

Executive Committee Meeting
February 18, 2016

Meeting Materials:

Meeting Agenda

Meeting Minutes



**Middle Rio Grande Endangered Species
 Collaborative Program
 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
 MEETING AGENDA
 Thursday, February 18, 2016
 9:00am – 12:00pm**

Location: Bureau of Reclamation, 555 Broadway NE, Suite 100, Albuquerque, NM 87102

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|---|------------|
| 1. INTRODUCTIONS AND REVIEW OF PROPOSED AGENDA* | 10 minutes |
| 2. DECISION – APPROVAL OF January 14, 2016 EC MEETING SUMMARY* | 10 minutes |
| 3. AGENCY ROUNDTABLE (<i>Litigation updates, Hydrologic update, Species Update, etc.</i>) | 30 minutes |
| 4. CC UPDATES (<i>R. Billings</i>) | 10 minutes |
| 5. UPDATE – ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT PLAN (<i>T. Caplan/USACE</i>) | 30 minutes |
| BREAK | 15 minutes |
| 6. UPDATES AND RECOMMENDATIONS – RIP DOCUMENT SUBGROUP
SUBGROUP* (<i>D. Freeman/RIP Doc Subgroup</i>)
A. Attorney report out
B. Comments received & revisions made to RIP Document | 30 minutes |
| 7. MEETING SUMMARY | |
| 8. PUBLIC COMMENT | |
| 9. ANNOUNCEMENTS | |
| 10. DECISION – NEXT PROPOSED EC MEETING: March 17, 2016 from 9am to 12pm @ Reclamation | |

**denotes read ahead*

Members

ABCWUA
 ISC
 NMDA
 Sandia Pueblo
 UNM

APA
 Isleta Pueblo
 NMGF
 Santa Ana Pueblo
 USACE

CABQ
 NMAGO
 MRGCD
 Santo Domingo Tribe
 USFWS
 Reclamation

**Middle Rio Grande Endangered Species Collaborative Program
Executive Committee Meeting
February 18th, 2016 – 9:00am to 12:00pm**

**Bureau of Reclamation
555 Broadway NE, Suite 100
Albuquerque, NM, 87102**

Decisions

- The January 14th, 2016 EC meeting summary was approved for finalization with the following changes:
 - Under the RIP Subgroup Update, Item #14, Chris Shaw will be added to the list of participants in the small attorney group; and Justin “Kade” will be corrected to Tade.
 - Under the RIP Subgroup Update, Item #9 will be revised to: “the Service will develop the sufficient progress metrics with *the EC*.”

Actions

- Rolf Schmidt-Petersen will provide Ali Saenz with a copy of his presentation for the March 2016 EC meeting.

Requests/Recommendations

- The EC is encouraged to read all meeting read aheads and provided documents in order to be prepared and comfortable with decisions in the upcoming months.

Announcements

- The annual meeting of the Rio Grande Compact Commission is scheduled for March 31st, 2016 in Alamosa.
- The Bosque Ecosystem Monitoring Program (BEMP) Crawford Symposium is scheduled on March 1st, 2016 from 4:00pm to 7:30pm at UNM. Students and scientists will present original research about the Middle Rio Grande’s bosque ecosystem and chart a green trail to the future. <http://www.bosqueschool.org/bemp.aspx>
- Reclamation’s Annual Water Operations Meeting is scheduled for April 20th, 2016 at 1:00pm at the Albuquerque Area Office.
- The Program and Science Support (PASS) pre-solicitation has been posted to FedBizOps. Program agencies are encouraged to forward the posting to any contractors/agencies that might be interested or appropriate bidders. The full solicitation is scheduled for a March release.

Next Meeting: March 17th, 2016 from 9:00am to 12:00pm at Reclamation

- Tentative March agenda items: (1) update of RIP Program Document; (2) PASS Proposal Evaluations: Identify and Approve 2 EC representatives for participation; (3) Sevilleta Habitat Restoration Phase II Presentation (Rolf Schmidt-Petersen);
- Tentative April agenda items: (1) Review Item: revised RIP Program Document (for endorsement in May?); (2) PASS Proposal Evaluations: Identify and Approve 2 EC representatives for participation; (3) Minnow Action Team updates (if applicable);
- Tentative future agenda items: (1) Discussion/Updates on Recent and Upcoming Reports (Adaptive Management Documents; Genetics Peer Review Draft Report); (2) Population Monitoring Workshop report presentation(May);

Meeting Summary

Introductions and agenda approval: Rick Billings brought the meeting to order and introductions were made. The agenda was approved with acknowledgement that Patrick Redmond would be providing the RIP Subgroup updates.

Approval of the September 17th, 2015 EC Meeting Summary:

- The January 14th, 2016 EC meeting summary was approved for finalization with the following changes:
 - Under the RIP Subgroup Update, Item #14, Chris Shaw will be added to the list of participants in the small attorney group; and Justin “Kade” will be corrected to Tade.
 - Under the RIP Subgroup Update, Item #9 will be revised to: “the Service will develop the sufficient progress metrics with *the EC*.”
 - It was specified that while this sufficient progress language can be captured in the notes, the Service does not necessarily agree with the statement.

Agency Roundtable:

- *Litigation Update:*
 - WildEarth Guardian’s (WEG) deadline for Submission of Objections to the Administrative Record has been extended to April 5th. Schedules have been delayed accordingly.
- *U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE or Corps):*
 - The President’s Budget and the Corps’ Work Plan are out. The Corps did receive the expected annual amount for participation in the Program. And in a pleasant surprise, the Rio Grande (RG) Environmental Management Program was also funded for FY2016. Funding for FY2017 is also included in the FY2017 President’s budget.
 - There is a requirement to submit the specific project(s) with distinct geographic footprint. The first piece was identified between Sandia and Isleta – thus the Environmental Management Program titled contains “Sandia to Isleta.” This may or may not be a limiting factor.
 - The Corps cannot apply the funding until Headquarters publishes the Rules to Execute (the program).
 - This program is a vehicle to get work implemented “on the ground” including providing implementation authority for a lot of watershed planning.
 - The program could, if set up as a priority in the basin, facilitate the 404 permitting for larger projects. Less mitigation is required in priority areas.
 - The Corps’ Collaborative Program authorities do not allow for construction – but this funding includes construction options.
- *U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation):*
 - The Collaborative Program received ~\$3 million in funding for FY2016. All the money has been allocated toward continued and on-going work. Thanks to the Regional Office, the Collaborative Program is expected to see an increase of \$1.5 million for FY2017 (total ~\$4.5 million).
 - The Program needs to be aware of and consider starting the contract Scope of Work development process, which is coming up.
 - The Program and Science Support (PASS; formerly 3rd Party Management) synopsis solicitation was posted on February 11th. The full solicitation is scheduled to come out in March with the evaluation of proposals expected the first week of April.

- The EC can provide two (2) representatives to see the proposals and sit in on the evaluation committee. They will have to sign non-disclosure forms.
 - If there are no further delays, the PASS contract will be awarded around May 17th. The awarded agency will then be able to begin work on hiring the Executive Director.
 - In response to a question on the “sense” of when the peak flow might occur this year, it was responded that this is always the big unknown. There are estimated volumes but only “best guess” on the potential timing. However, the April 1 forecast is the more accurate driver. Contingency planning is already going on.
 - The snowpack will have to be nearly doubled to have an “average” expected runoff.
- *Hydrology Update:*
 - El Vado operations will be coming out of Article VII sometime this week. Prior and Paramount (P&P) has been stored since January 1. As we come out of Article VII, native water will be stored as well (in addition to continuing the P&P storage).
 - Currently, temperatures are warm and there is a lack of moisture. In 2014, with really high spring temperatures, the runoff just “tanked.”
 - Historically, it is really hard to recover from a February that has no snow.
 - There was an initial Heron allocation of around 7,000 ac-ft in January. We are in a “wait and see” situation for the April allocation. Projected February volume into Heron was over 70,000 ac-ft.
- *Fish and Wildlife Service (Service):*
 - The Elephant Butte Rio Grande Operations Biological Opinion (BO) has been finished and is awaiting agency response. Upon completion, the Service will shift staff effort to focus on Reclamation’s (and Partner’s) BO.
 - *Species Update:*
 - *Rio Grande Silvery Minnow (minnow):*
 - There are no population updates. The species remains severely imperiled and near extinction. There are not very many fish out in the river; and there would be no minnow in the river if we weren’t augmenting them. The situation has been this way for the last 3 years.
 - In response to a question on what the Program/EC can do, if anything, to alleviate the situation, it was responded that the Service encourages the four (4) very important tasks of: (1) implementing the hydrologic objective; (2) getting connectivity in the river (fish passage); (3) completing large-scale habitat restoration and (4) conservation storage.
 - The longer it takes to accomplish these tasks, the longer we can expect to remain in this situation. Some attendees replied that the Program has tried to accomplish these activities within the existing rules and constraints. It was responded that the Program will have to “get outside the norm” to accomplish any changes.
 - The Program is moving toward implementing the Recovery Implementation Program (RIP) and RIP Action Plans (including tasks that will address connectivity).
 - It was commented that there have been large habitat restoration projects planned but they cost millions of dollars and only impact relatively small areas.
 - Agencies are attempting to continue work but are limited by compliance and permitting issues.

- In response to a previous comment, some attendees questioned how the Program/EC can work outside the existing framework.
 - There are several “good” projects that were designed to function for spawning and larval rearing but the system has not had an average snowmelt runoff since 2010. Is it worth spending money if weather/climate won’t cooperate so the created features aren’t functional? We can modify the hydrograph to a small percentage at best.
- It was commented that part of the RIP intentions were to move toward Adaptive Management (AM) with integration of restoration, science, etc. AM means agility and ability to do things quickly. This is a dynamic system with quick changes. We cannot enact things months down the road and expect positive responses. If “expedited” permitting is going to take 45 to 60 days, how can we expect to do appropriate/effective AM? How can the time limitations of the permitting be overcome? We don’t have the time or money to waste. How can we respond to such a dynamic system with agility when we are constrained by a long permitting process?
 - Physical changes in the river go through a NEPA and Section 7 process; which is different than permitting.
 - How can we realistically expect to do efficient/effective AM if we have to continually go through the NEPA process?
 - It was responded that the way to manage the Section 10 permitting process is to anticipate needs and get those requests in the system ahead of time. Permits can be extended by several years (3, 4, 5, etc.). But the initial request needs to be in the system in advance of the expected need.
 - How will the Program/EC know what to ask for 6 months from now? How can we be responsive to AM actions or Minnow Action Team (MAT) recommendations?
 - Consider pursuing a Section 10 Adaptive Management Permit – which is a take driven permitting system that anticipates the “didn’t go as planned” of trying new things.
 - Unfortunately, the Service’s permitting process is still 45 to 60 days. There are staffing and backlog issues and permits are in the queue all the time. There is no way to come in at the front of the line. The best way to manage the process is to anticipate what you will need and get it accomplished ahead of time. Submit applications as early as possible.
- In another response to the question of what the Program could be doing, it was suggested that the EC consider the fish passage issue, specifically at San Acacia. This is a requirement of the 2003 BO and one concrete activity that is relatively “lower tech” and potentially less expensive options exist. This could be a great time to resume work on that piece.

- *Albuquerque Bernalillo County Water Utility Authority (ABCWUA):*
 - Interestingly, water users are using the same amount of water as in 1988 but ABCWUA is selling to more customers. The per capita use is less than 130 gallons per person. This is encouraging as far as utility goes.
 - ABCWUA is working with the Corps and ISC to develop and implement a spring Sampling and Analysis project to collect information and data on the utility of habitat restoration sites during the anticipated spring runoff.
- *Pueblo of Sandia:*
 - The Corrales Siphon is a 1135 project. Historically, the Corrales Reach provided incredible habitat but the incising of the river has changed all that. The Corrales siphon is being exposed and the predicted high spring flows may just destroy it. There is risk associated with the loss of that siphon. There is a Resource Mobilization white paper that discusses the issues in detail.
 - In response, it was shared that the Second Phase of ISC's bosque work is scheduled to start February 25th. Part of the project involves removing sediment from and adjacent to the river. The site is north of Corrales, below the bluffs on the west side. The broader intent is to "tie" the previous good habitat and wetted conditions in that area.
 - As part of the 1135, the Corps looks at the entire reach.
- *Bosque Ecosystem Monitoring Program (BEMP):*
 - BEMP just recently put in the 32nd monitoring site and is looking to place another in a terrace site.

Coordination Committee (CC) Updates:

- The CC reviewed the FY2016 budget and projects – all money has been spent for this year. The CC also heard a presentation on data integration accomplished by another program. This is a topic/task that has been on the Program's radar for a while - the need to get all the work, reports, documents, and data in one place and get it useable in order to inform management.
- The draft report from the Fish Population Monitoring Workshop has been received. Comments are being compiled and provided back to the contractor. They will present the final report and results in April.

Adaptive Management Plan Presentation

- Todd Caplan, with Geosystems Analysis (GSA), presented *Middle Rio Grande Adaptive Management Plan: Science Assessment and Design*.
- The GSA "core" team consists of Todd Caplan (with GSA), Debbie Lee (with GSA), and Steven Courtney (with Western Ecosystems Technology, Inc. [WEST]) as the primary individuals leading this process.
- *Adaptive Management Cycle*
 - "Adaptive Management" is best known as the iterative decision-implementation-monitoring-evaluation cycle. It is also "a process to identify what is not known and determine processes to find out what needs to be known and come to agreement about both." A successful AM process will include both science (technical aspect) and resulting action.
 - Management and regulatory decision-makers need to know what constitutes best available management-relevant science. The AM process will identify that and lay out a path forward on how to resolve issues.
 - The AM cycle consists of "stages" that guide the process:

- Assess Uncertainties - scientific uncertainties that once resolved can inform how to better manage resources for benefit of the species;
- Design Phase – develop hypotheses on how species will respond to actions;
- Implement Action;
- Monitor;
- Evaluate; and
- Adjust.
- *Structured Process*
 - Because the process is critical, it has to be highly structured to get to the point of making sense of all the information. Steven Courtney and Deb Lee are the process experts.
 - The process really is critically important. It needs to be clean; it explains how you got to a conclusion; what information was used; it also documents perspectives and information.
 - The final product needs to be defensible and supported by an administrative record.
 - The Administration Procedures Act is a standard about what rules are to be followed in making decisions. Challenges to decisions can be expected – accusations that a decision is arbitrary and capricious. The defense is to be able to show your work and how decisions flow from that work. So the process includes documentation of everything allowing you to show (prove) that the decisions made are consistent with the facts and information used. It is a record keeping standard that shows everything has been considered.
- *Assessment Focus*
 - The assessment stage is already underway. It started with the general scoping and general convening assessment which identify the large scale understanding of perspectives on what is working, what is not working, etc. This stage also included review of the draft Biological Assessment (BA), project specific BOs, and other background information to understand the Program environment.
 - *State of the science* – what do we/don't we know regarding the life-history and habit requirements for the species?
 - Remember, the emphasis is on *management-relevant* science.
 - What are the key uncertainties regarding the species response to management: water management? habitat restoration? wetted refugia? connectivity? etc.
 - In response to a concern on the highly variable (and uncontrollable) hydrology, it was responded that the process will help prioritize uncertainties and gaps that need to be filled. Certain hydrologic conditions may be required to test specific hypotheses, so these will be identified as untestable in certain (any given) years.
 - What is the range of opinion among Subject Matter Experts (SME)? – is this knowledge/perspective supported by data (publish or unpublished), field observations, best professional judgment, etc.?
 - Can key uncertainties be resolved through monitoring/research? – metrics, thresholds; statistical power, spatial scale. There may be things that are critically important but the cost is too prohibitive to get to an answer. Or best professional judgment based on statistics could be used for decision making. The focus of the AM studies and cycles has to be informed by scientific studies that are statistically rigorous.
 - Following is a list of example questions that the contractor is sorting through:
 - For a typical snowmelt hydrograph: (1) what is the role of the descending limb in the minnow life-cycle?; (2) what flow stage

- is important to which life stage?; (3) how critical are timing and duration?
 - For the peak flow: (1) what is the needed magnitude of peak?; (2) what is the relevance of the peak?; (3) does peak flow create necessary habitat not available otherwise?; (4) can the height of the peak be brought down to a lower discharge and still be as successful?
 - These are example points/issues for the AM process to address. What is the range of perspectives on these things? These need to be pared down in order to get to testable pieces.
 - There will be a range of responses, for each topic, but the process is structured and managed in such a way as to get to answers and the best available science.
- *Assessment Steps*
 - Subject Matter Experts – nominated by stakeholders to detail perspectives of the issues
 - Technical Conveying Assessment
 - First step: species questionnaire
 - This is intended to identify areas of agreement, areas of disagreement, and documents the range of scientific opinions.
 - We have to show, within the framework of the best available science, that we listened to and considered the range of opinion. And that future decisions are consistent and formed within that range.
 - Second step: follow-up interviews
 - The interviews are used to confirm if we are asking the correct questions; and that the questions and basis for responses were fully understood.
- *Design Phase*
 - The design phase utilizes the assessment phase results to prioritize science questions that can be addressed through monitoring/research.
 - GSA will help to clearly articulate these and develop a study design intended to reach resolution.
 - In the ongoing discussions of technical issues, there are two (2) approaches that make up the Decision Action Template and that will be followed: (1) Structured Decision Making and (2) Joint Fact Finding.
 - Joint Fact Finding is basically an agreement between parties to follow an agreed-to process to find out the facts tougher and the agreement to be held to those facts.
 - This process:
 - is independent, impartial, and transparent;
 - is focused solely on scientific information and design; (*It was noted that the AM contractor will not be attempting to influence decisions; but it is their job to “police” the distinction and stop scientists from making management recommendations.*);
 - is concerned with only science that is management-relevant;
 - is committed to determine the best available science;
 - will provide the science to decision-makers in a value-neutral assessment;

- will provide a clear and articulate body work including study designs and prioritizations of the results - given to you as a clear record.
- *Decision Action Template (DAT) Flowchart*
 - The AM loop consists of: (1) scoping phases and (2) science stages which leads to (3) decisions; (4) implementation; (5) monitoring; (6) outcomes; and (7) adjusting. The process is adaptive in itself.
 - The scoping phases are used to determine areas of agreement/disagreement.
 - There may be areas/situations of relatively little disagreement and few uncertainties. Those are clearly articulated and recommendations can be made on possible next steps and testing. This could be a fairly simple process.
 - However, there can be situations where there is much more uncertainty and disagreement. You convene more meetings, meet with the SMEs, and work to determine a path forward. If that path forward is agreed to, you fully document it and move on.
 - But what happens in situations where you can't reach agreement and or resolution? You document the perspectives and then you have a Structured Meeting with Independent Advisors.
 - It is a recipe to avoiding endless meetings or 10 years of indecisions. Outside experts are called in. The process looks superficially like a peer review process. We work to make sure those experts fully understand all the information and full range of opinion by working with the SMEs to present their perspectives.
 - The panel is able to talk/investigate those perspectives in a "back and forth" process that drills down to the issues.
 - At the end of the process, the outside experts will render an opinion that culminates with a written report summarizing the range of opinion, where opinions are supported by literature, and what is best supported, and how to tackle the remaining uncertainties. It is as strong a scientific record as you can get. There is no other level of appeal on the science. The panel works with you to understand your positions and what the science really indicates.
 - *Examples:*
 - In a shared example, there was a river deepening and channel cutting project in the Columbia River that involved the Corps and three (3) regulatory agencies. The 10-year process had gone awry and there was no process even though the stakeholders supported the project and the Corps had the funding. Using the AM process, the range of scientific issues was tackled (although it did take a lot of meetings).
 - Of importance was the fear that dredging would remobilize toxic sediments resulting in negative impacts. The process was able to show that realistically toxic sediments would not be an issue and the concern was alleviated.
 - The process was able to further discussions regarding whether or not the dredging of the channel would have significant impact on the habitat and "untouched" portions of the river. All the information was brought forward and the team was able to identify what the bottom of the river looked like. The river bottom conditions could be modeled. The modeling results indicated that the project would only take out a narrow strip and it would be temporary at that. The NOAA fisheries were able to reverse their opinion and they had the administrative record to

support that reversal. They could show their change was consistent with the facts.

- The process ended with complete agreement among all parties and the project was able to move forward.

- *Timelines*

- General convening assessment – completed; reviewed documents and results will be provided;
- Technical Conveying Assessment (TCA) Questionnaire (for the minnow) – under way;
- TCA Interviews (minnow) – next week;
- TCA complete (minnow) – March (and/or April); the results will determine the need to go to an expert panel or not; concurrently starting work on the other species;
- Technical meetings/discussion – Spring and Summer;
- Prioritized Science topics – Fall; to address through study plans for all species
- Monitoring plans and Final Report – June 2017; including all documents for every step along the way;

- *After today*

- GSA will email:
 - General conveying assessment results
 - Decision Action Template (DAT)
 - Process flowchart
 - Process ground rules
 - Summary from the Adaptive Management Team (AMT) meeting
 - Technical Questionnaire for the minnow

- *Questions and Discussions*

- *Question:* Will the process include discussions on how these datasets are structured and used? Will it provide any guidance on how to utilize the data?
 - *Response:* The idea, with the monitoring plans, is that the process will identify the priorities to be implemented in similar/identical fashion by the entities including a standardize methodology to be implemented. What happens to the data is up to the Collaborative Program and outside the scope of GSA project. As AM contractors, we are not involved in the implementation or management stages.
- *Question:* How do you see this process timeline fitting in with the ongoing RIP and BO processes?
 - *Response:* We (AM contractors) are not in the loop of those timeframes. But we have seen some of the draft schedules. We will complete the technical conveying and vetting of uncertainties and priorities...completion of those could happen prior to the formalization of the RIP.
 - Some attendees cautioned that the issuance of the BO this summer could re-influence some of these items.
 - If the process goes smoothly, there will be a model for the Collaborative Program on how to implement things in the future and through the formalized RIP process(es). Hopefully, this process helps support the BO development process and examples how to integrate flexibilities.
- *Question:* One of the outputs of the design phase is a series of hypotheses implemented through adaptive management actions. What have you found to be the most effective way to narrow these things down?
 - *Response:* They are almost always stakeholder decisions. It is not our job to say what you should do.

- How do you deal with a situation such as: “this prioritization is the most important thing we need to know but it will take 10 years and cost a lot of money? However, there are these less important, but quickly accomplished things that can be implemented now.” That is a management decision and beyond our scope to advise.
 - One outcome could be one agency determines to undertake a specific piece. You have to lay it all out and be available to communicate those things to the decision makers. A key component to success is that the decision makers are involved and informed. This is management-relevant science: to give the decision makers, at whatever scale, information they can use. Ultimately, that is decision making and not part of GSA’s contracted work.
- *Question:* Regarding the timeline, it seems that the Adaptive Management Team (AMT) would benefit from having full cooperation/participation with the ScW and HRW committees. There is a lot going on in parallel but that does not necessarily mean everything is being cross-communicated. Robust discussions with everyone are important.
- *Response:* This is not for GSA to decide. We were told that there would be the AMT as part of the proposed RIP structure. Many of the members of ScW and HR (past and present) are involved or have been identified as the SME. It is up to the Collaborative Program to decide how to get complete audiences.
 - Each agency has assigned SMEs and AMT members so there is opportunity for a lot of overlap.

RIP Subgroup Updates and Recommendations:

- Patrick Redmond provided updates on the RIP Subgroup.
- There were five (5) main issues/points that the EC tasked the subgroup to address.
 - (1) the continued terminology concern using “RIP Agreement” to formally establish the RIP.
 - In a brief history, attendees were reminded that the original language referred to the RIP establishment document as the “Cooperative Agreement” but this created potential complications and confusions with the Cooperative Agreement Act. So the RIP Subgroup simplified the title to “RIP Agreement.” However, concerns remain with that title and whether or not the “Agreement” is the appropriate mechanism for the formation of the RIP.
 - The participating attorneys are reviewing the concerns and options – such as an EC Initiative or Memorandum of Agreement. The small attorney group decided that a formal agreement was not necessarily legally significant; but it could be significant from a policy perspective. The subgroup will continue discussions on this item.
 - (2) clarification on the role and scope of the Executive Director with specification that the Executive Director will not have unilateral ability to task the Budget Subcommittee;
 - This item has not been addressed at the RIP Subgroup level yet.
 - 3) issue of the Service’s specific approval role - particularly in advancing the updates to the Action Plan; and the roles in sufficient progress metrics and annual work plans;
 - This is another issue that was delegated to the small attorney’s group. The group has made some attempts to revise language but nothing has been finalized yet. The attorney suggestions will be reviewed at the full RIP Subgroup level within the next month or so.

- (4) sequencing of the tasks for establishing the RIP with respect to getting an early understanding of the potential draft Sufficient Progress Metrics prior to the signing of the Agreement document;
 - This item requires more discussion within the subgroup and clarification from the Department of Interior regarding how the BO might relate to sufficient progress and to the establishment of the RIP. The subgroup will continue discussions.
- (5) This final item was not captured in the notes, but the subgroup is also addressing the recommendation to revise the EC Bylaws. The subgroup has begun preliminary discussions, but is waiting on input from the attorney subgroup.
- In terms of timeline, it was proposed that the EC would have a 30 day review period before endorsing the revised Program Document. That might happen by mid-March for an April EC endorsement. But addressing all five (5) items could take longer and result in a delay of a month or two (2).

Meeting Summary:

- A quorum was present for today's meeting. The agenda was approved with no changes and the January meeting notes were approved for finalization with three (3) corrections.
- Agencies presented updates and announcements during the Agency Roundtable.
 - Many agencies remain busy and active and continuing good work.
 - There was a good discussion on the status of the minnow. While there might not be agreement on the "extinction" fear, it is acknowledged that the species is not doing well. Agencies voiced commitments to continue work and pursue projects.
 - The funding of the Corps' Environmental Management Program is very encouraging and will help us meet needs in the MRG.
- The AM contractors presented their approach. The process is well laid out. We are in good hands with GSA setting up our AM future. The process will help them complete their contract and set us up in terms of developing a good monitoring plan.
- Revisions of the Program Documents are still ongoing. The Program Document has evolved since the June 2013 endorsement. Once the BO is issued, we might have to revisit the Program documents again for consistency. But an updated version of the Program Document will be available for EC endorsement soon.

Public Comment

- Mike Marcus, representing the Assessment Payers Association of the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District (APA), shared that he also volunteers on the Water Assembly (which was formed and exists to address water planning issues on the RG). Mr. Marcus informed the EC that the Water Assembly is concerned that ESA water is not being addressed in the 2016 plan. The Water Assembly board members have tried to engage the water planners in an attempt to get endangered species and other issues incorporated into the 2016 Water Plan but feel they are being ignored.
- This isn't the only thing the Water Assembly recognizes as being ignored, but it is pertinent to this group. Mr. Marcus suggested someone from the Program could engage with the water planners to help address this need. He also referred to the 2005 Water Acquisition and Management (WAM) subcommittee final report and white papers for modeling projections and estimations of water potentially required for endangered species under that BO. Estimated ranges were from 20,000 ac-ft to 90,000 ac-ft per year. *MRG ESA CP WAM Plan Final Report 2005*.
 - *Response:* It was agreed that the WAM report is worthwhile reading, as are the HR plans, etc. because these documents help fill the "information" gap that can occur with staff turnover. With regards to the water planning, there are 3 state planning regions that are part of the MRG: (1) Jemez-Sangre plan; (2) MRG plan; and (3) the Socorro-Sierra

plan. There have been discussions on who is responsible to discuss these types of issues for each region and the collective. Unfortunately, the old regional plans took different approaches and there was never comfort in funding them. There needs to be a common platform in order to move forward. There is discontent state wide and the current platform, as it is understood, doesn't work here. But it is all we have to build from and changes need to be worked into the legislature.

- It was acknowledged that the draft plan does mention endangered species.
- Some attendees responded that there appears to be some misinformation – people have been sending comments directly to the steering committee (in writing) but there have been 2 separate meetings. Deadlines have been missed and issues have been partially discussed in email exchanges.
- The regional water plan(s) are project based and there could be implications on the water available for endangered species. It couldn't hurt for the EC to look at the updates and project lists to see what the potential impact could be.
- There are six (6) more relevant meetings: two (2) in the Jemez-Sangre region; two (2) in the MRG region; and two (2) in the Socorro-Sierra region.
- The Water Assembly thinks the draft 2016 Water Plan is a good starting point, but it shouldn't be acceptable as an ending point.
 - Some attendees commented that on a regional level, region 12, seems already “driven.”
 - One opinion expressed was that the Collaborative Program has to consider economics, population, socio-cultural needs as the population changes, its own history, etc. It can't operate in a vacuum especially with limited resources.

Next Meeting: March 17th, 2016 from 9:00am to 12:00pm at Reclamation

- Tentative March agenda items: (1) update of RIP Program Document; (2) PASS Proposal Evaluations: Identify and Approve 2 EC representatives for participation; (3) Sevilleta Habitat Restoration Phase II Presentation (Rolf Schmidt-Petersen);
- Tentative April agenda items: (1) Review Item: revised RIP Program Document (for endorsement in May?); (2) PASS Proposal Evaluations: Identify and Approve 2 EC representatives for participation; (3) Minnow Action Team updates (if applicable);
- Tentative future agenda items: (1) Discussion/Updates on Recent and Upcoming Reports (Adaptive Management Documents; Genetics Peer Review Draft Report); (2) Population Monitoring Workshop report presentation(May);

**Executive Committee Meeting Attendees
February 18th, 2016**

Attendees:

<i>Representative</i>	<i>Organization</i>	<i>Seat</i>
Rick Billings (A)	Albuquerque/Bernalillo County Water Utility Authority	Non-federal co-chair
Jennifer Faler (A)	Bureau of Reclamation	Federal co-chair
Rolf Schmidt-Petersen (A)	NM Interstate Stream Commission	NMISC
Kris Schafer (A)	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers	Corps
Wally Murphy (A)	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	FWS
Jim Wilber (A)	U.S. Bureau of Reclamation	Reclamation
Patrick Redmond (A)	Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District	MRGCD
Janet Jarratt (P)	Assessment Payers Association of the MRGCD	APA
Matt Schmader (P)	City of Albuquerque	COA

Kim Eichhorst (P)	Bosque Ecosystem Monitoring Program	BEMP
Frank Chaves (P)	Pueblo of Sandia	Sandia
Matt Wunder (P)	NM Department of Game and Fish	NMDGF
Alan Hatch (P)	Pueblo of Santa Ana	Santa Ana
Steve Farris (P)	NM Attorney General's Office	NMAGO

Others

Ali Saenz	Bureau of Reclamation
Leann Towne	Bureau of Reclamation
Brian Hobbs	Bureau of Reclamation
Ann Demint	Bureau of Reclamation
Josh Mann	Solicitor's Office
Beth Pitrolo	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Susan Bittick (A)	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Ryan Gronewold	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Ondrea Hummel	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Dave Campbell	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Johanna Roy	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Rich Valdez	SWCA/ISC
Kyle Harwood	BBD/City of Santa Fe
Rick Carpenter	BBD/City of Santa Fe
Maria O'Brien	ABCWUA
Bill Grantham (A)	NMAGO
Joe Jojola	BIA
Mike Marcus	for APA
Deb Lee	with GeoSystems Analysis
Steve Courtney	with GeoSystems Analysis
Todd Caplan	with GeoSystems Analysis
Marta Wood	Alliant Environmental (note taker)