

Middle Rio Grande Endangered Species Collaborative Program
Habitat Restoration Workshop/Joint Meeting
November 18th, 2013 – 9:00am – 12:00pm
USACE

Actions

- Rhea Graham will provide HRW with a list of contact information for Reclamation’s restoration staff.
- HRW members will populate the 5-year HR Plan Outline and provide their first draft portion(s) to Michelle Mann by December 10th.
- Michael Scialdone will check with the other pueblos to possibly include information on their restoration projects into the 5-year plan and HR Plan (which will include a decision matrix and/or criteria for projects).
- Michelle Mann will contact ISC to schedule a meeting room for the December (tentative), January, and February HRW meetings.
- Gina dello Russo will provide contact information for potential FWS employees who would be presenting project updates to HRW at the January 14th, 2014 meeting.
- Rick Billings will check with Robert Padilla at Reclamation to determine who from Reclamation would be presenting project updates to HRW at the January 14th, 2014 meeting.
- Ondrea Hummel will email the HRW 5-year Plan Outline #1 and #2 to HRW members for them to populate by December 10th (use Outline #2 on page 4 below to start with).

Decisions

- No formal decisions were made at this meeting.

Recommendations and Future Considerations

- Until further direction is provided, the attendees agreed that HRW will continue “as is.” HRW can function as a venue for information sharing and open-communication to benefit everyone. This will help keep things from getting “piece meal” during the transition.
- It was suggested members use the Long-term Plan (LTP), HR assessments, the RIP Action Plan table (page 37), the Reach A&Rs and mapping products, etc. as a framework or outline to develop the decision matrix/criteria in the HR Plan.
- It would be beneficial to understand what work/activities agencies are completing on their own. The HRW could lend itself to supporting that work and/or engaging those entities in an effort to augment and support other efforts going on.
- There is a lot of work being completed by individual agencies but the work still counts toward the total amount of restoration completed. It was suggested that it would be helpful to have an overview of projects and acreages of projects done to date and what is planned for the next year.
- It was also suggested that a list of agency people assigned to restoration work (or who are doing related projects) be developed. Having a “point of contact” list would ensure that the right people were being invited to participate.
- Over the next few months, the work group should aim to get to a point where there is a list of habitat type descriptions, construction technique descriptions, and a list our decision making criteria of why a certain technique would help a certain subreach.
- It was suggested that in the future, HRW consider what percentage of projects evolving out of ESA habitat should be maintained. How much can be “let go” versus how much should be ‘adaptively managed’?

- It was suggested that HRW encourage agencies/entities to include early maintenance (i.e., yearly removal of tumbleweeds until vegetation takes hold) and longevity considerations into the original project plans instead of being an afterthought or follow up need.

Next Meeting: Tentative December 10th, 2013 from 12:30pm to 3:30pm. Location to be Determined (note: the EPA Urban Watershed Initiative Kick-off meeting is December 9-11, so we may need to reschedule)

- Tentative agenda items include: (1) review of first draft 5-year plan outline document compiled by Michelle Mann; (2) subreach discussions;
- January 14th, 2014 from 9:00am to 4:00pm tentatively at ISC
 - Tentative agenda items include: (1) agency project updates and lesson's learned; (2) GSA – September 2013 flight overview
- February 18th, 2014 from 12:30pm to 3:30pm tentatively at ISC
 - Tentative agenda items include: (1) subreach project needs; (2) update on USACE Adaptive Management Phase II contracting and schedule;

Announcements

- The Urban Watershed Meeting is scheduled for December 9th through 11th.

Meeting Summary:

- After bringing the meeting to order, Rick Billings summarized the purpose of today's meeting as addressing the habitat restoration action item identified in the RIP Action Plan:
 - *"In the first 6 months of the RIP, specifically identify, plan and develop conceptual design for habitat restoration projects targeting 300 acres total that provide increased overbanking, backwater areas, and high-flow channels in the Cochiti, Albuquerque, Isleta, and San Acacia reaches for implementation in the first 5 years of the program. Evaluate conceptual design based on previous projects."*
 - Attendees agreed to not limit themselves to the "300 acres" identified in the RIP Action plan but instead to develop a tool from which people can pull projects and techniques and associated justifications.
 - Attendees then discussed and brainstormed strategies to address actions of the first 5 years. Lists of projects and priorities have already been discussed and developed in the past. These ideas are already "at our finger tips."
 - It was suggested the plan could be divided into (1) outreach/coordination/collaborative opportunities; (2) adaptive management and short-term projects; and (3) long-term projects (possibly supported by the Program).
 - With all the unknowns regarding the transition to the RIP and the new management (including Scientific Advisor), it was cautioned that the work group not move too far ahead. However, HRW should also be prepared to be the advocate for restoration.
 - In developing the 5-year plan, the work group could gather information and identify gaps in areas/locations or types of projects and make recommendations based on this.
 - Categories could include: (1) Project Categories; (2) Criteria for Priorities; (3) Types of Projects – such as modifications to existing infrastructure, overbank lowering, etc.

- The categories could be subdivided into priorities for the reaches.
- The plan could include known and/or planned future projects.
- It was suggested that the 5-year plan could include a simple decision making process (flow chart or matrix) that identifies project purpose (minnow, flycatcher, fire break, cuckoo, etc.); identification of existing projects (what has been done and where); assumptions; longevity considerations; descriptions on how projects have changed and if the change is beneficial in any way; list of habitat restoration types/life stage addressed, etc.
- The 5-year plan needs to be very adaptive if it is to be successful.
- Attendees discussed that this 5-year plan document would be substantial in order to help drive habitat restoration and inform the new management on what has been done and suggestions on where to go next. If written well, it will be a useful educational tool on what has been done to date and recommendations on moving forward.
 - It was suggested that members consider past projects and changes on the system to address assumptions on the longevity of projects.
 - It was also suggested that status of projects be included/identified; and if there is any need associated with past projects. For example, while the Albuquerque Reach has had a lot of projects, if 20% of those are no longer beneficial, it may be worth addressing this in the first 5-years in order to keep the benefits present and sustainable.
- Rhea Graham, Interim Program Manager, suggested the work groups consider developing a single, unified work plan for all work groups combined. The unified work plan is more buffered from the changes in the transition as it is one work plan for the Program. Ideally, it would be robust enough to show how the RIP is being addressed: one Program, one direction. If in agreement with this approach, the work group could make the request to the EC at the January EC meeting.

HRW 5-year Plan Outline #2:

- A. Techniques – *Ondrea, Yasmeen, Scial (terracing, high flow channels, backwater, island destabilization, willow swales, etc.)*
 - a. Example projects/designs
 - b. Describe “lessons learned” from previous projects
 - c. Longevity/maintenance needs
- B. Assumptions (by technique) - (*All, compile while working on techniques*)
- C. Potential Locations
 - a. Decision Making Matrix (criteria) – *HRW to develop as a group; does it overbank flow at X discharge?, land ownership protection?, etc.*
 - b. Links to maps
 - c. Upcoming/planned projects (*HRW*)

RGSM:

- 1.1.1 Create habitat for spawning and larval survival (including nursery habitat)
- 1.1.2 Work to provide spring-time hydrologic (flow) conditions and suitable habitat to facilitate spawning and larval fish survival
- 1.2.1 Provide wetted habitat areas during summer, fall, winter, and early spring that can be shown to facilitate survival of silvery minnow to the spring spawning period
- 1.2.2 Work to provide hydrologic (flow) conditions to support survival in all years.

SWFL:

- 2.1.1 Create habitat conducive to territory establishment and nesting success. Determine the viability of Southwestern Willow Flycatcher populations and specifically the habitat patches they occupy

Examples of Lessons Learned:

- High flow channels – slower moving areas (embayments, etc.)
- River bars – removing soil off site
- Island modifications –
- Bank terracing – connect to other features (high flow channel, willow swale) if possible
- Large Woody Debris – revision of techniques; planned/unplanned; attached or not attached; tracking of LWD from river – enough for microhabitat or more needed;

January 14th, 2014 HRW/Joint Work Group Meeting Tentative Agenda

- January 14th 2014 Agenda:
 - GSA – September flight overview
 - Presentations on lessons learned/monitoring of current projects (habitat restoration, river maintenance, river management, etc., including incorporation of adaptive management recommendations):
 - ISC – Grace Haggerty
 - MRGCD – Yasmeen Najmi
 - ABCWUA – Rick Billings
 - USACE – Ondrea Hummel
 - BdA – to be determined
 - SOBTF – Gina dello Russo
 - BOR – to be determined
 - Sandia – Scial
 - Isleta? – Cody?
 - Santa Ana – Nathan?
 - Ohkay Owingeh? -
 - San Felipe? -
 - Valle de Oro – presentation of public meeting info (Jennifer? Paul?)
 - EPA Urban Watershed Program
 - MAT – Grace Haggerty
 - Other programs/funding – USBR, USACE, USFWS
 - Proposed/upcoming projects (not limited to restoration but related to Program)? Everyone report on this

Meeting Notes

Introductions and agenda approval: Rick Billings brought the meeting to order and introductions were made. Rick summarized the agenda as developing the action item identified in the Recovery Implementation Plan (RIP) Action Plan. Ideally, the group should consider work in each reach, although this is not necessarily a requirement. The RIP Action Plan table identifies the following:

- *“In the first 6 months of the RIP, specifically identify, plan and develop conceptual design for habitat restoration projects targeting 300 acres total that provide increased overbanking, backwater areas, and high-flow channels in the Cochiti, Albuquerque, Isleta, and San Acacia reaches for implementation in the first 5 years of the program. Evaluate conceptual design based on previous projects.”*
 - Attendees agreed to not limit themselves to the “300 acres” identified in the RIP Action plan but instead to develop a tool from which people can pull projects and techniques and associated justifications.
- Members shared having explored habitat restoration projects, locations, priorities and recommendations over the last 12 years. The requested action directs the group to consider processes or strategies that the RIP program could address in the first 5 years. Attendees agreed that there are a lot of good ideas “at our figure tips.” However, in the development of a recommended 5-year plan, members were encouraged to consider the specific language captured in the RIP documents and tables.
- Attendees briefly discussed the importance of considering opportunities *in all reaches* to address in the first 5 years. This is one way to be best prepared for any type of funding scenario.
 - Rick Billings then updated attendees with the status of the transition. In July, the Executive Committee (EC) endorsed the RIP documents conditionally on the release of the 2014 Biological Opinion (BO). The 3rd Party Management subcommittee will be meeting soon to continue working toward getting the 3rd Party Management in place. Funding, of course, is projected to remain an issue.
 - In response to a question on when the work groups might be “folded into something new”, it was shared that no timeframes or guidance has been provided recently. Until further direction is provided, the attendees agreed that HRW will continue “as is.” HRW can function as a venue for information sharing and open-communication to benefit everyone. This will help keep things from getting “piece meal” during the transition.
 - However, HRW can continue to contribute to the conversations and transition by including sections in reports/documents that provide suggestions and recommendations to the new management (ex. how to most effectively monitor, etc.).
- It was pointed out that entities will continue to do their own work as well. The group was encouraged to consider how to engage and/or support that agency work. It will be important to know and understand what those projects are.
 - As an example, it was shared that the Albuquerque Bernalillo County Water Utility Authority (ABCWUA) hopes to start 2 big projects this winter (taking out acres and acres of non-natives below Paseo and embankment and terracing in the Albuquerque Reach). These were offered as an example of opportunity to demonstrate cooperation and support.
 - The Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge) is also starting a number of projects that could benefit from the work group’s expertise. Communication on the projects would also inform the work group on what the Refuge is doing.
 - Attendees highlighted the fact that new intended projects seem to be focused on larger scales, which is encouraging! Members suggested that the 5-year Habitat Restoration plan could be organized into (1) outreach/coordination/collaborate opportunities; (2) adaptive management

- and short-term projects; and (3) longer-term, phased projects (possibly supported by the Program).
- It was suggested that HRW could encourage monitoring efforts that support the efforts of the “larger collaborative group” and not just for the individual agency. HRW could also offer agencies support in the design of the projects – especially with documentation of what works, what has been done, and new ideas. This is one way to evaluate the effectiveness of new strategies.
 - Agencies should be encouraged to come to HRW and provide presentations/input on their internal projects.
 - The work group could also be a “gathering place” of information and identify gaps in areas/locations or types of projects. The work group could then make project recommendations based on this knowledge.
 - *Completed and Planned Projects*
 - It was suggested that it would be helpful to have an overview of projects and acreages of projects done to date and what is planned for the next year. There is a lot of work being completed by individual agencies but the work still counts toward the total amount of restoration completed
 - It was also suggested that a list of agency people assigned to restoration work (or who are doing related projects) be developed. Having a “point of contact” list would ensure that the right people were being invited to participate.
 - With all the unknowns regarding the transition to the RIP and the new management (including Scientific Advisor and the new 2014 BO), it was cautioned that the work group not move too far ahead. However, HRW should also be prepared to be the advocate for restoration.
 - In developing the 5-year plan, the work group could gather information and identify gaps in areas/locations or types of projects and make recommendations based on this.
 - Categories could include: (1) Project Categories; (2) Criteria for Priorities; (3) Types of Projects – such as modifications to existing infrastructure, overbank lowering, etc.
 - The categories could be subdivided into priorities for the reaches.
 - Attendees acknowledged the need respond rapidly to changing conditions and situations. The plan should be more than a “wish list of big projects” but should contain oversight. Partner with the Minnow Action Team (MAT) could help address this.
 - *Discussion on Field (Fire) Breaks*
 - There remains a desperate need for fire breaks. Current efforts establish and standardize fire breaks to ¼ mile along the river – with clearance of thick tamarisk (about 40-70 acres). Assuming flows will overbank at some time, there has been discussion about moving locations over time to let the original grow up with native communities (wetland to grassland to woody). These efforts could tie into long-term planning to get rid of tamarisk in the floodplain.
 - There may be opportunity to continue with projects to lessen the fire risk while identifying areas that could be left as understory or prioritize sections of bare ground for targeted revegetation.
 - *Decision Making Matrix*
 - It was suggested that the work group develop a simple decision making process (flow chart or matrix) that identifies project purpose (minnow, flycatcher, fire break, cuckoo, etc.);

- identification of existing projects (what has been done and where); assumptions; longevity considerations; descriptions on how projects have changed and if the change is beneficial in any way; list of habitat restoration types/life stage addressed, etc.
- This would be more adequate and appropriate for the RIP compared to just lists of projects.
 - Also what has been done, where, longevity and assumptions accurate, how has each one changed and if change is benefit for different reason or not beneficial anymore and has to be reworked, etc. quick on feet and very well informed kind of work.
 - It was suggested members use the Long-term Plan (LTP), HR assessments, the RIP Action Plan table (page 37), the Reach A&Rs and mapping products, etc. as a framework or outline to develop the decision matrix/criteria in the HR plan.
- *Moving Forward*
 - Attendees discussed that this 5-year plan document would be substantial in order to help drive habitat restoration and inform the new management on what has been done and suggestions on where to go next. If written well, it will be a useful educational tool on what has been done to date and recommendations on moving forward.
 - Questions to consider include: (1) how to determine which techniques to employ in each reach; (2) what is the status of past projects in each reach; (3) how much large woody debris (LWD) exists in each reach; (4) is there enough bar formation at different stages; etc.
 - Areas where information is lacking need to be kept in mind and covered under an assumptions section. Will we know how much LWD is optimal? Probably not. But we can identify which reach is lacking LWD that could improve habitat.
 - The plan should contain: descriptors of habitat types, descriptors of techniques, assumptions, example projects, possible locations, etc. in order to support the decision making of why a certain technique might benefit a certain subreach.
 - For example, if 20% of the work done in Albuquerque is no longer beneficial, it may be best addressed in the first 5 years (to keep the benefits present and sustainable) even though Albuquerque has had a lot of work compared to some other reaches.
 - Assumptions and understanding on project longevity should be built into the project design/descriptions.
 - Related to this, inherent upkeep and/or early maintenance (ex. yearly removal of tumbleweeds) needs to be incorporated and planned for from the beginning. There is a definite cost savings in addressing these early in the plan versus having to deal with them unexpectedly.
 - It was suggested that in the future, HRW consider what percentage of projects evolving out of ESA habitat should be maintained. How much can be “let go” versus how much should be ‘adaptively managed’?
 - It will also be important to have this plan be “living” and “trackable.” This may mean developing some criteria of cost to adapt/redo/manage projects or whether it is better to work in a different area?
 - Agencies should be encouraged to consider longevity and potential maintenance in the design/development stages.

Habitat Restoration 5-year Plan Outline Option #1:

RGSM

1.1.1 Create Habitat for spawning

- Techniques
 - Example projects/designs
 - Describe “lessons learned” from previous projects
 - Longevity/maintenance needs
- Assumptions (by technique)
- Potential Locations
 - Decision Support Matrix (criteria): does it overbank flow at X discharge?, land ownership protection?,
 - Links to maps
- Upcoming/Planned Projects

1.1.2 Work to provide spring-time hydrologic (flow) conditions

- Techniques
 - Example projects/designs
 - Describe “lessons learned” from previous projects
 - Longevity/maintenance needs
- Assumptions (by technique)
- Potential Locations
 - Decision Support Matrix (criteria): does it overbank flow at X discharge?, land ownership protection?,
 - Links to maps
- Upcoming/Planned Projects

1.2.2 Work to Provide hydrologic (flow) conditions to support survival in all years

- Techniques
 - Example projects/designs
 - Describe “lessons learned” from previous projects
 - Longevity/maintenance needs
- Assumptions (by technique)
- Potential Locations
 - Decision Support Matrix (criteria): does it overbank flow at X discharge?, land ownership protection?,
 - Links to maps
- Upcoming/Planned Projects

Habitat Restoration 5-year Plan Outline Option #2:

- A. Techniques – *Ondrea, Yasmeeen, Scial (terracing, high flow channels, backwater, island destabilization, willow swales, etc.)*
 - a. Example projects/designs
 - b. Describe “lessons learned” from previous projects
 - c. Longevity/maintenance needs
- B. Assumptions (by technique) - *(All, compile while working on techniques)*
- C. Potential Locations
 - a. Decision Making Matrix (criteria) – *HRW to develop as a group; does it overbank flow at X discharge?, land ownership protection?, etc.*
 - b. Links to maps
 - c. Upcoming/planned projects (*HRW*)

RGSM:

- 1.1.1 Create habitat for spawning and larval survival (including nursery habitat)
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- 1.2.2 Work to provide hydrologic (flow) conditions to support survival in all years.

SWFL:

- 2.1.1 Create habitat conducive to territory establishment and nesting success. Determine the viability of Southwestern Willow Flycatcher populations and specifically the habitat patches they occupy

Examples of Lessons Learned:

- High flow channels – slower moving areas (embayments, etc.)
- River bars – removing soil off site
- Island modifications –
- Bank terracing – connect to other features (high flow channel, willow swale) if possible
- Large Woody Debris – revision of techniques; planned/unplanned; attached or not attached; tracking of LWD from river – enough for microhabitat or more needed;

September Flooding

- The recent flooding events really highlighted changes in the southern reaches. More localized aggradation has been observed in San Acacia. Some of the flooding may have been an ephemeral effect that washed through, or all the sediment from the Puerco and local tributaries had no place to go.
- Attendees briefly discussed aggradation concerns in the northern reaches as well. Constructed features that were designed to flood at 1,500 cfs or lower are not being inundated at a sustained 2,000 cfs flow. Either the system is aggrading or the river is degrading.
 - Attendees were encouraged to consider how to be just as adaptive as the river. But does this mean these features need to be modified? Or should adaptive management be utilized in the management of the changes?
 - Attendees also discussed entrapment concerns and encouraging projects designs to address potential entrapment issues.
- A lot of features developed this last year did flood in the September flows. The monitoring will need to be gathered and looked at. The agencies doing the geosystems analysis probably had a great view of the system. A flight of the river occurred during the flooding.

Tamarisk Beetle Update

- Ben Bloodworth, head of the tamarisk leaf beetle monitoring program, believes there is a real possibility the beetle will be in the San Acacia area by next year. He also thinks the southern beetle will most likely reach San Acacia prior to the northern beetle. The San Acacia area is important as this is where most of the flycatchers are located. The southern beetle has moved up the Pecos really fast. The beetle is established in Albuquerque and was found in Belen this past summer.
 - Attendees discussed including ideas and strategies to address the complexities associated with the presence of the beetle.

Work Group Work Plans

- Rhea Graham, Interim Program Manager, suggested the work groups consider developing a single, unified work plan for all work groups combined. The unified work plan is more buffered from the changes in the transition as it is one work plan for the Program. Ideally, it would be robust enough to show how the RIP is being addressed: one Program, one direction. If in agreement with this approach, the work group could make the request to the EC at the January EC meeting.
 - The PMT also advised the work group to synthesize new data and analyses with the old as a way to approach the “big picture” for the Program and members.
 - Monitoring – know your framework first.
 - It was also shared that governance is just as important as science – science can provide information but cannot make decisions.

Adaptive Management Contract Update

- The Army Corps did not have any updates on the adaptive management contract at this time. However, the Corps is committed to completing the next steps and moving into Phase II of the adaptive management.

Announcements

- The Urban Watershed Meeting is scheduled for December 9th through 11th.

Next Meeting: Tentative December 10th, 2013 from 12:30pm to 3:30pm. Location to be Determined (note: the EPA Urban Watershed Initiative Kick-off meeting is December 9-11, so we may need to reschedule)

- Tentative agenda items include: (1) review of first draft 5-year plan outline document compiled by Michelle Mann; (2) subreach discussions;
- January 14th, 2014 from 9:00am to 4:00pm tentatively at ISC
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 - Tentative agenda items include: (1) subreach project needs; (2) update on USACE Adaptive Management Phase II contracting and schedule;

**Habitat Restoration Workshop/Joint Work Group Meeting
18 November 2013 Meeting Attendees**

NAME	AFFILIATION	PHONE NUMBER	PRIMARY (P) ALTERNATE (A) OTHERS (O)	EMAIL ADDRESS
Rhea Graham	Reclamation	462-3560	O – Interim PM	rgraham@usbr.gov
Rick Billings	ABCWUA	796-2527	P – HRW Member	rbillings@abcwua.org
Danielle Galloway	USACE	342-3661	P – Co-Chair	danielle.a.galloway@usace.army.mil
Ken Cunningham	NMDGF	476-8114	P – HRW Member	kenneth.cunningham@state.nm.us
Ondrea Hummel	USACE	342-3375	P - HRW Member	ondrea.c.hummel@usace.army.mil
Yasmeen Najmi	MRGCD	247-0234	P - HRW Member	yasmeen@mrgcd.com
Gina Dello Russo	USFWS	575-835-1828 ext. 230	P – Co-Chair	gina_dellorusso@fws.gov
Michelle Mann	USACE	342-3426	O- PMT Member	michelle.n.mann@usace.army.mil
Dana Price	USACE	342-3378	A – HRW Member	dana.m.price@usace.army.mil
Susan Bittick	USACE	342-3397	O – CC Member	Susan.M.Bittick@usace.army.mil
Michael Scialdone	Pueblo of Sandia	771-5046		mscialdone@sandiapubelo.nsn.us
Grace Haggerty	NMISC	383-4042	P	grace.haggerty@state.nm.us
Marta Wood	Alliant Environmental	259-6098	O – Note Taker	mwood@alliantenv.com