuge and is around 60 acres.
 - Originally it was planned for Tamarisk around the tower to be cleared, but the treatment site was moved upstream to avoid disturbing a Southwestern Willow Flycatcher (flycatcher) nest.
 - Timeline of the project:
 - In 2003 the project was funded and in 2005 environmental clearance was completed. Gina worked with Save Our Bosque Task Force to develop a restoration plan for the entire reach.
 - From 2005 to 2007 65-acres were cleared for invasive species control. Vegetation was also cleared from one of the sand bars to test a technique used on the Plat River to mow and disk vegetation on the sand bars. The technique was not successful on the Middle Rio Grande.
 - In 2008, a sediment plug caused overbank flows of 2,000 cfs on the site. This was also the first year that native vegetation was established on the site.
 - Woody vegetation and stem density monitoring was completed in 2009 and 2011.
 - The upper 20 acres of the site is mostly open grassland and forest with some recruitment of woody vegetation. The lower 40 acres is made up of dense woody vegetation.
 - Between 2009 and 2011 some of the diversity of the woody vegetation was lost and the percent cover for each species has decreased.
 - It was noted that Tamarisk stem density has decreased from 2009 to 2011 while Baccharis and Salix stem density has increased from 2009 to 2011.
 - There has been a decrease in overall stem density of about 50%, mostly in Tamarisk and Cottonwood, with the stem density of shrub species remaining about the same.
 - New Mexico State University and the University of New Mexico continue to monitor evapotranspiration.
 - Questions/Discussion

- *Question:* Are you observing a positive trend? *Response:* Yes, in species like Coyote Willow and Baccharis. This trend should result in a dense evenly aged habitat that is suitable for the flycatcher.
- *Question:* Was there any planting in the project area? *Response:* 200 Gooding's Willow stems were planted; the stems have had about 60% survival.
- *Question:* Are there any theories as to why the Baccharis is doing so well? *Response:* Baccharis seems to have the advantage in years with limited overbank flows. The Baccharis is well established on the site and has flourished.
- *Question:* What problems in terms of water flow is the plug causing? *Response:* A plug is a natural part of a dynamic channel and would only be a problem if the sediment is not managed. In that subreach, the river has a limited capacity to manage sediment on its own. A longer term spring runoff on the site was one effect of the plug.
- *Question:* Does the site usually get overbank flow? *Response:* The site has always had overbank flow. In 1996 the overbank flow was around 2,500 cfs – 3,000 cfs and in 2008 the overbank flow was around 1,500 cfs.

FY12 Budget & SOW Updates

- Attendees were updated that the Program will be getting \$1.6M in Reclamation funding for FY 2012 with the potential for \$2.4M - \$2.6M. Due to the strained budget it's not likely that any new projects for habitat restoration or science will be funded. The Coordination Committee (CC) did not finish discussions on whether the technical work groups should complete scopes of work (SOWs). Co-chairs were advised to contact the Program Manager to see if SOWS are still needed.
- Attendees discussed that though it is unfortunate that no new projects will be funded this year this may give the workgroup the opportunity to review the projects they have completed, visit habitat restoration sites, and use the reach maps to look for potential project areas and begin initial design of future projects.

Request for proposals on federal properties - letter out from Reclamation to land managers?

- Attendees were reminded that for consistency purposes the HRW would like to evaluate federal proposals at the same time as other proposals. The HRW wants to start the dialogue between federal land managers and the Program for this process but it's not known if this is the appropriate time for those conversations to occur.
- Attendees briefly discussed the draft Recovery Implementation Program (RIP) Program Document and draft RIP Action Plan.
 - The RIP Program Document and RIP Action Plan are expected to be released to the Executive Committee (EC) for review and discussion at their March 28th, 2012 meeting. It's currently planned for the EC to make a decision on becoming a RIP at the April EC meeting.
 - It was acknowledged that the transition to a RIP will not be an "overnight process" and there may be "growing pains".
 - The potential RIP structure is being discussed as a part of the draft documents.

- Meeting attendees discussed that with the Program potentially becoming a RIP and changing structure that it would be good to have a “report card” for the work that has been completed so far by the Program and HRW. In order to evaluate the Program’s progress each year there will need to be a starting point or some basis for comparison.
 - It was suggested that the HRW make sure that their section of the Program website is organized and includes information on the projects, analyses, and techniques that the HRW has discussed. This will be helpful for the work group to provide information on what habitat restoration techniques have worked.
- Attendees were updated that the peer review panel presentation for Population Estimation and Population Monitoring was cancelled and the EC met in closed session to discuss a standard peer review process.

Salt Cedar Beetle (beetle) monitoring for 2012

- In 2011 the Tamarisk Coalition made a presentation to the Program and began to map movement of the beetle. The Tamarisk Coalition distributed the protocol they use for monitoring and has offered to teach a class on their protocol to the Program.
 - Though there is no formal protocol for beetle monitoring in New Mexico as of yet, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (the Corps) and other agencies could look for the beetle during upcoming flycatcher surveys and other types of monitoring.
 - It was shared that the Corps will be funding some of the FY12 flycatcher monitoring and will soon be meeting with Reclamation to discuss the SOW for this year’s monitoring. Attendees agreed that it would be beneficial to see if procedure for beetle monitoring can be included in the SOW.
 - Deb Hill and Hira Walker have been working to track beetle sightings in New Mexico and the Bureau of Land Management has offered to put together a map for beetle occurrences.
 - Attendees discussed that it would be beneficial to see what vegetation is like before beetle nests have been established as defoliation usually starts after nesting. The beetles should first emerge around mid-April.
 - Attendees also agreed that determining the rate of defoliation and the rate of spread of the beetle will also be beneficial.

Tetra Tech presentation of draft San Acacia Reach maps

- Mark Horner and Walt Kuhn from Tetra Tech presented an updated version of the hard copy draft San Acacia Reach (SAR) maps. The hard copy maps are meant to be a tool to provide “at-a-glance” information for the reach. The hard copy maps will also be provided electronically and the full GIS mapping information will also be provided as .MXD files.
 - The maps now include completed projects for the Refuge. Tetra Tech is still waiting for the Socorro Soil and Water Conservation District to get back to them with information on additional completed projects.
 - The hard copy maps will only include completed projects; however, proposed projects will be included in the .MXD files.

- Based on feedback from the last meeting the vegetation has been further condensed.
- The categories for displaying inundation depth have been revised and now include 3 categories: .1 ft – 1 ft; 1.1 ft – 4 ft; and, 4 ft - maximum depth.
 - The maximum depth for each flow is included in the Notes box for each subreach.
- Channel widths, profiles, and selected cross section surveys are also included on the maps.
- Tetra Tech will be adding the month and year for each map.
- There will be one more round of revision to the draft SAR maps

Action: HRW member comments on the SAR maps are due to Ondrea Hummel by Friday, March 2nd, 2012.

- The HRW will begin manipulating the SAR GIS products to start reach review and evaluation at the next HRW meeting and will discuss the next steps for reach mapping in closed session.

Program Update

- The CC has approved a list of projects for the FY12 work plan but has not yet prioritized the projects within the work plan.
- The Public Information and Outreach and the Database Management System (DBMS) work groups have met to discuss replacing the Program website with the DBMS.

Next Meeting: March 20th, 2012 from 12:30 PM to 3:30 PM at ISC

**Habitat Restoration Work Group Meeting
February 21st, 2012 Meeting Attendees**

NAME	POSITION	AFFILIATION	PHONE NUMBER	EMAIL ADDRESS	P/A/O
Rick Billings	HR Member Co-Chair	ABCWUA	796-2527	rbillings@abcwua.org	P
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