**Fiscal Planning Committee (FPC)**

**Meeting Minutes**

**April 18, 2023; 9:30 AM­­­­ ­­– 11:30 AM**

**Location:** Zoom Meeting

**Decisions:**

* Approval of April 18, 2023 FPC meeting agenda
* Approval of January 24, 2023 FPC meeting minutes
* Selection of Danielle Galloway, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), as the new FPC Federal Co-Chair
* Decision to send a Non-federal letter of support for increasing USACE Fiscal Year 2024 (FY24) funding

**Announcements:**

* The USACE Middle Rio Grande Endangered Species Collaborative Program (MRGESCP) budget was included in the FY24 President’s Budget at $625,000. This funding amount is subject to change.
* The National Conference on Ecosystem Restoration will be in Albuquerque in 2024, and the Executive Committee (EC) is supportive of submitting a session proposal. Anyone who has a session idea should reach out to the Program Support Team (PST). Session proposals are due May 19, 2023.

**Action Items:**

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| **WHO** | **ACTION ITEM** | **BY WHEN** |
| PST | Revise the Biennial Schedule based on FPC discussion and provide to the FPC review | 4/20/2023 |
| PST | Send list of options for Program Portal funding to the FPC for review | 4/20/2023 |
| FPC | Provide any missing funding opportunities to the PST for inclusion on the Funding Opportunities Calendar and Strategic Funding Graphic | 4/21/2023 |
| PST | Update the Funding Opportunities Calendar and Strategic Funding Graphic based on FPC discussion (i.e., add missing opportunities, etc.) | 4/28/2023 |
| FPC | Review the revised Biennial Schedule | 4/28/2023 |
| FPC | Review the options for Program Portal funding | 4/28/2023 |
| PST | Work with the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) to post the Funding Opportunities Calendar and Strategic Funding Graphic to the Program Portal | Early May |
| PST, Mark Kelly, & Anne Marken | Draft letter of support to U.S. Congress for additional funding for USACE’s FY24 budget | 5/1/2023 |
| PST | Clarify Program Portal funding options with the USGS | June EC meeting |
| PST | Add regular check-ins for the Funding Opportunities Calendar and Strategic Funding Graphic to FPC meeting agendas | July FPC meeting |
| Anne Marken | Discuss the America the Beautiful funding opportunity with the MRGCD grants department | July FPC meeting |
| Lynette Giesen and Kim Eichhorst | Work with the PST to develop standard language for proposals on the value of long-term monitoring and data collection | July FPC meeting |
| Anne Marken | Ask Yasmeen Najmi to work on standard language for proposals on habitat restoration | July FPC meeting |
| PST | Develop standard language for proposals on the MRGESCP, its value, and adaptive management | July FPC meeting |
| USACE | Include the Program Portal in the USACE FY23 Work Plan | Internal USACE deadline |

**Next Meeting:** July 2023

**Meeting Minutes**

# Welcome, Introductions, and Agenda Review

Debbie Lee, Program Support Team (PST), opened the meeting, led introductions, and reviewed the April 18, 2023 meeting agenda. The FPC approved the agenda with no amendments. Danielle Galloway, USACE, was formally selected as the new Federal Co-Chair for the FPC.

* **Decision**: Approval of April 18, 2023 FPC meeting agenda
* **Decision**: Selection of Danielle Galloway, USACE, as the new FPC Federal Co-Chair

# January 2023 Meeting Summary

Debbie L. reviewed minutes and action items from the January 24, 2023 FPC meeting (see read-ahead). All action items were completed. Updates are provided below:

* The Biennial Schedule was updated with FPC activities. Michelle Tuineau, PST, also updated formatting to make it easier to read. The Biennial Schedule will be provided at the next EC meeting for approval.
* The Funding Opportunities Calendar and Funding Graphic were updated based on FPC discussion. The FPC will review the updates and discuss next steps.
* The PST discussed the potential for submitting an America the Beautiful Challenge grant proposal next year for post-fire restoration at the Big Hole fire site in partnership with other MRGESCP signatories. There will be more information later in the meeting.
* Volunteers are needed to develop standard language for proposals.
* There will be an update on USACE FY24 funding and a potential non-federal letter of support later during the meeting.
* The group will discuss Program Portal funding with the USACE, the current contracting agency, later in the meeting. The EC Co-Chairs advised that rather than form an ad hoc group of lawyers to review funding options for the Program Portal, the lawyers be a part of the FPC conversation.
* Anne Marken, Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District (MRGCD), was announced as the new FPC Non-Federal Co-Chair at the March EC meeting.
* The PST sought an expert to develop a checklist for environmental compliance considerations but has not yet identified one. The FPC was asked if this task was still useful to pursue.
  + Virginia Seamster, New Mexico Department of Game & Fish (NMDGF), stated that the NMDGF has a detailed compliance process and would not need a checklist.
  + Thomas Turner, University of New Mexico (UNM), also stated that UNM has a detailed compliance process and shared a link to the Office of Research Integrity and Compliance website, which has more information: <https://researchcompliance.unm.edu/>.
* The Rio Grande Compact Commission meeting will be held on April 21, 2023 in Santa Fe, New Mexico. There will be a virtual Zoom option as well.

The FPC approved the January 24, 2023 meeting minutes with no amendments.

* **Decision**: Approval of January 24, 2023 FPC meeting minutes

# Update on the Funding Opportunities Calendar and Funding Graphic

Michelle Tuineau, PST, discussed updates to the Funding Opportunities Calendar and Graphic (see read-aheads). Updates and discussion points are summarized below:

**Calendar Discussion**

* Updates were made based on FPC discussion and review comments received.
* A symbol was added to indicate whether a funding opportunity required cost share.
* Additional opportunities were added to the calendar and graphic, totaling 71 opportunities.
* The calendar feature was reduced from a two-year period to a one-year period to improve readability and an “X” was added to the calendar feature to indicate when an application was due.
* FPC members’ feedback about the calendar was overwhelmingly positive.
* An FPC member asked about the schedule for updating funding opportunities.
  + The PST stated an update is scheduled every two years, which is reflected on the updated Biennial Schedule.
  + The member acknowledged the heavy lift required to update the existing funding opportunities, which aligns with the two-year update schedule, but favors also adding opportunities as they become available.
  + The FPC was in favor of adding a check for new funding opportunities to every FPC meeting agenda. This change will be reflected in the updated Biennial Schedule.
* An FPC member asked where the Funding Opportunities Calendar and Graphic would exist.
  + The PST stated it would exist on the Program Portal.
  + The member commented that users could also identify new or out-of-date opportunities.
* Michelle T. stated that the FPC previously discussed adding an indicator for funding length, either single-year or multi-year. Given that opportunities had a lower limit of $50,000, most opportunities had a multi-year funding length. The short-length opportunities were typically related to emergencies/disaster relief. The funding length indicator was not added.

**Graphic Discussion**

* An acronym list was added to the Funding Graphic based on feedback. The list shows the full name of each funding opportunities.
* FPC members noted the graphic was busy but a good tool.
* Michelle T. stated that all acronyms link to the sites where the funding opportunities originate rather than the grants.com listing. The grants.com link will change each year, requiring more upkeep.
* An FPC member requested an indicator for when applications were due (e.g., first half vs. second half of the year) to help users quickly determine if an opportunity was still open.
* The PST has been discussing moving the calendar to an Access Database to improve user queries. It is unsure whether the Portal can support an Access Database file.
* An FPC member asked that the New Mexico Water Trust Board and New Mexico Environment Department funding opportunities be included.
  + Michelle T. noted that opportunities were pulled from a national site as well as email announcements and local opportunities may be missing. FPC members were asked to send any missing opportunities for inclusion on the funding tools.
* **Action Item**: FPC will provide any missing funding opportunities to the PST for inclusion on the Funding Opportunities Calendar and Strategic Funding Graphic
* **Action Item**: PST will update the Funding Opportunities Calendar and Strategic Funding Graphic based on FPC discussion (i.e., add missing opportunities, etc.)
* **Action Item**: PST will work with the USGS to post the Funding Opportunities Calendar and Strategic Funding Graphic to the Program Portal
* **Action Item**: PST will add regular check-ins for the Funding Opportunities Calendar and Strategic Funding Graphic to FPC meeting agendas

# Biennial Schedule

Debbie L. reviewed the updated Biennial Schedule (see read-ahead). Updates and discussion points are summarized below:

* Michelle T. redid the formatting based on comments that the document was hard to read.
  + Symbols were added to denote activities specific to a committee (e.g., purple heart for FPC activities).
* An FPC task of determining a collaborative funding opportunity to pursue was added at the beginning of each year.
* Tasks for informing project priorities for signatories (e.g., inform project priorities for NMDGF, New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission, and U.S. Bureau of Reclamation [Reclamation] in April) were added.
* An update to the Funding Calendar and Graphic was added every two years. A check for new funding opportunities will be added to every FPC meeting.
* A task for the FPC to coordinate implementation of Long-Term Plan activities was added every two years.
* The Biennial Schedule already included a funding check for RioRestore, the Program Portal, and the Program and Science Support (PASS) contract (i.e., third-party management contract for the MRGESCP) every two years.
* An FPC member asked for clarification on “informing project priorities.”
  + Debbie L. stated that the FPC could provide recommendations for potential projects to fund based on how they align with the Long-Term Plan, the multi-year plan, and other signatory priorities.
* Debbie L. asked for input on when the FPC should inform project priorities for the USACE.
  + Ryan Gronewold, USACE, stated that USACE would need project priorities by February two years before the implementation year.
* Mark Kelly, Albuquerque Bernalillo County Water Utility Authority (ABSWUA), and Dustin Chavez-Davis, City of Albuquerque (CoA) Open Space, both asked that the FPC inform their project priorities by February.
* The PST will update the Biennial Schedule to include informing project priorities for USACE, ABCWUA, and CoA at the January FPC meeting.
* Debbie L. asked when the opportunity is to provide input into the University of New Mexico (UNM)’s legislative letters of support.
  + Thomas Turner, UNM, stated the typical timing for legislative letters of support is in the fall.
  + The FPC can provide input on UNM’s legislated letter at the July FPC meeting.
* An FPC member noted that State budgets typically need to be decided during fall of the year prior to implementation. Given this input, the date for determining a collaborative funding opportunity to pursue was moved to the July meeting the year before implementation.
* **Action Item**: PST will revise the Biennial Schedule based on FPC discussion (i.e., inform USACE budget/project priorities in January, MRGCD in April, ABCWUA in January, and CoA in January; add UNM legislative support letter of support in July; decide big projects to pursue funding for in July of previous year) and provide to the FPC review
* **Action Item**: FPC will review the revised Biennial Schedule

# America the Beautiful Challenge Grant

Debbie L. opened discussion on the America the Beautiful Challenge grant. Discussion points are summarized below:

* There has been discussion of pursuing America the Beautiful Challenge funding for collaborative post-fire restoration at the Big Hole burn site. The MRGESCP could support this effort.
* FPC members voiced their support for pursuing the funding provided there are restoration partners that are eligible and willing to manage the project.
  + MRGCD would likely need to manage the project as it has the highest number of acres burned in the area. Yasmeen Najmi, MRGCD, is interested in getting involved.
* To apply for funding, groups will need to submit a pre-proposal before being invited to submit a full proposal.
  + The FPC can start developing standard proposal language that supports this effort.
* Anne M. will speak to the MRGCD grants department before the next meeting for more information.
* FPC members were in support of MRGCD and partners pursuing America the Beautiful Challenge funding.
* **Action Item**: Anne Marken will discuss the America the Beautiful funding opportunity with the MRGCD grants department

# Standard Proposal Language

Debbie L. opened discussion on developing standard proposal language and called for volunteers. Discussion points are summarized below:

* The idea behind development of standard proposal language is proposal seekers may go after funding in similar areas or want to include specific messages. Rather than everyone writing proposals from scratch, they would be able to pull from a template with standard language.
* At previous meetings, FPC members identified the value of habitat restoration, the value of data collection and monitoring, and collaboration as areas for development of standard proposal language.
* Kim Eichhorst, Bosque Ecological Monitoring Program, and Lynette Giesen, Reclamation, volunteered to develop standard proposal language on the value of long-term monitoring and data collection.
* Anne M. will ask Yasmeen N. if she can work on developing standard proposal language on habitat restoration.
* NMDGF has a habitat handbook that covers restoration in riparian areas. It could be used to inform the habitat restoration language.
* The PST will develop standard proposal language on the MRGESCP, its value, and adaptive management.
* **Action Item**: Lynette Giesen and Kim Eichhorst will work with the PST to develop standard language for proposals on the value of long-term monitoring and data collection
* **Action Item**: Anne Marken will ask Yasmeen Najmi to work on standard language for proposals on habitat restoration
* **Action Item**: PST will develop standard language for proposals on the MRGESCP, its value, and adaptive management

# Update on USACE Funding

Danielle Galloway, USACE, gave an update on USACE funding. USACE received just under $2 million in MRGESCP-related funding in FY23 and is in the President’s Budget for $625,000 in FY24. USACE is preparing a work plan for FY24. The FY24 funding amount is lower than usual, but it is good to be included in the President’s Budget at all, given that funding was missing in two out of the last three years. USACE could possibly receive more funding through congressionally directed funding, which was how it increased funding in FY23.

An FPC member asked why funding has decreased. Ryan G. explained that there was a change in budgeting and the MRGESCP-related work now competes with infrastructural projects for funding. The competition has meant less funding for MRGESCP-related work. There needs to be a strong case to increase funding. Ryan G. believes the USACE may need to seek a different way to fund MRGESCP-related work, which may require cost share with a non-federal partner. That conversation would need to be had with the New Mexico Congressional Delegation and potential non-federal partners.

The FPC agreed to send a non-federal letter of support for increasing USACE funding in FY24. It would be best to send the letter as soon as possible while the Appropriations Committee is meeting. The PST will send the letters to members of the New Mexico Congressional Delegation and the chairs of the House and Senate natural resource committees.

* **Decision**: Decision to send a Non-federal letter of support for increasing USACE FY24 funding
* **Action Item**: PST, Mark Kelly, & Anne Marken will draft letter of support to U.S. Congress for additional funding for USACE’s FY24 budget

# Program Portal Funding Options

Debbie L. opened discussion on Program Portal funding. Discussion points are summarized below:

* The last update from the USACE was it would fund the Program Portal at $100,000 through the end of calendar year 2023 with rollover FY22 funding. There as questions as to whether the USACE could fund the Program Portal after 2023 and at what level or if it could accept funds from other signatories for the Program Portal.
  + Base level funding for the Program Portal is around $70,000 a year.
  + The USACE prioritizes funding the Program Portal and may be able to fund it in FY24.
* The EC asked the FPC to provide options for Program Portal funding for discussion. The FPC requested at the March EC meeting that legal advisers be present at the next FPC meeting, but none were able to join. The FPC could instead provide a list of options for legal advisers to review.
  + Program Portal funding options:
    - Other signatories give money to the USACE to fund the existing U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) contract for the Program Portal.
    - Another signatory takes on the USGS contract.
    - Signatories pool money to fund the USGS contract.
    - Signatories set up a rotation every year for different signatories to take on the USGS contract.
* In the past, it was determined that signatories could not pool money to fund non-specific MRGESCP activities, but it needs to be determined if signatories can pool money for a specific purpose, such as the Program Portal.
* One FPC member believes it makes the most sense to have one entity hold the USGS contract and accept funds from others.
* FPC members agree it would be difficult to pursue a rotating option. The funding amount is high and would be a large shift in budget from year to year.
* Ryan G. stated the USACE may not be able to collect funds for the USGS contract from a non-federal entity. He also stated it may not be possible for a non-federal signatory to take over the USGS contract and have the USACE contribute funds.
* The PST will send out the list of Program Portal funding options for FPC review.
* An FPC member noted that USGS should be a part of the funding discussion as they can inform us on how they can accept funds.
  + Debbie L. stated her understanding from previous discussions was USGS could only accept funds from public entities. The PST will discuss this topic at an upcoming meeting with USGS.
* The USACE will include Program Portal funding in the FY23 work plan.
* **Action Item**: PST will send list of options for Program Portal funding to the FPC for review
* **Action Item**: FPC will review the options for Program Portal funding
* **Action Item**: PST will clarify Program Portal funding options with the USGS
* **Action Item**: USACE will include the Program Portal in the FY23 Work Plan

# Announcements:

* The National Conference on Ecosystem Restoration will be in Albuquerque in 2024, and the EC is supportive of submitting a session proposal. Anyone who has a session idea should reach out to the PST. Session proposals are due May 19, 2023.

**Meeting Participants**

**FPC Representative Organization**

Anne Marken, Non-Federal Co-Chair Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District

Danielle Galloway, Federal Co-Chair U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Brittney Erdmann Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District

Cetan Christensen Albuquerque Bernalillo County Water Utility Authority

Dustin Chavez-Davis City of Albuquerque, Open Space Division

Grace Haggerty New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission

Kim Eichhorst Bosque Ecosystem Monitoring Program

Lynette Giesen U.S. Bureau of Reclamation

Mark Kelly Albuquerque Bernalillo County Water Utility Authority

Quantina Martine Audubon Southwest

Ryan Gronewold U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Thomas Turner University of New Mexico

Virginia Seamster New Mexico Department of Game and Fish

**Support Organization**

Debbie Lee Program Support Team

Michelle Tuineau Program Support Team