Fiscal Planning Committee Meeting

April 1, 2020

Meeting Materials:

Agenda

Minutes

ScW/HR Project Descriptions [read-ahead]

USACE FY21 Unfunded Activities [read-ahead]

Middle Rio Grande Endangered Species Collaborative Program

Est. 2000

Fiscal Planning Committee (FPC)
Meeting Agenda

Date & Time: April 1, 2020; 1:00-3:30pm
Location: Zoom Meeting

Zoom Call-in Information
Link: https://west-inc.zoom.us/j/8983593120
Call-In: +1-669-900-6833
Meeting ID: 898-359-3120
One-Touch Dial: 669-900-6833,,8983593120#

1:00 – 1:10	**Welcome** • Introductions • Agenda Review • ***Decision***: Approve meeting agenda	*Julie Dickey, Program Support Team (PST)*
1:10 – 1:25	**Review Charter Amendment** • Addition of co-chairs • ***Decision***: Selection of a Non-Federal and a Federal Co-Chair	*J. Dickey, PST*
1:25 – 2:15	**FY2021 Unfunded Activities** • Proposed activities for FY21 • Review U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) unfunded activities list • ***Read Aheads***: o Project descriptions o USACE activities list	*FPC Group Discussion*
2:15 – 2:30	**Break**	
2:30 – 3:20	**FY2021 Unfunded Activities (*continued*)**	*FPC Group Discussion*
3:20 – 3:30	**Meeting Review** • Action Items • Next Steps	*J. Dickey, PST*
3:30	**Adjourn**	

Middle Rio Grande Endangered Species Collaborative Program

Est. 2000

Fiscal Planning Committee (FPC)
Meeting Notes

Date & Time: April 1, 2020; 1:00-3:30pm
Location: Zoom Meeting

Decisions:

- ✓ Approval of April 1, 2020 FPC meeting agenda
- ✓ Grace Haggerty, New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission (NMISC), and Lynette Giesen, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), were elected as the FPC Non-Federal Co-Chair and Federal Co-Chair, respectively

Action Items:

WHO	ACTION ITEM	BY WHEN
Program Support Team (PST)	Review Grace H.'s suggested revisions to the FPC charter, and discuss them with the Executive Committee (EC) co-chairs to determine next steps	April 2, 2020
PST & Avian Small Group	Add in a section for how the project descriptions apply to different regulatory obligations, authorities, and/or missions	April 2, 2020
PST	Research how a membership fee/pooled funds approach could work to pay for future Program Portal operations, maintenance, and development	May 1, 2020
Grace H.	Research how New Mexico State uses pooled funds in the case of the San Juan River Recovery Implementation Program to pay for administrative costs	May 1, 2020
PST	Research how other Programs manage pooled funds/membership fees to cover administrative costs	May 1, 2020
Lynette Giesen	Check Dave Moore's availability to hold a Zoom Brown Bag in April/May	ASAP
PST	Schedule a Zoom Brown Bag for Dave Moore's work	ASAP
PST	Provide the FPC with a document that provides more detail about the status of USACE's FY21 unfunded projects	April 8, 2020
All Signatories	Review USACE's FY21 unfunded projects list for funding opportunities, and contact Lynette G. (lynette.m.giesen@usace.army.mil) for more information	April 8 – May 1, 2020
MRGESCP	Determine potential avenues of funding for USACE's projects list	ASAP

Next Meeting: TBD

Meeting Summary

Welcome, Introductions, Agenda Review

- The PST opened the meeting and reviewed the agenda.

✓ **Decision**: The FPC approved the meeting agenda

Review Charter Amendment

Addition of co-chairs

- The FPC charter amendment specifies the election of two co-chairs to serve as committee leaders for a one-year term with no more than two consecutive one-year terms.
- Grace H., NMISC, sent some suggested edits to charter. She wants to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of having co-chairs.
    - The missing piece in the amendment is the responsibilities of the co-chairs.
    - The benefit of a federal co-chair, in particular, is that they could help navigate the ins and outs of federal contracting and budgeting.
    - The co-chair can benefit meeting participation.
        - Participation is decided by the EC based on the FPC meeting agenda.
        - There has been low participation in FPC meetings.
        - It may help to make the meeting more formal and establish dates within a quarter.
        - The co-chairs can help disseminate information to the EC.
    - Lynette G., USACE, is willing to be the federal co-chair but does not know how much longer she will be available.
    - The group elected Grace H. as Non-Federal Co-Chair and Lynette G. as Federal Co-Chair.
    - Ashlee Rudolph, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation), will figure out the primary FPC person from Reclamation.
        - Ashlee R. or Brian Hobbs are more appropriate than Jim Wilber.
        - Brian H. has accepted a position as a grants manager for U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.
- Grace H.'s suggested charter revisions
    - Add an organizational chart.
    - The FPC should be a work group instead of a committee.
        - A work group address specific issues and a committee does not appear to do much.
        - The By-Laws Committee and EC decided that standing groups will be "committees" and ad hoc groups with a specific charge will be "work groups."

➢ **Action Item**: The PST will discuss Grace Haggerty's suggested FPC charter revisions with the EC co-chairs

✓ **Decision**: Grace Haggerty and Lynette Giesen were elected as the FPC's Non-Federal and Federal Co-Chairs, respectively

FY2021 Unfunded Activities
Proposed activities
Review USACE unfunded activities list

- Avian Work Group Project Descriptions
    - The Avian Work Group will meet to develop scopes of work (SOWs) and estimate costs.
    - The projects need more development to know who will want to fund them. Their funding organizations may determine how the SOW is written.
    - How did the SOWs become a priority?
        - The work groups developed conceptual ecological models, identified uncertainties, and developed projects to address them. The prioritization process for the uncertainties is still being worked through.
    - More work needs to be done before finding funding. Project descriptions will go back to the Avian Work Group.
    - In April, all project descriptions need to be submitted to signatories, specifically Reclamation, to get funding placeholders for the upcoming year.
        - The PST will be submitting the projects and their cost estimates to Reclamation and other organizations.
        - Reclamation is unlikely to fund anything that does not meet Biological Opinion (BO) commitments.
            - While prioritizing these projects, link them to organization requirements to make them more relevant to funding organizations.
        - Referencing the 2016 BO in a SOW could prevent USACE from funding a project.
            - Use a different format depending on the organization a SOW is sent to.

➢ **Action Item**: The PST will add an item to the Avian Work Group meeting agenda to address adding in a section for how project descriptions apply to different regulatory obligations, authorities, and/or missions

- USACE unfunded activities list
    - Bosque Ecosystem Monitoring Program (BEMP)
        - Funded through FY21, has 12 months from October to find funding.
        - BEMP has some funding from other signatories but is looking for more.
        - A larger conversation needs to happen with Kim Eichhorst, BEMP, to understand the full situation.
    - Program Portal
        - Funded through January 2021.
        - There needs to be ongoing funding for annual maintenance and operations.
        - $10,000 per year is the approximate cost but there will be no additional development.
        - There should be minimal work that needs to be done by the PST after past documents and datasets get uploaded.

- The Program needs to prioritize what is completed before funding ends.
- Could there be a membership fee that covers Portal costs?
    - There needs to be an account holder, either WEST or a signatory.
    - It could be a fiscal nightmare; each signatory would need to have an independent contract with the account holder.
    - Do other programs have a membership fee?
        - The San Juan Recovery Implementation Program (RIP) pools money from members.

- **Action Item**: Grace Haggerty will research how New Mexico State uses pooled funds in the San Juan RIP to cover administrative costs
- **Action Item**: The PST will research how membership fees/pooled funds can be used to fund the Program Portal
- **Action Item**: The PST will research how other programs manage membership fees/pooled funds to cover administrative costs

- Avian Monitoring
    - Large-scale monitoring ended in winter 2019.
    - Raptor nest monitoring will be funded through 2020.
    - Gale is completing some surveys but is not paid by USACE; that data may not be shared with Program signatories.
    - Southwestern willow flycatcher (SWFL) and yellow-billed cuckoo surveying will end at USACE restoration sites within four years.
- Multi-Agency Study for Identifying Restoration Priorities for Threatened Tamarisk Dominated Habitat to Benefit Future Habitat for SWFL
    - This will result in a list of areas ripe for restoration.
    - USACE can only do the study, not the implementation.
    - A report will be out by April.
- Multi-Agency Los Lunas Habitat Restoration Project
    - One of the first projects the Program funded.
    - David Moore is managing the project and recommends that the site not be abandoned. Monitoring should continue.
    - Dave M. wants to give brown bag; he submitted a draft report to USACE, and the report will be finalized in April.

- **Action Item**: Lynette Giesen will check David Moore's availability for a Zoom brown bag in April/May
- **Action Item**: The PST will schedule a Zoom brown bag for David Moore

- Habitat Restoration Site Surveying
    - The Hydraulics and Hydrology group is surveying USACE's created structures and monitoring changes during high flows to determine maintenance activities that can be funded by a local sponsor.
    - GeoSystems Analysis (GSA) and TetraTech are looking at vegetative differences at sites.
    - There will be summary reports through 2019.

- USACE Unfunded Projects Summary
    - The ending of these projects will result in the loss of a large knowledge base that will affect the work of other signatories.
    - USACE is stopping avian monitoring, tamarisk leaf beetle monitoring, sediment transport studies, large-scale climate change monitoring, water quality monitoring, and multi-agency projects.
    - Some of these studies cross into water management. Are they getting picked up by other funding sources?
        - The HEC-RAS model was funded by USACE, MRGESCP, Upper Rio Grande Water Operations Model (URGWOM), and Water Ops.
        - Other sediment projects are focused on sediment transportation and how it affects restoration features or species habitat.
        - The HEC-RAS model is largely complete and available.
        - URGWOM has taken a huge hit but will be funded in 2021. It has dropped everything that is "nice to know" instead of "need to know."

➢ **Action Item**: Signatories will review USACE's list of FY21 unfunded projects for funding opportunities and contact Lynette Giesen for more information

Potential Funding Resources

- Sustainable Rivers Program
    - The program proactively improves environmental health by changing reservoir operations to benefit natural communities.
    - Seems to be focused on environmental flows, which would involve Cochiti.
        - Cochiti has the most restrictive authorizing language of any U.S. reservoir.
        - Altering Cochiti operations to establish environmental flows will take Congressional authorization, which won't be considered unless the Rio Grande Compact and Pueblos affected by the change reach agreement.
- Continuing Authorities Program – Section 1135
    - Requires a local sponsor to send a letter to USACE stating that a federal structure has impacted an ecosystem along a floodway and they would like to study how to improve that.
    - The local sponsor pays for half the cost of the study.
    - Cost share for construction is 75% federal, 25% non-federal.
    - The funding limit is 10 million total.
- Continuing Authorities Program – Aquatic Ecosystem Restoration - Section 206
    - Requires no link to federal action.
    - Cost share not as good; 65% federal, 35% non-federal for construction, 50-50 cost share for study.
- Reclamation's Science and Technology Program
    - Requires a strong technical proposal, usually engineering-focused.
    - The WaterSmart Grant may be more appropriate for the level of the proposals the Program can produce.

USACE Unfunded Projects (Continued)

- Further Information on Groundwater Monitoring

        - USACE has 65 wells; a large portion have transducers and others have data manually collected.
        - The contract is ending in April.
        - All sites are in the Albuquerque Reach.
        - The wells have produced a 15-year data set that can be useful.
        - Every BEMP site also has a groundwater well; some have close to 10 years of data.
        - The groundwater data can be put on the Portal. Todd Caplan, GSA, will likely finish a compilation report in August.
- The PST will send out a detailed list of projects.
        - It would be helpful to add the dates that projects were funded and the reaches they happened in.

- **Action Item**: The PST will provide the FPC with a document that gives more detail about USACE's unfunded FY21 projects
- **Action Item**: The MRGESCP will determine potential avenues of funding for USACE's project list

Meeting Participants

Participant	Organization
Ashlee Rudolph	U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
Debbie Lee	Program Support Team
Grace Haggerty	New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission
Julie Dickey	Program Support Team
Kate Mendoza	Albuquerque-Bernalillo County Water Utility Authority
Lynette Giesen	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Michelle Tuineau	Program Support Team

Project Description for
Soil Moisture Holding Capacity Study

I. Background

Native riparian vegetation thrives in conditions with moist soils, low salt content, shallow depths to groundwater, and opportunities for seasonal overbank flows. When these conditions are not met, less desirable, non-native vegetation may be established and potentially outcompete native vegetation. A better understanding of the bosque's soil moisture holding capacity would enable managers to take steps to increase the likelihood of native vegetation establishment and survival. A study of soil moisture holding capacity and topsoil health will provide valuable information to management, and especially restoration efforts, in the Middle Rio Grande bosque.

II. Objective

To design and implement a study to examine possible methods to increase soil moisture holding capacity with the end goal of increasing success of native vegetation establishment at habitat restoration sites. This could include evaluating soil improvements, microbial composition, and other potential amendments.

III. Conservation Benefit

The results of this study would inform future habitat restoration and increase the potential success of ecosystem restoration.

IV. Relationship to Panel Recommendations

This project idea is related to the following panel recommendations:

- Caplan (2018) SWFL critical uncertainty #1: What site selection and prioritization procedures contribute to the successful restoration of SWFL breeding habitats along the MRG?

V. Compliance Required?

If this study is carried out in the bosque, the researcher may need to secure Clean Water Act permits.

Project Description for
Evaluation of Yellow-billed Cuckoo Prey and Associated Host Plants

I. Background

Habitat restoration work for the southwestern willow flycatcher (SWFL) and YBCU in the Middle Rio Grande (MRG) mainly focuses on planting vegetation related to the nesting site. The YBCU's food intake needs are great, as juveniles grow rapidly and fledge in seven days. Their main food source is large insects, such as caterpillars, dragonflies, and cicadas. To our knowledge, little work has been done to cross-reference the vegetation needs of the YBCU prey base with plants suitable for habitat restoration projects in the MRG. Having a reference of such plants would inform future restoration planning, and allow restoration managers to plan for the food base needed to support YBCU populations.

II. Objective

Complete a literature search and research project identifying the prey base of YBCU and the host plants needed to support those prey, and evaluating whether those plants are suitable for inclusion in habitat restoration projects in the MRG.

III. Conservation Benefit

The results of this research project would facilitate the inclusion of YBCU prey host plants, suitable for the MRG, in habitat restoration projects. This would improve the prey base for the YBCU and contribute to greater nest success, thus improving the value of the habitat restoration site.

IV. Relationship to Panel Recommendations

This project idea is related to the following panel recommendations:

- Caplan (2018) YBCU critical uncertainty #1: Which abiotic and biotic variables predict suitable YBCU habitats in the MRG across multiple spatial and temporal scales?

V. Compliance Required?

No permits would be required to carry out this project.

Project Description for
An Analysis of Overbank Flow and Its Relationship with Southwestern Willow Flycatcher (SWFL) and Yellow-billed Cuckoo (YBCU) Territory Selection

I. Background

Restoration projects have created native riparian habitat, yet few of these sites in the Middle Rio Grande (MRG) support breeding populations of SWFLs. The magnitude, frequency, and duration of flooding and overbank flow strongly influence the structure and function of riparian habitat and the invertebrate communities that provide abundant food resources for SWFL and YBCU. SWFLs, in particular, often place their nests in vegetation hanging over standing water. Although data on hydrological conditions along the MRG exist, no studies have analyzed response of riparian vegetation or SWFL and YBCU territory selection to quantitative data on river flow regimes within the MRG. Results of this study would inform adaptive water management to optimize the creation and maintenance of flycatcher and cuckoo habitat, and would help prioritize locations for habitat restoration with the highest probability of success.

II. Objective

The design and implementation of a research project exploring a potential correlation between overbanking and SWFL and YBCU territory selection. This would entail using existing data of overbank flows and SWFL and YBCU survey data to determine if there was an observed increase in territory selection in an overbanked area during the year of overbanking, and in successive years. This project would also include an analysis of vegetation types before and after flooding events, and whether the vegetation was more suitable for SWFL and YBCU habitat.

III. Conservation Benefit

The results of this project would help predict SWFL and YBCU territory selection, and could be used to inform future restoration projects site selection and development.

IV. Relationship to Panel Recommendations

This project idea is related to the following panel recommendations:

- Caplan (2018) SWFL critical uncertainty #1: What site selection and prioritization procedures contribute to the successful restoration of SWFL breeding habitats along the MRG?
- Caplan (2018) YBCU critical uncertainty #1: Which abiotic and biotic variables predict suitable YBCU habitats in the MRG across multiple spatial and temporal scales?

V. Compliance Required?

No permits would be required to carry out this project.

Project Description for
An Evaluation of Aerial Imagery and Southwestern Willow Flycatcher (SWFL) and Yellow-billed Cuckoo (YBCU) Habitat

I. Background

Understanding the best locations to conduct habitat restoration for SWFL and YBCU in the Middle Rio Grande (MRG) would be a valuable approach to the management and conservation of these species. This could be accomplished by developing a GIS-based, habitat restoration suitability model for SWFL and YBCU. The foundation of this model would include using past survey and nest data of occupied SWFL and YBCU locations, and subsequently overlaying these layers with existing aerial imagery, vegetation maps, and habitat maps. This type of landscape-scale analysis would help determine the influence of patch size, edge effects, and adjacent land uses on SWFL and YBCU habitat uses. Habitat suitability model results would better inform habitat restoration site locations that provide the best opportunity for breeding activities.

II. Objective

An evaluation of aerial imagery of the MRG overlaid with occupied habitat for SWFL and YBCU in order to determine:

(1) any overlap in habitat characteristics for the two species, and
(2) any edge effects.

This would be include an analysis using existing aerial imagery, habitat maps, and vegetation maps. This project would not include collecting new data or imagery.

III. Conservation Benefit

The results of this project would inform habitat restoration efforts to maximize ability to attract both SWFL and YBCUs. It would also inform habitat restoration project siting based on adjacent and nearby land uses that would be beneficial to either or both species.

IV. Relationship to Panel Recommendations

This project description is related to the following panel recommendations:

- Caplan (2018) YBCU critical uncertainty #3: How similar are the YBCU and SWFL in their breeding habitat requirements in the MRG?
- Caplan (2018) YBCU critical uncertainty #1: Which abiotic and biotic variables predict suitable YBCU habitats in the MRG across multiple spatial and temporal scales?
- Caplan (2018) SWFL critical uncertainty #1: What site selection and prioritization procedures contribute to the successful restoration of SWFL breeding habitats along the MRG?

V. Compliance Required?

No permits would be required to carry out this study.

1. Bosque Ecological Monitoring Program (BEMP)
2. Middle Rio Grande Endangered Species Collaborative Program Portal and Database
3. Avian monitoring in the Middle Rio Grande (MRG)
4. Multi-Agency study for Identifying Restoration Priorities for Threatened Tamarisk Dominated Habitat to Benefit Future Habitat for SWFL
5. Multi-Agency Los Lunas Habitat Restoration Project
6. Habitat restoration site surveying
7. SWFL surveys on the Rio Grande in the Albuquerque metro area
8. Tamarisk leaf beetle monitoring
9. Multi-Agency Assessment and Quantification of Sediment and Discharge at Arroyo de los Piños
10. Changes in Terrestrial Soil Loss in the Middle Rio Grande Basin to 2100
11. Development and Application of a HEC-RAS, Mobile-bed, Sediment Transport Model of the Middle Rio Grande
12. MRG groundwater monitoring
13. Multi-Agency Engineering Modeling Applications for Quantifying Habitat for the Rio Grande Silvery Minnow
14. Multi-Agency Environmental Flow Analysis of Hydrograph and Population Parameters for Rio Grande Silvery Minnow Recruitment
15. Evaluating the Grain Size of Bedload Transported from Arroyos into the Rio Grande
16. Evaluation of Sediment Dynamics in Habitat Restoration Features of the Albuquerque Reach
17. Monitoring Climate Change in the MRG
18. Water quality monitoring of aquatic refugia in the MRG
19. Multi-Agency continuous water temperature monitoring of the MRG Basin
20. YBCU Noise and Telemetry Study