

Middle Rio Grande Endangered Species Collaborative Program
Habitat Restoration Workshop/Joint Meeting
January 14th, 2014 – 12:30pm – 3:30pm
ISC

Actions

- Michelle Mann will continue updating the 5-year HR Plan to include all the provided information.
- Ondrea Hummel will distribute the 2013 Monitoring Report once available.
- ISC staff will review the HR techniques and lessons learned that were summarized by Yasmeen Najmi and incorporated into the 5-Year HR Plan for accuracy/revisions/edits.

Ongoing Actions

- 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). *continued from 11/18/13*

Decisions

- The November 18th, 2013 meeting notes were approved for finalization with no changes.

Recommendations and Future Considerations

- It was suggested that HRW consider having a workshop to discuss/identify the different “directives” and/or needs from the new Biological Assessments (BAs), Biological Opinion (BO), and Recovery Implementation Program (RIP) documents once these are all available. The idea is for the work group to have a more complete idea of where the Program is in general and where it is headed. The workshop participants could pull in past recommendations on projects, priorities, and research to include in the 5-year HR Plan and make it as comprehensive as possible.

Next Meeting: February 11th, 2014 from 12:30pm to 3:30pm at ISC

- Tentative agenda items include: (1) review of first draft 5-year plan outline document compiled by the PMT liaison; (2) subreach discussions;

OR

(1) Agency project updates and lesson’s learned presentations and GSA September 2013 flight overview (original January 14th agenda)

- *March 11th, 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 Rio Grande Nature Center (RGNC) completed several adaptive management projects including addressing the siltation on the north end of the channel and construction of a new embayment.
- The ScW will be visiting the Museum of Biology on February 11th, 2014. Science members asked to be provided with a copy of the Draft 5-Year HR Plan, Recovery Implementation Program (RIP) Action Plan, Minnow Action Team (MAT) recommendations, and Water Management recommendations, and San Acacia Reach (SAR) recommendations.

- The MAT meetings are open meetings for anyone who would like to participate. Their next meeting will cover a retrospective report on 2013 and discussions on how to get a big spawn and recruitment in 2014.

Meeting Summary:

- Danielle Galloway brought the meeting to order and introductions were made. The agenda was reviewed and approved with the addition of (1) an initial review of the HR 5-year Plan and (2) discussion options of integrated work group attendance.
- Llyod DeWald provided a brief update on the status of the Database Management System (DBMS). The database is populated with older information and there is a need to incorporate more current and new information (documents, reports, studies, etc.).
 - Please note that all document submittals need to include a document submittal template located under the User Support tab on the database (<http://mrgescp.dbstephens.com>).
- The November 18th, 2013 meeting notes were approved for finalization with no changes.
- Attendees then completed a November 18th, 2013 Action Item review. All but 1 action items were completed as assigned. The ongoing action items will be documented as ongoing.
- The Habitat Restoration Work Group (HRW) 5-year Planning Document outline is still in progress. The definitions of the techniques have been populated and the PMT liaison is continuing to incorporate the other information that was received. The working version was projected for attendees to review the current status of the document and provide any initial feedback.
 - Attendees discussed the process of assigning rank or “weight” to techniques. A description of the assumptions, effectiveness, and evaluation process needs to be included. The range of ranks and what each “level” indicates also needs to be defined.
 - It was suggested that the work on the ranking be delayed until all the outline is more completely populated with all techniques.
- Gina Dello Russo, as a representative for the Save Our Bosque Task Force (SOBTF), presented an update on the Rhode’s Property Phase II. The purpose of the update was to introduce the work group to potential future projects and provide information on work that is occurring in the San Acacia Reach.
- Ondrea Hummel provided an update on monitoring. The 2013 Monitoring Report will be available soon. The synthesis review completed by Tetra Tech and SWCA is currently in internal review; it will be provided to the group once that review has been completed. The monitoring details for 2014 need to be determined. For example, should the same 20 sites remain or be expanded? The fish monitoring needs to be coordinated and the objectives need to be clearly identified.
- The Adaptive Management contract is expected to be elevated “up the chain” for approvals within the next several weeks. It is hoped that the contract will be issued for responses within the next month or so.
- Attendees discussed the possibility of Science Work Group (ScW) members attending HRW meetings for cross-representation during the transition and restructuring period. ScW has not had regular PMT support for several months. There are also several science-related components that not only tie into the developing 5-year HR Plan but help to strengthen the justifications. Having Minnow Action Team (MAT) representation attend the meetings would also be beneficial.

Meeting Notes

Introductions and agenda approval: Danielle Galloway brought the meeting to order and introductions were made. The agenda was reviewed and approved with the addition of (1) an initial review of the Habitat Restoration (HR) 5-year Plan and (2) discussion options of integrated work group attendance.

Database Management Systems (DBMS) Update:

- Lloyd Dewald (with contractor D.B. Stephens) presented an update on the database management system (DBMS) and made a request for more current and new data.
 - The database has been populated with the information provided during the initially data-gathering efforts. Not only do large gaps remain, but recent data has not been regularly provided.
 - To make the DBMS more useful and applicable, more current data needs to be included.
 - Specifically related to habitat restoration, treatment and site information is needed on work prior to 2006 and after 2009 and vegetation surveys prior to 2002 and after 2003.
 - Please include all possible information – including all files such as GIF, jpegs, shape files, raw or polished data in whatever form (Excel, text files, anything external to a PDF report).
 - Please note that all document submittals need to include a document submittal template located under the User Support tab on the database (<http://mrgescp.dbstephens.com>).
 - Documents and the document template should be submitted to Ali Saenz at Reclamation for approval and uploading.
 - Mr. Dewald can be reached at ldewald@dbstephens.com for DBMS questions, assistance, and login information and requests.

Approval of November 18th, 2013 HRW Meeting Notes:

- The November 18th, 2013 meeting notes were approved for finalization with no changes.

November 18th, 2013 Action Item Review

- ✓ Rhea Graham will provide HRW with a list of contact information for Reclamation's restoration staff. – *completed*
 - Robert Padilla and Vicki Ryan are Reclamation's representatives for HR.
- ✓ HRW members will populate the 5-year HR Plan Outline and provide their first draft portion(s) to Michelle Mann by December 10th. – *completed*
 - The requested information has been received. The 5-year HR Plan outline is in progress.
- 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). – *ongoing*
- ✓ Michelle Mann will contact ISC to schedule a meeting room for the December (tentative), January, and February HRW meetings. – *completed*
- ✓ 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. – *completed*

- ✓ 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. – *completed*
- ✓ 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). – *completed*

Review of first draft HR 5-year Plan Outline Document compiled by Michelle Mann

- The Habitat Restoration Work Group (HRW) 5-year Planning Document outline is still in progress. The definitions of the techniques have been populated and the Program Management Team (PMT) liaison is continuing to incorporate the other information that was received. The working version was projected for attendees to review the current status of the document and provide any initial feedback.
 - The purpose and intent of the 5-year HR Plan is highlighted in the November 18th, 2013 meeting notes.
- Some HR members provided examples of what the decision matrix might resemble. Included in the example was a weight (or ranking) assigned to the various techniques.
 - Attendees briefly discussed that HR has, in the past, providing rankings for projects.
 - It was cautioned that if the group agrees to providing ranking in the 5-year HR Plan then a description of how each is weighted (including assumptions, effectiveness and how evaluated, variation by reach if any, the range such as 0 to 5, what each level indicates, etc.) would need to be carefully described and documented.
 - Much of this description of ranking could be provided in the Lesson's Learned section – providing the justification on why there is emphasis on some versus others.
 - Previous proposal and project work might contain information on cost and effectiveness (which went together) for certain techniques. This could be a starting place for the ranking effort.
- Attendees briefly discussed the possible approach to have a separate matrix for each reach which could allow for finer-tuned criteria with more defensible objectives.
 - Some members suggested possibly including information on how times each technique has been used in each reach. This might inform the ranking effort as well.
- Attendees agree to wait until the 5-year HR Plan outline was completely populated before discussing the details of the techniques and ranking system. However, it was suggested that the descriptions of techniques could be standardized using the language in the 2004 HR Plan. If needed and appropriate, photo examples could be useful.

Save Our Bosque Task Force's Rhodes Property (San Acacia Reach) Phase II presentation by Gina Dello Russo:

- Gina Dello Russo, as a representative for the Save Our Bosque Task Force (SOBTF), presented an update on the Rhode's Property Phase II. The purpose of the update was to introduce the work group to potential future projects and provide information on work that is occurring in the San Acacia Reach (SAR). As a side note, the techniques that have been or intended to be employed during the Phase II have been provided to the HR PMT member for inclusion in the techniques of the 5-year HR Plan.
 - *Background*
 - The Save Our Bosque Task Force (SOBTF) is a non-profit entity that works with multiple agencies to accomplish restoration work.
 - Located in the San Acacia reach, the Rhode's Property is situated between the Sevilleta and the Bosque del Apache Refuge. Currently there is a berm that keeps water out of the floodplain area of the property.

- SAR has more private land than the other reaches. The only way to accomplish species benefits in this area is to work through agreements and conservation easements. Finding the partnerships is the first step. Local partners strengthen the work and help maintain the features.
- *Phase I Accomplishments include:*
 - Tamarisk control and follow up treatment;
 - Pole plantings;
 - Planting of various native shrubs;
 - Seeding of native grasses in disturbed areas;
 - Swale construction;
 - Pecos sunflower experimental seeding;
 - Noxious weed control;
 - Conservation easements established in northern portion (with pending conservation easement for southern parcel until the entire property is under protection);
 - 350 acres of floodplain;
 - Perimeter fencing to exclude grazing;
 - Management plan in place;
 - Large cooperative effort with funding from the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), National Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), the State of NM, and others.
- *Pecos Sunflower Update*
 - The Rhodes Property was used for an experimental seeding of the endangered Pecos sunflower (an annual plant). The seeds were gathered from La Jolla in 2008. The sunflowers were sustained from 2009-2012. However, drought conditions in early summer 2013 combined with late season rain/flooding resulted in little to no seed production. It is unknown what 2014 will bring and if any seeds in the soil will produce.
- *Phase II Intentions:*
 - Continuing to control invasives;
 - Embayment construction;
 - Enhancement of overbank flow through channel;
 - Backwater and back channel construction;
 - Temporary structures needed to hold water – designs pending; and
 - Topographic changes to enhance seasonal flows for:
 - Winter water bird use; and
 - Riparian forest.
- *Nuances of Working with Private Lands*
 - Working with private lands is unique in that the landowner does not necessarily approve introduction of water flows to the property. In the case of the Rhode's Property Phase I, no surface water was introduced; instead, the focus remained on the vegetation and plantings. Phase II takes a slightly different direction with the attempt to put surface water on the site occasionally and reintroduce more natural processes. Enhancement of the features on the property could seasonally bring water onto the flood plane to assist in natural regeneration of the vegetation. If designed correctly, the flooded property could potentially provide habitat for the minnow during spring runoff (through embayments and back channels) and winter wetlands for bird use (through a connected backchannel of

1 to 6 inches that could be passively managed with the winter base flow of 500 to 600 cfs).

- *Vegetation*
 - Cottonwoods in NM olive grove ~25 acres; it would be great to try to mimic that closed canopy over time that the yellow billed cuckoo like. One way to determine or produce the close canopy would be to use poles and plantings to mimic the characteristics.
 - Pole plantings to augment existing ~20 acres; for structural diversity that flycatcher utilize.
 - Pecos Sunflower/saltgrass meadow 70 + 20 acres
 - Estimate of naturally established forest with improved flooding ~40 acres
 - Continued native grass establishment ~50 acres
 - Overall aquatic habitat improvements: 60 acres
 - Flow through channel
 - Back channel ~40+ acres including seasonal wetlands and
 - Embayments ~20 acres
- *Next Steps:*
 - Depletion accounting (working with Interstate Stream Commission (ISC) to determine net depletions);
 - Working with Reclamation and FWS to offset depletions
 - Design and Implementation:
 - Evaluate site following the September 2013 flooding;
 - Evaluate topographic changes needed;
 - Develop implementation plan; and
 - Seek funding (a North America Wetland Conservation grant (NAWCA) has been applied for)
- *SOBTF Other work*
 - Continue to assist with Conservation Easements – to date, 500+ acres of permanent conservation easements are being worked on with different land owners in the San Acacia Reach;
 - Continue to assist with restoration projects;
 - Develop designs for new restoration projects; and
 - Outreach for coordinated efforts.
- *Questions*
 - *Question:* What is the cost associated with Conservation Easements and do the property owners get paid?
 - *Response:* Total cost depends on the size of property and the landowner. Some properties are donated and the partners involved help pay for the surveys and such. Property owners can get tax credit for half the value of the land. The SOBTF searches for funding to pay for the restoration activities. Large properties, like the Rhode's property, can also involve legal work between the trust and the land owner.
 - *Question:* Does the restoration work with non-natives, accessibility, and fire control provide the main “allure” for most landowners compared to actual species work?

- *Response*: Initially, yes. But once restoration work gets started, many develop interest in the species issues. A comprehensive 404 permit (regional permit) allowing certain techniques to occur up and down the river would be very beneficial.
- *Question*: Since the river channel is narrow in that portion, are features that might encourage more bank scouring (and channel widening) being considered?
 - *Response*: That is something that could be considered given that a lot of features are disproportionately on one side of the river. Techniques applied on the other side could change the sustainability of those projects. A well designed project would consider many of these suggestions.
 - Understanding how technique response varies by reach could help us know how to better predict how a certain technique might respond and if it is likely to be efficient or effective.

Monitoring Update

- The 2013 Monitoring Report will be available soon. The synthesis review completed by Tetra Tech and SWCA is currently in internal review; it will be provided to the group once that review has been completed.
- The monitoring details for 2014 need to be determined. For example, should the same 20 sites remain or be expanded? The fish monitoring needs to be coordinated and the objectives need to be clearly identified.
 - It was suggested that monitoring efforts be well coordinated for neighboring or overlapping features (ex. Atrisco/Route 66).
 - Staffing of the monitoring efforts also needs to be addressed (contracted? Volunteers? Agency staff?).
- Other related items to address include: (1) figuring out what to include in the Recovery Implementation Program (RIP) HR Plan for monitoring and those are tied to the Biological Opinion (BO) requirements; (2) what to do for the 2014 flows and plans for monitoring efforts; and (3) set deadlines for the 2014 plan and determine how the 5-year HR Plan fits into the RIP.
- Attendees agreed that having broad permitting coverage for the reaches could be very beneficial.

Adaptive Management Contract Update

- The Adaptive Management contract is expected to be elevated “up the chain” for approvals within the next several weeks. It is hoped that the contract will be issued for responses within the next month or so.

Integrated Work Group Attendance

- Attendees discussed the possibility of Science Work Group (ScW) members attending HRW meetings for cross-representation during the transition and restructuring period.
 - ScW has not had regular PMT support for several months and their meeting schedule has been decreased. However, there are also several science-related components that not only tie into the developing 5-year HR Plan but help to strengthen the justifications.
 - The Minnow Action Team (MAT) is not actually implementing projects. A joint effort (or cross-representation with ScW and HR) could be a great venue for developing refugial habitat planning and maintenance. Having MAT representation and communication with the work group(s) would be beneficial.

- ScW members can contribute to the discussions on: (1) how to monitor and develop research that explores both the natural system as well as the constructed sites; and (2) what can be done to increase recruitment.
- There is strength in the joint group grappling with the “how tos” and addressing permitting, personnel, and funding.
- Understanding the system as a whole is crucial to successfully developing and implementing monitoring and restoration projects. A system wide analysis should be coupled with the monitoring plans. This more comprehensive understanding of the system will highlight what research needs to be done now and why. It also provides the justification for the restoration we want to do.
 - Attendees briefly brainstormed several topics that could benefit from continued joint discussions and/or more research: (1) the impact of the magnitude of flow change as it relates to potential spawning; (2) in low-flow years in which a spawning event occurs, what happens to the eggs/larvae; (3) dispersals and drift – how far are the minnow moving; (4) possible application or lesson’s learned from the GIS tagging of salmon for real-time tracking purposes; and (5) refugial observations that the minnow used “deeper” water instead of the assumed 6-8 inches.
 - It was suggested that ScW and HR members review the Final Draft RIP Action Plan, MAT Recommendations report, Water Management Recommendations report, and reach Analysis and Recommendations (A&R) Plans as starting points for previously identified research or project needs that could be incorporated or addressed in the 5-Year HR plan.
 - It was also suggested that members consider hosting a joint workshop to review/discuss the different needs/requirements from the Biological Assessments/Biological Opinions (BA/BO) and RIP. If completed soon, then the 5-year HR plan can encompass as much of the identified needs as possible. Those discussions could inform the techniques and lessons learned and justifications. Ancillary documents might be needed to explain why certain things might not be included in the 5-year HR plan.

Announcements

- The Rio Grande Nature Center (RGNC) completed several adaptive management projects including addressing the siltation on the north end of the channel and construction of a new embayment.
- The ScW will be visiting the Museum of Biology on February 11th, 2014. Science members asked to be provided with a copy of the Draft 5-Year HR Plan, RIP Action Plan, MAT recommendations, and Water Management recommendations, and SAR recommendations.
- The MAT meetings are open meetings for anyone who would like to participate. Their next meeting will cover a retrospective report on 2013 and discussions on how to get a big spawn and recruitment in 2014.

Next Meeting: **February 11th, 2014 from 12:30pm to 3:30pm at ISC**

- Tentative agenda items include: (1) review of first draft 5-year plan outline document compiled by the PMT liaison; (2) subreach discussions;

OR

(2) Agency project updates and lesson’s learned presentations and GSA September 2013 flight overview (original January 14th agenda)

- *March 11th, 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;

**Habitat Restoration Work Group Meeting
14 January 2014 Meeting Attendees**

NAME	AFFILIATION	PHONE NUMBER	PRIMARY (P) ALTERNATE (A) OTHERS (O)	EMAIL ADDRESS
Danielle Galloway	USACE	342-3661	P – Co-Chair	danielle.a.galloway@usace.army.mil
Michelle Mann	USACE	342-3426	O – PMT Member	michelle.n.mann@usace.army.mil
Lloyd DeWald	DB Stephens (for USACE)	353-9084	O – DBMS Contractor	ldewald@dbstephens.com
Eric Gonzales	SWCA (for ISC)	517-285-8142	O – Contractor	egonzales@swca.com
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	SOBTF	575-517-5306	P – HRW Member	gdellorusso@wildblue.net
Dana Price	USACE	342-3378	O – ScW Member	dana.m.price@usace.army.mil
Michael “Shel” Scialdone	Pueblo of Sandia	771-5046	P – HRW Member	mscialdone@sandiapubelo.nsn.us
Robert Padilla	Bureau of Reclamation	462-3626	P – HRW Member	rpadilla@usbr.gov
Allison Hutson	ISC/LLSMR	841-5201	O – ScW Member	alison.hutson@state.nm.us
Brooke Wyman	MRGCD	247-0234	O – ScW Member	brooke@mrgcd.com
Ashley Inslee	FWS/BDA	620-243-3410	P – HRW Member	ashley_inslee@fws.gov
Grace Haggerty	NMISC	383-4042	O – CC Member	grace.haggerty@state.nm.us
Marta Wood	Alliant Environmental	259-6098	O – Note Taker	mwood@alliantenv.com