

**Middle Rio Grande Endangered Species Collaborative Program  
Habitat Restoration Workgroup (HRW) Meeting  
15 May 2012, Tuesday  
1:00-3:30 pm at Reclamation – San Juan Conference Room**

**Actions**

- HRW members will review the Southwestern Willow Flycatcher (Flycatcher) portions of the criteria in preparation for the June HRW meeting; comments on the criteria should be sent to Danielle Galloway for compilation.
- Robert Padilla will ask Yvette Paroz or Hector Garcia for the data from the project that looked for potential refugial habitat for RGSM to include in the reach mapping. (*Ongoing 4/17/12*)
- Jason Casuga will find out if the shapefiles from Reclamation's flycatcher suitability monitoring can be provided to the Habitat Restoration Workgroup (HRW) (*Ongoing 12/13/11*).

**Decision**

- The April 17<sup>th</sup>, 2012 HRW meeting notes were approved with no changes.

**Meeting Summary**

- Gina Dello Russo brought the meeting to order. It was shared that the American Society of Engineers will be having the 2012 World Environmental & Water Resources Congress international conference in Albuquerque May 20<sup>th</sup> - 24<sup>th</sup>.
- The April 17<sup>th</sup>, 2012 HRW meeting notes were approved with no changes.
- Meeting attendees performed an action item review. All but two of the action items were completed; the two remaining actions will be carried over to next month.
- Ondrea Hummel updated the workgroup that she is working on modifying the scope of work (SOW) for the reach mapping to include the additional components that the workgroup would like added to the San Acacia Reach maps (ground water modeling, queries) and to include mapping for the Isleta Reach. The next step will be to meet with the contractor for negotiation.
- It was shared that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) is working on a SOW for the next phase of Collaborative Program adaptive management. After the Executive Committee (EC) finalizes the SOW an adaptive management ad hoc workgroup will be formed.
- Meeting attendees briefly discussed the delineating criteria to evaluate restored habitat. One comment on the draft criteria was received. The comment was about the incised thalweg at low flow conditions as an additional criterion in summer refugial hydrology. There was some confusion regarding the comment as there is still a variety of habitat when there is an incised thalweg; meeting attendees will further discuss the comment at a future HRW meeting. HRW members will review the Southwestern Willow Flycatcher (Flycatcher) portions of the criteria in preparation for the June HRW meeting; comments on the criteria should be sent to Danielle Galloway for compilation.
- Meeting attendees viewed a presentation "Tamarisk Biological Control & Implications for Land Management" by Matt Johnson from Northern Arizona University. The presentation included a history of how several species of the Tamarisk Leaf Beetle were

introduced in the United States as a part of Tamarisk removal efforts. The presentation also included a description of the Tamarisk Leaf Beetle life cycle; yearly distribution of the beetle in Utah, Nevada, Colorado, Arizona, and New Mexico from 2007 to 2011; and Texas beetle establishment as of 2010. The presentation also outlined the impacts of defoliation to habitat conditions that are detrimental to Flycatcher (unfavorable microclimate, increased risks for predation and brood parasitism). Hard copies of the monitoring forms and Tamarisk Leaf Beetle monitoring protocol used by the Tamarisk Coalition were distributed to meeting attendees. Meeting attendees were also informed of a Tamarisk Leaf Beetle Monitoring Workshop for field training on May 30<sup>th</sup>, 2012 at the Corps; those interested in attending the workshop should RSVP to Ondrea Hummel.

- Collaborative Program and Recovery Implementation Program (RIP) update:
  - Attendees were updated that the Population Viability Assessment (PVA) workgroup will be meeting in June to discuss ways to speed up the PVA process so that preliminary findings will be available in time to be included in the consultation (by August 15<sup>th</sup>).
  - The EC will be discussing RIP management, the draft RIP Program Document, and the external peer review process at their May 29<sup>th</sup> meeting. It's anticipated that the EC will be making a decision on becoming a RIP in the next couple months as Reclamation will be submitting their final BA to U.S. Fish and Wildlife at the end of July and it's currently planned for the RIP to be included as a conservation measure in their BA.
  - Two half day training sessions for the Database Management System (DBMS) are tentatively scheduled for July 18<sup>th</sup> and a day the following week.
  - A RIP transition/Biological Opinion tentative timeline was distributed to meeting attendees. It was explained that the timeline is a little inaccurate in some areas; because deadlines are continually changing as events unfold it's not possible to create a definite schedule.

**Next Meeting: June 19<sup>th</sup>, 2012 from 12:30 PM to 3:30 PM at ISC**

- Tentative agenda items: (1) discuss delineating criteria to evaluate restored habitat, look to next steps to streamline criteria (rapid assessment, develop matrix, evaluate constructed projects);

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## Meeting Notes

### Introductions/Agenda Approval

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

### Announcements

- It was shared that the American Society of Engineers will be having the 2012 World Environmental & Water Resources Congress international conference in Albuquerque May 20<sup>th</sup> - 24<sup>th</sup>.
- Meeting attendees were also informed of a Tamarisk Leaf Beetle Monitoring Workshop for field training on May 30<sup>th</sup>, 2012 at the Corps; those interested in attending the workshop should RSVP to Ondrea Hummel.
  - The purpose of the training is to monitor the advancement of the beetle especially as related to Southwestern Willow Flycatcher (flycatcher) habitat.
  - The majority of flycatcher habitat on the Middle Rio Grande (MRG) consists of mixed vegetation but the majority of the nests are in native vegetation.
  - It was suggested that the reach analysis include identifying and prioritizing areas near flycatcher habitat or territory where there is the potential for a beetle infestation.
  - Attendees discussed why the movement of the beetle would be important to the public as removal of Salt Cedar Tamarisk (Tamarisk) can be beneficial.
    - Loss of Tamarisk can cause destabilization, increased runoff from the Rio Puerco, and fire danger.
    - Tamarisk is also used for privacy in some areas.
    - It was commented that it will be interesting to see how newly sprouted Tamarisk are affected by the beetle.

### Approve April 17<sup>th</sup>, 2012 HR meeting minutes

- The April 17<sup>th</sup>, 2012 HRW meeting notes were approved with no changes.

### Action Item Review

- **Robert Padilla will ask Yvette Paroz or Hector Garcia for the data from the project that looked for potential refugial habitat for RGSM to include in the reach mapping.**
  - Incomplete.
  - Ondrea updated meeting attendees that she will be updating the SOW for the reach mapping to include addition of the refugial habitat and the other additional information that the workgroup has requested (flycatcher suitability monitoring, ground water modeling). The refugial habitat information and flycatcher suitability monitoring will need to be received in the next month or so to be included in the reach mapping.

- It was commented that it may also be beneficial to include the River Eyes information in the reach mapping to identify areas with the highest potential for drying.
- **Gina Dello Russo will distribute the updated Desirable Conditions for Habitat document.**
  - Complete.
- **Michelle Mann will distribute the MRG Consultation/Recovery Implementation Program (RIP) Establishment Timeline that was distributed at the March 28<sup>th</sup> EC meeting.**
  - Complete. A RIP transition/Biological Opinion (BO) tentative timeline was distributed to meeting attendees. It was explained that the timeline is a little inaccurate in some areas; because deadlines are continually changing as events unfold it's not possible to create a definite schedule.
  - Meeting attendees discussed whether there are any HRW products that would be helpful to provide for the MRG consultation or RIP establishment.
    - It was one opinion that the assessment of where the system is at in order to figure out the goals for the future may be beneficial; however, it's not known when that assessment can happen as it depends on multiple factors. The habitat restoration work that has been completed to date can be evaluated but the evaluation is something that the workgroup may want to have contracted as it will likely be a large task.
      - In order to evaluate the restored habitat the definition of successful habitat restoration needs to be determined. The successful habitat criteria need to be turned into metrics.
        - One suggestion is to have a contractor perform a rapid assessment of the completed restoration projects once the habitat criteria have been turned into metrics.
      - Meeting attendees determined that, given the timeframe, it's not likely that there will be any products for the workgroup to provide for the MRG consultation or RIP establishment.
- **Jason Casuga will find out if the shapefiles from Reclamation's flycatcher suitability monitoring can be provided to the Habitat Restoration Workgroup (HRW) (Ongoing 12/13/11).**
  - Incomplete.

#### **Check in on GIS products for San Acacia Reach and Isleta Reach**

- Meeting attendees were updated that the workgroup has been discussing incorporating additional data to the San Acacia Reach (SAR) maps. The workgroup has also decided to begin the mapping for the Isleta Reach. The SOW for the SAR is in the process of being modified to include the additional data that is requested and to include the queries that the workgroup is requesting; the Corps will be meeting with the contractor to negotiate the changes. The Corps will be funding the mapping for the Isleta Reach and the modifications to the SAR mapping.
  - Attendees were reminded that the workgroup would like to add the ground water modeling to the SAR maps. The contractor may need to talk to staff at Interstate Stream Commission (ISC) (Nabil or Page) to add the ground water modeling.

- It was not known if the ground water modeling is public information. It's also not known if there is GIS representation of the modeling that shows the change in ground water.
- The workgroup had also discussed having the contractor develop queries to identify the distance from flycatcher habitat to water and other types of flycatcher habitat information.
  - Meeting attendees briefly discussed patch size in the context of the Reclamation adaptive management test project. It's believed that Reclamation is using the term "patch" to describe an entire area of suitable or preferred habitat and a patch may include multiple vegetation types; not just a single vegetation type.
- Meeting attendees briefly discussed this morning's adaptive management presentation.
  - It was shared Reclamation has been working with the Corps to develop the "test" activities that were presented. Reclamation had wanted to include the Cochiti deviations as a test activity, but right now the Corps is only evaluating the actions taken in the past in regard to the deviations.
  - It was asked if there will be an adaptive management workgroup.
    - An adaptive management workgroup has not been formed but there is a list of people who attended the last adaptive management meeting. It was shared that the Corps is working on the SOW to develop version 2 of the Program Adaptive Management Plan; it's likely that an ad hoc workgroup will be developed as part of developing Adaptive Management Plan version 2. The SOW was presented to the EC during their meeting today and their comments are due by next Tuesday (5/22/12). The EC will then vote on accepting the SOW. Though the activity is funded by the Corps, the Corps would like to get buy-in from the EC.

### **Complete first round of delineating criteria to evaluate restored habitat, look to next steps to streamline criteria**

- One comment on the draft delineating criteria was received. The comment was about the incised thalweg at low flow conditions being an additional criterion in summer refugial hydrology.
  - There was some confusion regarding the comment as usually the context of an incised thalweg is used when talking about spring habitat. If a channel is incised it takes more water to get an overbank. There is also still a variety of habitat when there is an incised channel.
  - Meeting attendees will further discuss the comment at a future HRW meeting.
- The Southwestern Willow Flycatcher (flycatcher) components of the criteria still need to be reviewed and discussed. The workgroup will also need to discuss the next steps for the criteria; some optional next steps are to develop a matrix from the criteria and/or a rapid assessment for existing restoration projects.

**Action:** HRW members will review the Southwestern Willow Flycatcher (Flycatcher) portions of the criteria in preparation for the June HRW meeting; comments on the criteria should be sent to Danielle Galloway for compilation.

### Diorhabda Monitoring presentation

- Meeting attendees viewed a presentation “Tamarisk Biological Control & Implications for Land Management” by Matt Johnson from Northern Arizona University. *For specific details please see actual presentation.*
- The presentation included a history of how several species of the Tamarisk Leaf Beetle were introduced in the United States as a part of Tamarisk removal efforts. The presentation also included a description of the Tamarisk Leaf Beetle life cycle; yearly distribution of the beetle in Utah, Nevada, Colorado, Arizona, and New Mexico from 2007 to 2011; and Texas beetle establishment as of 2010. The presentation also outlined the impacts of defoliation to habitat conditions that are detrimental to Flycatcher (unfavorable microclimate, increased risks for predation and brood parasitism).
- Hard copies of the monitoring forms and Tamarisk Leaf Beetle monitoring protocol used by the Tamarisk Coalition were distributed to meeting attendees.
  - It was noted that the most important sections of the forms are the date, the UTM coordinates, and the river mile (if found on a river) for the location where the Tamarisk Leaf Beetle is sighted. The stage (adult/larval/early larval) is also important to record.
  - It was shared that there is another species of beetle that eats Tamarisk that was released in Phoenix, Arizona and is expanding north into Mead and the Navajo Reservation. The impacts of that beetle are not as extensive as the Tamarisk Leaf Beetle but it does cause some defoliation.
    - It was commented that it will be interesting to see how the two beetles will coexist.
  - The monitoring forms include a section on refoliation; however it is difficult to identify refoliation unless you saw the defoliation.
  - Photos are always very helpful for identification of the beetle and for monitoring its effects.
  - The beetle can be collected using alcohol and a sample bottle. Any specimens can be sent to the Tamarisk Coalition.
  - Matt shared that his research looks mostly at the short and long term affects of the beetle on wildlife.
  - *Question:* Are there any plans to bring in ants to areas on the Virgin River with flycatcher (ants are a predator of the beetle)? *Response:* No. Restoration for this year includes establishing native vegetation. It’s believed that areas where there is already a native-mix will be the most successful in recovery.
  - *Question:* Is there anything in place for fire hazards? *Response:* Restoration includes the removal of dead vegetation. The restoration on the Virgin River consists of using cutting/herbicide and then planting.
    - A lot of the restoration is funded through the Walton Foundation.
  - *Question:* Are there any other implications related to the loss of Tamarisk outside of loss that is related to the flycatcher? *Response:* Erosion and fire are other implications of the beetle. Currently there are plans for long term monitoring of the affected areas so see how the loss of Tamarisk affects temperature and relative humidity.
    - Tamarisk also provides layers of structural habitat for other birds like the Yellow-billed Cuckoo.

- *Question:* Is Tamarisk the Tamarisk Leaf Beetle's food source in their native habitat? *Response:* Yes; however because there are a lot of predators for the Tamarisk Leaf Beetle in their native habitat there is a constant balance. The biggest problem in the U.S. is that there is not a predator. There is no documentation that birds here are eating the Tamarisk Leaf Beetle in the wild (caged-birds have been known to eat the Tamarisk Leaf Beetle); this year there will be more observations to see if there is predation.

### **Review RIP Program Document, schedule for consultation, and RIP Action Plan**

- Attendees were updated that the Population Viability Assessment (PVA) workgroup will be meeting in June to discuss ways to speed up the PVA process so that preliminary findings will be available in time to be included in the consultation.
  - Meeting attendees expressed concern that the consultation deadlines and PVA deadlines have “missed” one another.
  - The hydrology has not been included in the PVA models yet; however there is hydrology information available that can be incorporated into the models.
  - There are two different PVA models being developed. It was asked which model would be used if there are two different outputs.
    - It was one opinion that the Program should avoid trying to determine which model is “better”.
  - It was explained that contractually the owner of the FORTRAN model is the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District (MRGCD). MRGCD will be contributing the model to the PVA process. The RAMAS model was initially funded by the Program but for the last couple of years model development has been funded by the Service.
- Attendees were updated that the RIP Action Plan team will be meeting on Thursday (5/17/12). The RIP Action Plan still needs a lot of work but the framework of an action plan is there. It's believed that the RIP Program Document is a little further along in development than the RIP Action Plan. The EC will be discussing the RIP Action Plan and RIP Program Document at the May 29<sup>th</sup> EC meeting to try to make a decision on becoming a RIP.
- Attendees were updated on this morning's EC meeting. Today's EC meeting was for regular EC business and there was some discussion on the May 29<sup>th</sup> EC meeting agenda. Items that will be on the May 29<sup>th</sup> EC meeting agenda are discussion on RIP management, the draft RIP documents (Action Plan, Program Document) and the external peer review process. The May 29<sup>th</sup> EC meeting will be a full-day meeting.
  - It was commented that if the RIP Action Plan and RIP Program Document will be conservation measures in the Reclamation Biological Assessment then decisions will need to be made about the documents as soon as possible.
  - It was asked what the difference is between a RIP and how the Program is functioning now.
    - It was explained that the formation of a RIP would create a “game plan” with a definite end point (recovery and delisting of the species).
    - In theory, the RIP should have more flexibility with flow regimes and allow for more adaptive management.

- Hopefully the RIP will be more encompassing in terms of how recovery is reached.
- It was one opinion that flexibility will need to be specifically spelled out in the RIP documents before entities will feel comfortable signing on to a RIP.
- The San Juan RIP is an example of a RIP that is functioning. The San Juan RIP has a diversity of stakeholders. The Upper Colorado Platte River RIP is another example of a RIP that is functioning well; however, that RIP receives a lot of funding so it may not be very comparable to the MRG.
- It was commented that one of the concerns with adaptive management is making sure that there is a clear understanding of where the Program is going. Adaptive management does not just include developing hypotheses of what will or will not happen but it usually also includes determining what the actions will be if you get the desired or undesired results. The actions will need to be agreed upon as part of the project design phase. There will also need to be confidence that if there are negative results that management will be changed.
- It was asked how the candidate species fit into the RIP.
  - There are placeholders in the RIP Program Document and RIP Action Plan for the candidate species. If the candidate species are listed and their ranges include the MRG then the RIP or Program will address them.
- Will the RIP have a program leader?
  - The decision on who will lead the RIP is a high priority decision for the EC. Right now the EC is split on either having a 3<sup>rd</sup> party manager or a Service manager. Some of reasoning behind wanting a Service-led RIP is the urgency for getting a RIP in place. However, the EC is struggling with trying to figure out the best way to have direction and control over the RIP manager. It is difficult to remain unbiased when working for an agency; this is one advantage of a 3<sup>rd</sup> party-led RIP.

### **Program Update**

- Two half day training sessions for the Database Management System (DBMS) are tentatively scheduled for July 18<sup>th</sup> and one day the week of July 23<sup>rd</sup>.

### **Next Meeting: June 19<sup>th</sup>, 2012 from 12:30 PM to 3:30 PM at ISC**

- Tentative agenda items: (1) discuss delineating criteria to evaluate restored habitat, look to next steps to streamline criteria (rapid assessment, develop matrix, evaluate constructed projects);



**Habitat Restoration Work Group Meeting**  
**May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2012 Meeting Attendees**

<b>NAME</b>	<b>POSITION</b>	<b>AFFILIATION</b>	<b>PHONE NUMBER</b>	<b>EMAIL ADDRESS</b>	<b>P/A/O</b>
Rick Billings	HR Member Co-Chair	ABCWUA	796-2527	rbillings@abcwua.org	P
Danielle Galloway	HR Member Co-Chair	USACE	342-3661	danielle.a.galloway@usace.army.mil	P
Gina Dello Russo	HR Member Co-Chair	FWS	575-835-1828	gina_dellorusso@fws.gov	P
Ondrea Hummel	HR Member	USACE	342-3375	ondrea.c.hummel@usace.army.mil	P
Sarah Beck	HR Member	USACE	342-3333	sarah.e.beck@usace.army.mil	O
Michael Scialdone	HR Member	Pueblo of Santa Ana	771-3046	mscialdone@sandiapueblo.nsn.us	P
Michelle Mann	PMT Member	USACE	342-3426	michelle.n.mann@usace.army.mil	O
Robert Padilla	HR Member	Reclamation	462-3626	rpadilla@usbr.gov	P
Brooke Wyman	HR Member	MRGCD	247-0234	brooke@mrgcd.us	A
Matt Johnson	Presenter	Northern Arizona University			O
Susan Bittick (present only for Tamarisk Beetle presentation)		USACE	342-3397	susan.m.bittick@usace.army.mil	O
Christine Sanchez	Admin support	Tetra Tech	881-3283	christine.sanchez@tetrattech.com	O