

Executive Committee Meeting  
*September 28, 2023*

Meeting Materials:

[Agenda](#)

[Minutes](#)

[Draft Revised SAMC charter \[read-ahead, draft\]](#)

[Draft Revised 2023 MRGESCP Work Plan \[read-ahead, spreadsheet, draft\]](#)

[FPC Memo on Portal Funding Options \[read-ahead\]](#)

[VSWCD membership request letter \[read-ahead\]](#)

[Climate Futures Planning Workshop Update \[presentation\]](#)

[Introducing VSWCD and the Whitfield Complex \[presentation\]](#)

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Executive Committee Meeting  
September 28, 2023

*See the following meeting material on the page below:*

Agenda



# Middle Rio Grande Endangered Species Collaborative Program

Est. 2000

## Executive Committee (EC) Meeting Agenda

September 28, 2023, 1:00 – 4:00 PM MT

**Location:** Surface Water Treatment Plant  
6000 Alexander Blvd NE, Albuquerque, NM 87107

Zoom Log-In:

<https://west-inc.zoom.us/j/8983593120?pwd=bU54V3NGeG93bXVISlJFcElzcE9wZz09>

Call-In: +1-669-900-6833

Meeting ID: 898-359-3120; Passcode: 1251

### Meeting Objectives:

- Hear an update on Middle Rio Grande Endangered Species Collaborative Program (MRGESCP) activities.
- Discuss an update on the 2023 Work Plan.
- Discuss funding options for the Program Portal.
- Hear an update on the October 24-25, 2023 Climate Futures Planning Workshop.
- Hear an update on planning for the December 2023 Science Symposium.
- Hear a presentation from Valencia Soil and Water Conservation District (VSWCD).
- Discuss the membership application from VSWCD.

1:00 – 1:10	<b>Welcome, Introductions, Agenda Review</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Meeting ground rules</li><li>• 2022 Annual Report handout</li><li>✓ <b>Decision:</b> Approval of September 28, 2023 EC meeting agenda</li></ul>	Mark Kelly, Non-federal Co-chair
1:10 – 1:15	<b>June 2023 Meeting Summary</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Action items review</li><li>✓ <b>Decision:</b> Approval of June 29, 2023 EC meeting minutes</li></ul> Read-ahead: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Draft June 29, 2023 EC Meeting Minutes</li></ul>	EC Co-chairs
1:15 – 1:35	<b>Program Support Team (PST) Update</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Science and Adaptive Management Committee (SAMC) update<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Status of multi-year plan review</li><li>○ Overview of new SAMC leadership on various topics</li><li>○ Proposed revision to SAMC charter to reflect SAMC member roles on Science and Technical Ad Hoc Groups</li></ul></li><li>• Program Portal<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Forthcoming new look</li><li>○ Update to posting datasets</li></ul></li><li>• Future field trip to Los Lunas Plant Materials Center</li><li>• Public outreach events</li><li>• Recent letters of support</li><li>✓ <b>Decision:</b> Approval of revised SAMC charter</li><li>➤ <b>Action Item:</b> Signatories provide topics of interest related to the Plant Materials Center</li><li>➤ <b>Action Item:</b> Signatories provide PST any materials for public outreach events</li></ul>	Debbie Lee & Catherine Murphy, PST

	Read-ahead:	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Draft revised SAMC charter	
1:35 – 1:50	<b>2023 MRGESCP Work Plan Update and Revisions</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Update on 2023 progress</li> <li>• Proposed revisions</li> </ul>	<i>Debbie Lee &amp; Catherine Murphy, PST</i>
	✓ <b>Decision:</b> Approval of revised 2023 Work Plan	
	Read-ahead:	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Draft Revised 2023 MRGESCP Work Plan	
1:50 – 2:10	<b>Program Portal Funding Options</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Memo from the Fiscal Planning Committee (FPC) on Portal funding options</li> <li>• Discussion of funding options</li> </ul>	<i>Debbie Lee, PST</i>
	➤ <b>Action Item:</b> Legal review of Program Portal funding options	
	Read-ahead:	
	<input type="checkbox"/> FPC Memo on Portal Funding Options	
2:10 – 2:25	<b>Climate Futures Planning Workshop Update</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Report out from Whitfield Wildlife Conservation Area field trip</li> <li>• Update on workshop planning</li> <li>• Anticipated workshop outcomes and next steps</li> </ul>	<i>Catherine Murphy, PST</i>
	➤ <b>Action Item:</b> Register for the Climate Futures Planning Workshop	
2:25 – 2:35	<b>2023 Science Symposium</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Theme: “Scaling Up: Adapting Species Management for a Changing Ecosystem”</li> <li>• Location and date</li> <li>• Call for abstracts</li> <li>• Update from small planning group</li> </ul>	<i>Debbie Lee, PST</i>
	➤ <b>Action Item:</b> Register for the 2023 Science Symposium	
	➤ <b>Action Item:</b> EC members encourage technical experts to submit abstracts	
2:35 – 2:45	<b>Break</b>	
2:45 – 3:40	<b>New Membership Request: Valencia Soil and Water Conservation District</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presentation on VSWCD</li> <li>• Discussion with VSWCD staff</li> <li>• Membership approval process</li> </ul>	<i>Andrew Hautzinger, VSWCD Facilitated discussion</i>
	➤ <b>Action Item:</b> Include formal vote on VSWCD membership application on agenda for next EC meeting	
	Read-ahead:	
	<input type="checkbox"/> VSWCD membership request letter	
3:40 – 3:50	<b>Public Comment and Announcements</b>	
3:50 – 4 :00	<b>Meeting Summary and Action Items Review</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <b>Next EC Meeting:</b> December 2023/January 2024</li> </ul>	<i>Debbie Lee, PST Mark Kelly, Co-chair</i>
	➤ <b>Action Item:</b> PST will reschedule the December 2023 EC meeting	
4:00	<b>Adjourn</b>	

[Link to full Meeting Materials List](#)

Executive Committee Meeting  
September 28, 2023

*See the following meeting material on the page below:*

Minutes



# Middle Rio Grande Endangered Species Collaborative Program

Est. 2000

## Executive Committee (EC) Meeting Minutes

**September 28, 2023; 1:00 PM–4:00 PM**

**Location:** Surface Water Treatment Plant, 6000 Alexander Blvd NE, Albuquerque, NM 87107

**Zoom Log-In:**

<https://west-inc.zoom.us/j/8983593120?pwd=bU54V3NGeG93bXVlSlJFcElzcE9wZz09>

Call-In: +1-669-900-6833

Meeting ID: 898-359-3120; Passcode: 1251

**Decisions:**

- ✓ Approval of the September 28, 2023 EC meeting agenda
- ✓ Approval of the June 29, 2023 EC meeting minutes
- ✓ Approval of revised Science and Adaptive Management Committee (SAMC) charter allowing SAMC members to lead Science & Technical Ad Hoc Groups
- ✓ Approval of revised 2023 Middle Rio Grande Endangered Species Collaborative Program (MRGESCP) Work Plan

**Announcements:**

- ❖ Valencia Soil & Water Conservation District (VSWCD) submitted an application to join the MRGESCP. Andrew Hautzinger, VSWCD District Director, presented on the VSWCD at the September 28, 2023 EC meeting. The EC will vote on letting the VSWCD join the MRGESCP at the next meeting in December 2023/January 2024.
- ❖ City of Albuquerque (CoA), Open Space Division, has hired Joanna Strange as a Biologist.
- ❖ Audubon Southwest has hired Tucker Davidson as a Senior Water Resource Associate.
- ❖ New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission (NMISC) is releasing water out of Cochiti Reservoir starting November 15, 2023. Two thousand cubic acre-feet per second plus Prior & Paramount (P&P) water will be released until the end of the year. New Mexico will likely still be in Rio Grande Compact debit by the end of the year.

**Action Items:**

WHO	ACTION ITEM	BY WHEN
Program Support Team (PST)	Include calls to participate in outreach events on behalf of the MRGESCP in the weekly announcement emails	Ongoing
Signatory members	Provide the PST any signatory materials to distribute during public outreach events	10/6/2023
Non-federal signatory members	Volunteer to participate in the Habitat Restoration Compendium Ad Hoc Group	10/13/2023
Signatory members	Contact Michelle Tuineau ( <a href="mailto:mtuineau@west-inc.com">mtuineau@west-inc.com</a> ) to volunteer to provide feedback on the Program Portal redesign	10/13/2023
All	Register for the Climate Futures Planning Workshop	10/13/2023

PST	Finalize location of the 2023 Science Symposium and open registration	10/13/2023
EC representatives	Encourage technical experts to submit abstracts for the 2023 Science Symposium	10/27/2023
EC representatives	Request your Public Affairs Officers (PAOs) and Public Information Officers (PIOs) contact the PST to begin coordinating on efforts	10/31/2023
Signatory members	Provide topics of interest to discuss on the November field trip to the Plant Materials Center	10/31/2023
PST	Work with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and the U.S. Geological Survey to estimate future costs of the Program Portal	10/31/2023
Ryan Gronewold	Determine the feasibility of USACE accepting pass-through funding to fund the Program Portal contract, and clarify from which entities	10/31/2023
PST	Reschedule the December EC meeting	10/31/2023
PST	Coordinate with Rick Strait to plan a field trip to the Plant Materials Center in November	November 2023
All	Register for the 2023 Science Symposium	November 2023
PST & EC Co-Chairs	Include a formal vote on the VSWCD membership application at the next EC meeting	December 2023/January 2024

**Next Meeting:** January 18, 2024; 1:00 – 4:00 PM

## Meeting Minutes

### Welcome, Introductions, Agenda Review

The Non-Federal Co-chair, Mark Kelly, Albuquerque Bernalillo County Water Utility Authority (ABCWUA), opened the meeting, led introductions, and reviewed the September 28, 2023 meeting agenda. Hard copies of the 2022 Annual Report were made available.

- ✓ **Decision:** Approval of the September 28, 2023 EC meeting agenda

### June 2023 Meeting Summary

The PST reviewed the June 29, 2023 meeting minutes and action items. Summary updates for action items are below:

- The PST is subscribed to Senator Heinrich’s funding newsletter and will include additional funding opportunities in Friday email announcements.
- The Climate Futures Planning Workshop will be held October 24-25, 2023 at the Tamaya Wellness Center.
- The Science Symposium planning group is scheduled to meet.
- There were volunteers to assist with the paper on the MRGESCP’s transition to adaptive management.
- Additional funding opportunities were provided to add to the Funding Matrix. A draft Funding Matrix is on the Program Portal.
- The PST is refining the outline for the paper on the MRGESCP’s transition to adaptive management.
- Some folks have been using the Science and Adaptive Management Information System (SAMIS). For any help, contact the PST.
- There was a field trip to the Whitfield Wildlife Conservation Area.
- The outcomes of the climate planning poll were posted in the August newsletter.
- The PST had one-on-ones with most signatories.
- The PST will consider adaptive management themes for the annual work plan and environmental justice and socioeconomic impacts where appropriate.

The EC approved the June 29, 30, 2023 EC meeting minutes.

- ✓ **Decision:** Approval of the June 29, 2023 EC meeting minutes

### Program Support Team Update

The PST presented updates on MRGESCP activities. Summary updates are below:

#### ***Science and Adaptive Management Committee (SAMC) Update:***

- The SAMC agreed to change its quarterly meeting structure, moving from 4 hours to a 2-hour business meeting format. The SAMC will focus on finalizing memos and decision making.
- The Multi-Year Plan is made up of items prioritized during the Collaboratory discussions. SAMC revisions have been incorporated for final review. The Multi-Year Plan will be reformatted for integration into the Long-Term Plan for Science and Adaptive Management (Long-Term Plan).
- SAMC members chose topics of interest to lead:
  - Climate futures planning – Megan Friggens



- Vegetated islands and bars deliverables (i.e., glossary, conceptual model, data gaps) – Ari Posner and Dave Moore
- Habitat restoration ad hoc groups – Ondrea Hummel and Meaghan Conway
- RGSM hypotheses and application of models – Mick Porter, Alison Hutson, and Ara Winter
- Information and Data Quality Standards Ad Hoc – Ara Winter and Matt Wunder
- Fiscal Planning Committee (FPC)/SAMC coordination and Long-Term Plan development – Aubrey Harris and Ryan Gronewold
- The SAMC proposes a revision to the SAMC charter to reflect SAMC member roles on Science & Technical Ad Hoc Groups. The SAMC proposes removing the charter language stipulating that SAMC members could not serve as ad hoc group leads.

***Program Portal Update:***

The PST is helping U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) redesign the Program Portal and will reach out to folks to get feedback before a full rollout. Any signatory members interested in reviewing the Program Portal redesign should contact the PST.

The PST has also been working to update datasets posted to the Program Portal, which is public facing. The PST must reformat data provided by the funding agencies in order to upload the datasets to the mapper on the Portal. This process introduces the opportunity for error and allows for ambiguity if a user has a question about the data. This issue would be mitigated by posting the datasets exactly as they are provided. Contact information, associated reports, and more complete metadata will also be linked, in accordance with guidance determined by the Information and Data Quality Standards Ad Hoc Group.

The change affects the mapper and the MRGESCP should revisit a discussion on the purpose and potential applications of data served on the Portal. The mapper should be tailored to meet the needs of the MRGESCP and its signatories. For instance, people have said they want to be in the field and be able to see monitoring sites (e.g., BEMP, Rio Grande silvery minnow), which would require additional data visualization. There has been interest in additional data visualization, but there needs to be more conversation of what exactly people want to see.

***Future field trip to Los Lunas Plant Materials Center:***

- The Habitat Restoration (HR) Coordination Group will now hold its field trips in May and November, which aligns with better weather.
- The PST will coordinate with Rick Strait on a field trip to the Los Lunas Plant Materials Center in November.
- The PST began compiling topics of interest for discussion on the field trip:
  - Planting techniques for use in riparian restoration in the Southwest (specific guidance/resources)
  - Riparian seeding techniques and weed control
  - Soil erosion control
  - Improvement of soil quality
  - Stabilization of roadsides, disturbed areas and steep slope sites
  - Reclamation of abandoned cropland
  - Food sources and habitat for wildlife
  - Fire and climate resistance

***Public outreach events:***

- The PST tabled at the Santa Ana Environmental Fair.
- The PST will table at the Fall Farm Festival on October 21, 2023.
  - Signatories were asked to provide materials for outreach events.
- U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) has a new public affairs specialist named Pacifica Casares-Chehy, who could get involved in outreach events.
- The PST will include calls for outreach volunteers in the Friday email announcements.
- Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District (MRGCD), ABCWUA, and USACE also have public affairs specialists who can contribute to outreach/communication efforts.
- The signatories will ask their public affairs specialists to reach out to the PST.
- Western Collaborative Conservation Network (WCCN) is interested in collaborating with the MRGESCP. The MRGESCP was asked to give a seminar or present at the WCCN's annual conference to tell the story of the MRGESCP's transition and success.
  - Mark K. commented that it was a good idea to learn from others.
  - Presenting at the National Conference on Ecosystem Restoration (NCER) was cost prohibitive, and the EC agreed developing a paper that told the story of the MRGESCP was a good alternative. Participating in the WCCN is an additional opportunity to tell the MRGESCP's story.
  - The WCCN had generally positive feedback in discussions about the work of the MRGESCP. The WCCN previously did not know the MRGESCP existed and are interested in learning more.

**Recent letters of support:**

Two MRGESCP letters of support went out last month: one at the request of Bosque Ecosystem Monitoring Program (BEMP) and one at the request of Valencia Soil and Water Conservation District. Both letters were in support of a project proposal that went to the Climate Adaptation Science Center's grant process. The final versions of the letters were sent to the EC via email.

- ✓ **Decision:** Approval of revised SAMC charter allowing SAMC members to lead Science & Technical Ad Hoc Groups
- **Action Item:** PST will include calls to participate in outreach events on behalf of the MRGESCP in the weekly announcement emails
- **Action Item:** Signatory members will provide the PST any signatory materials to distribute during public outreach events
- **Action Item:** Signatory members will contact Michelle Tuineau ([mtuineau@west-inc.com](mailto:mtuineau@west-inc.com)) to volunteer to provide feedback on the Program Portal redesign
- **Action Item:** EC representatives will request your PAOs and PIOs contact the PST to begin coordinating on efforts
- **Action Item:** Signatory members will provide topics of interest to discuss on the November field trip to the Plant Materials Center
- **Action Item:** PST will Coordinate with Rick Strait to plan a field trip to the Plant Materials Center in November

**2023 MRGESCP Work Plan Update and Revisions**

The PST presented an update on the 2023 MRGESCP Work Plan. Summary updates are as follows:

- Task 1.1 Program Portal
  - The Program Portal timeline was extended through November 2023. The task of uploading new datasets on the Program Portal was removed.

- The timeline for discussing a plan for continuing Program Portal funding was extended through the end of the year.
- Task 1.4 Science Evaluation
  - The Science Evaluation task was altered to include a second phase that covers the SAMC’s review of the Multi-Year Plan. The SAMC will finalize a memo to the EC at the November meeting.
- Task 2.2 Collaborative Seminars
  - The Collaborative Seminar task was revised to reflect the actual schedule of seminars. While the MRGESCP has aimed for one per quarter, they have been many more and all well attended.
    - There were 9 so far in 2023.
- Task 3.1 Information and Data Quality Standards Ad Hoc Group
  - The timeline for the Information and Data Quality Standards Ad Hoc Group was revised to reflect the updated charge.
- Task 3.3 Project Evaluation Criteria
  - The Project Evaluation Criteria timeline was extended and continues under the leadership of Aubrey Harris on the SAMC.
- Task 3.4 Conceptual Models
  - The timelines for the Rio Grande silvery minnow (RGSM) conceptual ecological model (CEM) and peer review of the RGSM CEM were extended. Draft New Mexico meadow jumping mouse and Pecos sunflower conceptual models were developed and will be rolled out at the Climate Futures Planning Workshop.
- Task 3.6 Data Visualization
  - The Program Portal data visualization task was removed. If there is a specific need for data visualization, the task will be revisited. The task needs a specific purpose.
- Task 4.1 RGSM Hypotheses Development Ad Hoc Group
  - A second phase was added for the RGSM Hypotheses Development Ad Hoc Group. The group may have additional tasks as determined by the SAMC.
  - Mick Porter, Alison Hutson, and Ara Winter are SAMC leads for this task.
- Task 4.2 Recommendations for Drying
  - Public messaging for the drying recommendations is on hold until the drying report is finalized. The task of evaluating the effectiveness of the drying response plan was contingent on drying in the Angostura Reach, which did not occur.
- Task 4.3 Restoration Guidance Ad Hoc Groups
  - Tasks for the habitat restoration guidance ad hoc groups were broken up and given timelines to reflect workflow.
  - Ondrea Hummel and Meaghan Conway are SAMC leads for these tasks.
  - A lot of work has been done to inform the Society for Ecological Restoration (SER) Recovery Wheel and Compendium Ad Hoc Groups.
  - There were volunteers for both groups – six (6) for the SER Recovery Wheel Ad Hoc Group and four (4) for the Compendium Ad Hoc Group. The Compendium Ad Hoc Group volunteers are all from federal agencies. Non-federal folks were encouraged to volunteer.
    - Michael Scialdone, Pueblo of Sandia, and Shannon Weld, NMISC, were both recommended.
- Task 4.4 Vegetated Islands and Bank-Attached Bars
  - The glossary is in SAMC review and refinement; the timeline was extended for review.

- The conceptual model is in the early stages of development and the timeline was extended.
- ✓ **Decision:** Approval of revised 2023 MRGESCP Work Plan
- **Action Item:** Non-federal signatory members will volunteer to participate in the Habitat Restoration Compendium Ad Hoc Group

### **Program Portal Funding Options**

The PST presented options for Program Portal funding, provided in a memo from the FPC. Summary updates are below:

- No legal folks were able to attend the FPC meeting to discuss Program Portal funding option.
- The FPC prepared a memo with available options to the EC for next steps.
- USACE can fund the Program Portal through the end of 2024.
- Base funding for the Program Portal with no development is approximately \$72,000 annually.
- Options:
  - Signatories provide pass-through funding to USACE to fund USGS to continue managing the Program Portal.
    - USACE may not be willing to accept pass-through funding or be limited on the signatories they can accept funds from. It is easier for USACE to accept funds from federal agencies.
  - Another signatory takes on the USGS contract.
    - Several signatories have indicated the base cost is too much to take on. USGS may have limitations on who they can contract with.
  - Signatories pool money to fund the Portal with one signatory holding the contract.
    - This is similar to the first option, but USACE would not hold the contract.
    - It was previously determined that the MRGESCP could not pool funds but it would need to be determined if it could do so with a purpose, such as the Program Portal.
  - Signatories rotate funding the Program Portal.
    - There are many logistical issues and USGS is not in favor of this option.
- The FPC recommends the EC present the top options to legal experts.
  - ABCWUA and MRGCD can reach out to their procurement officers to be a part of the legal expert review. The Department of Interior (DOI) solicitor who previously worked with the MRGESCP left her position and will no longer be a part of legal expert review.
- Mark K. noted that ABCWUA had funded the Program Portal in the past and asked why the cost had increased.
  - Part of the reason is hosting and software fees increased.
- Mark K. suggested eliminating the fourth option.
- EC representatives asked who USGS can contract with.
  - USGS can contract with entities with a public interest. That does not appear to limit many signatories.
- Ryan Gronewold, USACE, will determine if pass-through funding is possible.
- EC representatives asked if the base price is stable.
  - Price is likely to go up over time, but USGS and USACE may have more insight on the increase.
- Grace H. noted that NMISC cannot fund beyond a year due to uncertainties in their funding. Grace H. She stated that option 1, pass-through funding, was the best option.

- The EC representatives are in favor option 1 unless USACE determines it is not be feasible.
- **Action Item:** PST will work with the USACE and the U.S. Geological Survey to estimate future costs of the Program Portal
- **Action Item:** Ryan Gronewold will determine the feasibility of USACE accepting pass-through funding to fund the Program Portal contract, and clarify from which entities

### **Climate Futures Planning Workshop Update**

The PST presented an update on the Climate Future Planning Workshop. Summary updates are below:

- The event is planned for October 24-25, 2023 at the Tamaya Wellness Center. If the government shuts down and remains shut down until October 13, 2023, the event will be rescheduled for after the new year.
- Recap of field trip to Whitfield Wildlife Conservation Area (Whitfield):
  - The excavated pond near the Visitor Center is a visible indicator of depth to groundwater.
  - The monitoring wells throughout the property have 13 years of monthly groundwater data.
  - The moist soil units serve as bird habitat.
  - There has been successful native grass (e.g., scratch grass and yerba mansa) establishment post-fire with very little active management.
  - A turkey restoration area offers lots of opportunities for collaboration and data collection to address questions about ecosystem function.
  - The cottonwood gallery was affected by fire damage.
    - The 100-year-old “Owl Tree” was lost in the Big Hole Fire.
  - The site has many host plants and pollinator habitats.
- The field trip is a lead-in to the Climate Future Planning Workshop. The objective of the workshop is to have participants connect climate model forecasts to likely impacts to listed species through a step-wise approach:
  - Step 1: Review projected changes to hydrological variables based on a climate model forecasts (provided by an online tool).
  - Step 2: Come up with likely changes to ecosystem functions.
  - Step 3: Determine likely changes to species habitats and the impact on listed species.
  - Step 4: Come up with research needs, recommendations, and partnership opportunities.
    - Folks can take outcomes and move them to ad hoc groups, develop summaries, plan field trips, etc. which feeds into the process of adaptive management.
- As a reminder, Whitfield is the epicenter of a 10-km square, which will be the focus of the workshop. Whitfield can be used as a potential testing site for recommendations and strategies that come out of the workshop.
  - Students have also expressed interest in taking on projects coming out of the MRGESCP.
- Jim Wilber, Reclamation, asked if the projected changes to hydrological variables were based on models or subjective.
  - The tool used to develop the climate model forecasts, which is publicly available from the University of California Merced, also develops resulting hydrological variable projections. There is uncertainty related to both the model forecasts and hydrological variable projections, but it gives workshop participants a starting point for considering climate futures.

- There was a suggestion at the previous EC meeting to pull in data from the Central Gage.
    - The most controversial hydrological variable has been streamflow. The PST will present the natural streamflow as well as the median hydrograph (indicating the regulated flow) at the workshop.
  - The workshop includes activities referenced in the Multi-Year Plan and all are encouraged to attend.
  - Grace Haggerty, NMISC, noted that Whitfield is not directly on the river and there are no RGSM present. She asked whether there would be opportunities to talk about activities that would take place outside of Whitfield, including riverine areas.
    - Whitfield is one part of the 10-km square, which is the focus of the workshop. The 10-km square includes riverine areas. There is a BEMP monitoring site and RGSM monitoring site in the 10-km square.
    - The workshop is a thought exercise, but there is a potential opportunity to work directly with Whitfield on non-channel activities. The thought exercise will also include riverine areas.
  - The small planning group will meet in early October to finalize planning for the workshop.
- **Action Item:** All will register for the Climate Futures Planning Workshop

### **2023 Science Symposium**

The PST presented on the proposed 2023 Science Symposium. Summary points are below:

- Becky Bixby (University of New Mexico), Cetan Christensen (ABCWUA), Matt Leister (BEMP), Hira Walker (USACE), Lynette Giesen (Reclamation), and Shannon Weld (NMISC) are on the small planning group.
  - The theme is “Scaling Up: Adapting Species Management for a Changing Ecosystem.”
  - The recommended topics for presentations, provided on the call for abstracts, are not limiting. Other topics are welcome.
    - There are some slated presenters already.
  - The symposium will tentatively be held on December 6-7, 2023 at the Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute (SIPI). The location has bosque access, an auditorium, a conference room, and an atrium room. There is no fee to use the facility.
  - The small planning group is seeking to provide more opportunities for students and is planning an activity to foster student and professional interactions.
    - SIPI students are encouraged to get involved in the symposium.
- **Action Item:** PST will finalize location of the 2023 Science Symposium and open registration
- **Action Item:** EC representatives will encourage technical experts to submit abstracts for the 2023 Science Symposium
- **Action Item:** All will register for the 2023 Science Symposium

### **New Membership Request: Valencia Soil and Water Conservation District (VSWCD)**

Andrew Hautzinger, VSWCD District Director, presented on VSWCD and its membership application to the MRGESCP. VSWCD submitted an application letter to the MRGESCP. Andrew H. was formerly a USFWS fish hydrologist and chief of water resources.

Andrew H. spoke about the Big Hole Fire, which burned a dozen ancient cottonwood trees on the Whitfield Complex and is considered the largest fire in Valencia County. VSWCD focuses on accessible conservation with an educational component. Andrew has a staff of three (3). VSWCD is one (1) of 47 soil and water conservation districts. VSWCD manages 1.4 million acres, which includes all of Isleta, most of Laguna, important range lands, and lots of tributary lands that feed into the main valley.

Andrew H. sees a lot of overlap in interests between VSWCD and the MRGESCP. Both are interested in effective adaptive management informed by data as well as climate future planning. MRGESCP needs space to carry out adaptive management and the VSWCD is open to being a living laboratory. The Whitfield Complex includes the Stacy, Whitfield, and Rio Abajo Conservation Area (RACA) units. The Whitfield Complex is the premier wildlife viewing location in Valencia County. Through its environmental education program, the VSWCD conducts approximately 3,200 student-educator interactions annually with a stress on land stewardship both in schools and at Whitfield.

Since the Big Hole Fire, VSWCD has been seeking funding and partnerships on post-fire activities. VSWCD held a climate change workshop in April 2023. The workshop was an opportunity for adaptive management. VSWCD provided a plant matrix manual and summary report for the event.

VSWCD is interested in restoration techniques and designs for hotter/dryer weather and strategies to reduce the severity of wildfires.

The EC asked Andrew the following questions:

- Jim W. asked about VSWCD staffing and who would be the point of contact for the MRGESCP. Jim W. noted the limited staff (3) at VSWCD.
  - Andrew H. stated he would be the primary contact. The VSWCD Board is in full support of VSWCD participation in the MRGESCP. Andrew and the Board believe VSWCD and MRGESCP can help each other.
- Jennifer Davis, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, asked for more information on the connection between VSWCD and listed species. Fire protection efforts at VSWCD (e.g., understory thinning) and southwestern willow flycatcher habitat are opposed. It's important to discuss that. Andrew spoke on some potential at VSWCD to support listed species, and Jennifer D. would like to explore that more.
  - Andrew H. would like to work together on listed species and noted that other states seem to address Endangered Species Act (ESA) issues better. Collaboration can help.
- Grace H. noted the low representation of the Isleta Reach on the EC. She remarked on VSWCD's interest in engaging and strong educational component. She asked what else the MRGESCP could bring to the VSWCD's reach of the Rio Grande.
  - VSWCD can expand its content for students with the help of the MRGESCP and carry out pilot studies informed by the MRGESCP. VSWCD could also use the help of the MRGESCP to complete its plant matrix and identify holes in knowledge to inform research.
- Jim W. asked about the farmer or agricultural constituents of the VSWCD.
  - There are currently no farmers on the VSWCD Board. There will be an election in November and VSWCD is hoping to replace that voice.
  - VSWCD currently does not have demographic information on its constituents but has collected it in the past.

- **Action Item:** PST & EC Co-Chairs will include a formal vote on the VSWCD membership application at the next EC meeting

## Announcements

- ❖ CoA, Open Space Division, has hired Joanna Strange as a Biologist.
  - ❖ Audubon Southwest has hired Tucker Davidson as a Senior Water Resource Associate.
  - ❖ NMISC is releasing water out of Cochiti Reservoir starting November 15, 2023. Two thousand cubic acre-feet per second plus P&P water will be released until the end of the year. New Mexico will likely still be in Rio Grande Compact debit by the end of the year.
- **Action Item:** PST will reschedule the December EC meeting



## Meeting Participants

<b>EC Representative</b>	<b>Organization</b>
Mark Kelly, Non-Federal Co-Chair	Albuquerque Bernalillo County Water Utility Authority
Paul Tashjian	Audubon Southwest
Kim Eichhorst	Bosque Ecosystem Monitoring Program
Rick Carpenter	Buckman Direct Diversion
Dustin Chavez-Davis (alternate representative)	City of Albuquerque, Open Space Division
Anne Marken	Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District
Matthew Wunder	New Mexico Department of Game and Fish
Grace Haggerty	New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission
Andrew Sweetman	Pueblo of Isleta
Michael Scialdone	Pueblo of Sandia
Nathan Schroeder (alternate representative)	Pueblo of Santa Ana
Jim Wilber	U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
Thomas Turner	University of New Mexico
Lt Commander Jerre Hansbrough	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Jennifer Davis (alternate representative)	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Organization</b>
Andrew Hautzinger	Valencia Soil & Water Conservation District
Ara Winter	Bosque Ecosystem Monitoring Program
Cetan Christensen	Albuquerque Bernalillo County Water Utility Authority
Hira Walker	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Luke Pierpont	Buckman Direct Diversion
Lynette Giesen	U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
Ryan Gronewold	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Samuel Coulter	University of New Mexico
Trevor Stevens	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

<b>Support</b>	<b>Organization</b>
Debbie Lee	Program Support Team
Catherine Murphy	Program Support Team
Michelle Tuineau	Program Support Team
Angela Medina Garcia	Program Support Team
Zoë Rossman	Program Support Team

[Link to full Meeting Materials List](#)

Executive Committee Meeting  
September 28, 2023

*See the following meeting material on the page below:*

Draft Revised SAMC charter [read-ahead, draft]



# Middle Rio Grande Endangered Species Collaborative Program

*Est. 2000*

## **Middle Rio Grande Endangered Species Collaborative Program Science and Adaptive Management Committee Charter**

*Approved by the Executive Committee on October 27, 2020*

*Revised to align with the By-Laws Adopted on July 28, 2021*

*Revised to reflect change to SAMC membership approved on March 30, 2023*

*Revision approved by the Executive Committee on June 29, 2023*

### **I. Overview**

The Middle Rio Grande Endangered Species Collaborative Program (MRGESCP) By-Laws state that the Executive Committee (EC) may establish committees and ad hoc groups to carry out activities that further the MRGESCP's mission and goals. Upon approval of this charter, the EC establishes the Science and Adaptive Management Committee (SAMC).

The SAMC will operate under defined schedules, objectives, and tasks established in coordination with the EC. Methods for accomplishing established activities will be identified by the SAMC. The science coordination lead and program coordination lead will coordinate with the SAMC to ensure that objectives and work products are clearly defined, assigned tasks are completed, and schedules are met.

The SAMC is a non-decision-making body. It will synthesize scientific findings, translate results into recommendations, cite appropriate evidence, and include rationale for any supported differences of opinion within the MRGESCP. Products of the SAMC will be delivered to the EC for approval and next steps. The EC continues to hold decision-making authority for the MRGESCP.

### **II. SAMC Purpose**

The SAMC will coordinate the implementation of MRGESCP-related science initiatives and signatory efforts by defining and delegating tasks to Science & Technical (S&T) Ad Hoc Groups; compiling results from scientific studies, modeling, and monitoring efforts; and translating scientific findings into recommendations for best management practices in the Middle Rio Grande.

### **III. Responsibilities**

The SAMC will be directed by the EC to implement the MRGESCP's Science & Adaptive Management (S&AM) Plan and Long-Term Plan (LTP). SAMC responsibilities include:

- Coordinating with the science coordination lead and other PST staff to ensure the completion of MRGESCP-related science initiatives
- Convening and coordinating S&T Ad Hoc Groups to complete tasks in support of the S&AM Plan

- Reviewing results from MRGESCP-related studies, models, and monitoring activities and translating findings into management recommendations
- Working with the Fiscal Planning Committee (FPC) to support EC-recommended activities (e.g., research, restoration, modeling)
- Reporting to the EC the progress of S&AM Plan implementation, including a summary of updates to MRGESCP science objectives and strategies, and modifications to conceptual ecological models, with associated scientific justifications
- Providing updates at each EC meeting, which includes:
  - Discussing proposed work and the status of in-progress work products
  - Informing the EC of the formation of S&T Ad Hoc Groups with assigned tasks and deadlines
  - Informing the EC of the disbanding of S&T Ad Hoc Groups
  - Proposing implementation schedules for MRGESCP science and adaptive management initiatives for EC approval
  - Suggesting amendments to the S&AM Plan
  - Documenting the range of SAMC opinions with associated scientific justifications for EC review and consideration of next steps
  - Providing evidence-based recommendations for scientific research and management alternatives
  - Recommending research questions for independent peer review, as needed

#### **IV. Membership**

The Science and Adaptive Management Committee shall consist of eight-to-ten (8-10) subject matter expert members appointed by the Executive Committee. These positions will include:

- Four (4) specified subject matter experts with the following areas of expertise:
  1. Aquatic ecology
  2. Terrestrial ecology
  3. Ecosystem function
  4. Hydrology
- Four-to-six (4-6) flexible subject matter experts selected based on science-related needs, as determined by the Executive Committee. The Science and Adaptive Management Committee may provide input on which areas of expertise would benefit the group, but the final decision will be made by the Executive Committee.

An individual may not hold more than one position on the SAMC at one time.

One (1) Executive Committee member shall serve in an *ex-officio* advisory capacity to the Science and Adaptive Management Committee. This position will not count towards the eight-to-ten (8-10)-count membership and will not participate as a subject matter expert.

The Science and Adaptive Management Committee will be chaired by the science coordination lead and supported by the Program Support Team (Article 10). Neither the science coordination lead nor members of the Program Support Team will count towards the eight-to-ten (8-10)-count membership.

**a. Application Process**

The EC, in coordination with the science coordination lead and program coordination lead, will oversee and administer the application process. Interested individuals shall submit a formal application to the science coordination lead. Individuals may apply for more than one SAMC position and must submit one application per position. Applications will be accepted from experts both internal and external to the MRGESCP.

The EC will review, or delegate review of, submitted applications and each EC representative will cast one vote per SAMC position no later than the last EC meeting of the calendar year. The EC will nominate EC members for the *ex-officio* position and vote to fill the position. The EC has final decision-making authority on SAMC membership.

**b. Membership Terms**

SAMC members shall be appointed by the EC for staggered two (2)-year terms. Sitting SAMC members may apply for one (1)-year term limit extensions. Individuals may serve on the SAMC for no more than four (4) consecutive years, except as authorized by the EC.

**c. Membership Vacancies**

If a vacancy on the SAMC occurs mid-term, it will remain open unless the EC, in coordination with the SAMC, determines a need to fill the position. Upon a determination, the EC may appoint an individual for the remainder of the term.

**V. Roles**

The eight-to-ten (8-10) subject matter expert members will:

- Be chosen based on their technical qualifications and will serve as subject matter experts in their respective fields
- Not represent a signatory or organization as members of the SAMC
- Safeguard and support the scientific rigor of MRGESCP investigations and initiatives

The EC *ex-officio* position will:

- Serve in an advisory capacity to the SAMC on policy
- Provide the larger MRGESCP perspective
- Ensure topics and recommendations are within the scope decided by the EC
- Provide direction for completion of summary documents to the EC

The facilitator (science coordination lead) will:

- Coordinate meetings
- Facilitate the SAMC administrative functions, including:

- Drafting S&T Ad Hoc Group charges
- Coordinating with the FPC, S&T Ad Hoc Groups, and any independent peer reviewers
- Relaying updates and recommendations to the EC

## **VI. SAMC Meeting Operations**

The SAMC will hold meetings as necessary to conduct its business. At a minimum, the SAMC shall meet once each annual quarter, and may meet more frequently, as needed. Meetings will be facilitated by the science coordination lead. Formal agendas will be drafted for review and approval at each meeting. The PST will announce SAMC meetings on the Program Portal event calendar and will include draft agendas and read-aheads for download. Meeting agendas and read-aheads will be made available to SAMC members no later than seven (7) calendar days in advance of the meeting date, with the exception of materials under nondisclosure or confidentiality agreements, materials pertaining to closed portions of meetings, or materials declared confidential by the law.

SAMC meetings shall be open to an audience of non-committee members. Only SAMC members may participate in meeting deliberations. Prior to the meeting, the SAMC may invite ad hoc group leads and/or outside experts to participate on specific agenda items, as needed. At each meeting, time will be included on the agenda for non-member comment. Non-members that wish to provide comment will have up to three (3) minutes to speak during this time, unless included on the agenda or at the specific request of the SAMC. Non-members may submit written comments to the science coordination lead prior to SAMC meetings.

The PST shall record formal meeting minutes that will be used to document meeting deliberations and communicate activities to MRGESCP members and external interested parties. Finalized agendas, read-aheads, and minutes will be included in the MRGESCP Annual Administrative Record and stored on the Program Portal.

## **VII. Establishment of Science & Technical Ad Hoc Groups**

The SAMC may establish S&T Ad Hoc Groups to carry out tasks necessary for implementing the S&AM Plan and LTP. S&T Ad Hoc Groups will operate according to specific schedules, objectives, and scopes of work developed through coordination with the SAMC. These tasks include:

- Addressing specified scientific uncertainties
- Conducting literature reviews and writing summaries to delineate alternative hypotheses regarding critical uncertainties, as needed
- Developing, refining, and updating conceptual ecological models
- Developing scopes of work to test research hypotheses and/or collect necessary data
- Compiling and synthesizing the results of field or laboratory studies, monitoring, and modeling to develop recommendations
- Analyzing existing data to address hypotheses linked to scientific uncertainties
- Proposing updates to the S&AM Plan as new information becomes available and new questions emerge

**a. Formation of Science & Technical Ad Hoc Groups**

The SAMC shall develop a charge for any S&T Ad Hoc Group it wishes to form. The charge will clearly define:

- Task(s) assigned
- Qualifications for ad hoc group membership
- Nominees for ad hoc group membership
- Nominee for ad hoc group lead
- Any attendance requirements or guidelines to achieve sufficient participation
- Deliverable(s)
- Schedule, including anticipated sunset date

SAMC members may sit on S&T Ad Hoc Groups as technical experts, and may serve as ad hoc group leads.

**b. Review of Science & Technical Ad Hoc Groups**

The SAMC shall receive progress updates from the science coordination lead (or ad hoc group leads) regarding active S&T Ad Hoc Groups at each meeting. The SAMC may, as necessary, revise a S&T Ad Hoc Group's charge, schedule, or membership, or decide to disband the S&T Ad Hoc Group early.

**c. Disbanding Science & Technical Ad Hoc Groups**

A S&T Ad Hoc Group shall be disbanded upon the completion of its charge, or at the discretion of the SAMC. If the SAMC determines the need for additional work that is not included in the original charge, a new S&T Ad Hoc Group charge shall be developed.

**VIII. Recommendations to the EC**

The SAMC will not be a decision-making body. When bringing evidence-based recommendations to the EC, the SAMC will strive to operate by consensus. In a report or memorandum to the EC, the SAMC will include:

- (If consensus was reached) The consensus recommendation with scientific justification
- Considered alternatives to a recommendation
- (If consensus was not reached) Documentation of competing positions with associated scientific justifications

Ultimately, the EC determines the final recommendations of the MRGESCP.

If there is no consensus recommendation from the SAMC, the EC may:

- Direct the SAMC to form a S&T Ad Hoc Group to investigate the issue in more detail
- Determine, in coordination with the SAMC, that there is a need for independent peer review

**IX. Annual Update and Evaluation of the SAMC by the EC**

The science coordination lead shall provide a formal annual update to the EC that summarizes:

- Accomplishments from the past year

- Status of the SAMC Work Plan
- Updates to MRGЕСP science and adaptive management tools (e.g., conceptual ecological models, geospatial mapper, etc.)
- Any recommended amendments to the S&AM Plan or LTP, including MRGЕСP science objectives

As part of the annual update, the EC shall evaluate SAMC membership. If there are empty seats on the SAMC, the EC may choose to seek applicants. The EC may also review requests for (1)-year term limit extensions or extensions past the limit of four (4) consecutive years.

**X. Conflict of Interest**

SAMC members will abide by all federal, state, tribal, and local agency rules and regulations regarding conflict of interest. SAMC members are required to recuse themselves when they identify a potential financial conflict of interest.

**XI. Amendment of the SAMC Charter**

This charter may be revised and amended as deemed appropriate by the MRGЕСP By-Laws. Potential amendments will be open to input from the SAMC and must be approved by the EC.



[Link to full Meeting Materials List](#)

## Executive Committee Meeting September 28, 2023

*See the following meeting material on the page below:*

Draft Revised 2023 MRGESCP Work Plan [read-ahead, spreadsheet, draft]

Middle Rio Grande Endangered Species Collaborative Program

2023 Work Plan - Revision proposed 09/28/2023

TASK	SUBTASK	EC	AAH	SAMC	S&T	FPC	Sigs	PST	Jan-23	Feb-23	Mar-23	Apr-23	May-23	Jun-23	Jul-23	Aug-23	Sep-23	Oct-23	Nov-23	Dec-23
	Executive Committee (EC) meeting	X									X			X			X			X
	Science and Adaptive Management Committee (SAMC) meeting			X						X			X			X			X	
	Fiscal Planning Committee (FPC) meeting					X			X			X			X			X		
	<b>1.1 Program Portal Administration</b>																			
	1.1a Maintain and update documents and content on the Program Portal						X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	1.1b Update the existing datasets on the Program Portal						X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	1.1c Develop a plan for continued Program Portal funding	X				X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	<b>1.2 Science and Adaptive Management Information System (SAMIS)</b>																			
	1.2a Maintain and update activities in SAMIS						X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	1.2b Finish module one of signatory SAMIS trainings	X		X			X	X	X	X	X									
	<b>1.3 SAMC Membership</b>																			
	1.3a Collect applications for new SAMC members							X	X	X	X									
	1.3b Appoint new SAMC members	X	X							X										
	<b>1.4 Science Evaluation</b>																			
	1.4a Carry out the Science Evaluation based on the outcomes of the 2022 Collaboratory			X				X	X	X				X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	1.4b Complete and present results from the Science Evaluation	X		X				X			X								X	
	<b>1.5 Annual Program Evaluation</b>																			
	1.5a Carry out the Annual Program Evaluation	X		X		X		X	X	X										
	1.5b Complete and present results from the Annual Program Evaluation	X						X			X									
	1.5c If needed, draft and adopt updates to the Long-Term Plan for Science & Adaptive Management to reflect recommendations from the Science Evaluation and Program Evaluation		X					X	X	X										
	1.5d If needed, draft and adopt updates to committee charters and the By-Laws to reflect recommendations from the Program Evaluation	X	X					X				X	X	X						
	<b>1.6 Work Plan</b>																			
	1.6a Check in and revise the 2023 Work Plan if needed	X						X			X			X			X			
	1.6b Develop and approve the 2024 Work Plan	X						X										X	X	X
	<b>1.7 Reporting</b>																			
	1.7a Continue drafting and approve the 2022 Annual Report	X						X	X	X										
	1.7b Collect and finalize 2022 signatory contributions reports						X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			
	1.7c Develop and finalize the 2022 cost share report						X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X				
	1.7d Begin drafting the 2023 Annual Report						X	X										X	X	X
	1.7e Develop the SAMC annual summary presentation to the EC			X				X											X	X
	<b>2.1 Send out regular MRGESCP newsletters</b>							X		X		X		X		X		X		X
	<b>2.2 Host regular collaborative seminars</b>			X				X		X		X	X		X	X				
	<b>2.3 2023 Science Symposium</b>																			
	2.3a Approve the proposal for the 2023 Science Symposium	X												X						
	2.3b Collect abstracts for the 2023 Science Symposium							X							X	X	X	X		
	2.3c Finalize the agenda for the 2023 Science Symposium			X				X											X	
	2.3d Host the 2023 Science Symposium	X		X				X												X
	<b>3.1 Information and Data Quality Standards</b>																			
	3.1a Convene the hybrid ad hoc group to discuss data and information quality standards								X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	3.1b Develop a project template to document data and information quality standards for signatory projects	X		X														X	X	X
	<b>3.2 Survey of Manager Confidence in MRGESCP Science Support</b>																			
	3.2a Present results of the 2022 survey	X						X			X									

General Collaborative Program Administration

Communication and Information Sharing

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Science Decision Support Planning and Tools Developer

3.2b	Incorporate the objective of the survey of manager confidence into the Annual Program Evaluation for 2023																		X	X
3.3	<b>Evaluate and refine project evaluation criteria to align with management needs</b>			X						X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
3.4	<b>Conceptual Ecological Models</b>																			
3.4a	Complete the revisions to the Rio Grande Silvery Minnow (RGSM) Conceptual Ecological Model to incorporate genetics considerations and the augmentation program			X	X					X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
3.4b	Initiate an Internal Science Review of the draft revised Rio Grande Silvery Minnow (RGSM) Conceptual Ecological Model			X	X														X	X
3.4c	Draft a conceptual ecological model for the New Mexico meadow jumping mouse			X	X					X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
3.4d	Draft a conceptual ecological model for the Pecos sunflower			X	X							X	X	X	X	X	X			
3.5	<b>Climate Scenario Futures Planning Workshop</b>																			
3.5a	Plan Climate Scenario Futures Planning Workshop for the Middle Rio Grande to develop strategies for managing listed species in the future			X							X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
3.5b	Link climate forecast models with projected on-the-ground impacts to species and habitat			X								X	X	X						
	Host a field trip to the Whitfield Wildlife Conservation Area																	X		
3.5c	Host a Climate Scenario Futures Planning Workshop	X		X															X	
3.5d	Compile and present results from Climate Scenario Futures Planning Workshop			X															X	X

Implementing Adaptive Management Activities

4.1	<b>Continue RGSM Hypothesis Development S&amp;T Ad Hoc Group</b>				X							X	X	X					X	X	X
4.1a	Explore research hypotheses regarding the influence of mesohabitat on fish distribution (Rec #4)				X						X	X	X	X	X				X	X	X
4.1b	Compare and contrast various RGSM population models, and determine most appropriate uses for each (Rec #7)				X						X	X	X	X	X				X	X	X
4.2	<b>Provide Recommendations for Drying in the Angostura Reach</b>																				
4.2a	Survey of water managers regarding roles and flexibility in planning for and controlling drying				X						X	X	X								
4.2b	Provide recommendations for management actions and data collection in response to potential drying in the Angostura reach in 2023	X		X	X								X	X							
4.2c	Develop public messaging strategies in concert with recommendations for drying in 2023	X	X																		
4.2e	Evaluate effectiveness of the drying response plan, and refine recommendations for 2024 (contingent on drying in Angostura Reach)	X		X	X																
4.3	<b>Convene Restoration Guidance S&amp;T Ad Hoc Groups to define restoration goals, monitoring/maintenance considerations, and metrics to document success</b>																				
4.3a	Research Society of Ecological Restoration (SER) Recovery Wheel and prepare ad hoc group charge			X									X	X	X	X					
4.3b	Evaluate use of the Society of Ecological Restoration (SER) Recovery Wheel's applicability and usefulness to plan and evaluate ecosystem restoration in the MRG			X	X													X	X	X	X
4.3c	Compile a compendium of restoration resources for the MRG			X									X	X	X	X					
4.3c	Review the draft compendium of restoration resources for the MRG and provide additional resources for inclusion			X	X													X	X	X	X
4.4	<b>Vegetated Islands and Bank-Attached Bars in the MRG</b>																				
4.4a	Develop a glossary of technical terms related to management of vegetated islands/bars			X										X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
4.4b	Develop conceptual model representing the vegetated islands/bars phenomenon			X														X	X	X	X

f es	5.1	<b>Host quarterly HR coordination meetings</b>					X				X				X			X			X
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Coordination o Signatory Activiti	5.2	Identify coordination opportunities related to the spring/summer hydrology	X					X				X								
	5.3	Provide updates on coordination activities related to the spring/summer hydrology, and lessons learned	X					X												X
	5.4	Provide updates on the implementation of signatory activities from the Long-Term Plan					X	X		X			X			X			X	

**Middle Rio Grande Endangered Species Collaborative Program  
2023 Work Plan**

TASK	SUBTASK	EC	AAH	SAMC	S&T	FPC	Sigs	PST	Jan-23	Feb-23	Mar-23	Apr-23	May-23	Jun-23	Jul-23	Aug-23	Sep-23	Oct-23	Nov-23	Dec-23
	Executive Committee (EC) meeting	X									X			X			X			X
	Science and Adaptive Management Committee (SAMC) meeting			X						X			X			X			X	
	Fiscal Planning Committee (FPC) meeting					X			X			X			X			X		
	<b>1.1 Program Portal Administration</b>																			
	1.1a Maintain and update documents and content on the Program Portal							X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	1.1b Update the existing datasets on the Program Portal						X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X						
	1.1c Upload new datasets on the Program Portal identified at the 2022 Portal Stakeholder Meetings						X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X						
	1.1d Develop a plan for continued Program Portal funding	X				X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X					
	<b>1.2 Science and Adaptive Management Information System (SAMIS)</b>																			
	1.2a Maintain and update activities in SAMIS						X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	1.2b Finish module one of signatory SAMIS trainings	X		X			X	X	X											
	<b>1.3 SAMC Membership</b>																			
	1.3a Collect applications for new SAMC members							X	X	X										
	1.3b Appoint new SAMC members	X	X							X										
	<b>1.4 Science Evaluation</b>																			
	1.4a Carry out the Science Evaluation based on the outcomes of the 2022 Collaboratory			X				X	X	X										
	1.4b Complete and present results from the Science Evaluation	X		X				X		X										
	<b>1.5 Annual Program Evaluation</b>																			
	1.5a Carry out the Annual Program Evaluation	X		X		X		X	X	X										
	1.5b Complete and present results from the Annual Program Evaluation	X						X		X										
	1.5c If needed, draft and adopt updates to the Long-Term Plan for Science & Adaptive Management to reflect recommendations from the Science Evaluation and Program Evaluation		X					X	X	X										
	1.5d If needed, draft and adopt updates to committee charters and the By-Laws to reflect recommendations from the Program Evaluation	X	X					X				X	X	X						
	<b>1.6 Work Plan</b>																			
	1.6a Check in and revise the 2023 Work Plan if needed	X						X			X			X			X			
	1.6b Develop and approve the 2024 Work Plan	X						X										X	X	X
	<b>1.7 Reporting</b>																			
	1.7a Continue drafting and approve the 2022 Annual Report	X						X	X	X										
	1.7b Collect and finalize 2022 signatory contributions reports						X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			
	1.7c Develop and finalize the 2022 cost share report						X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X				
	1.7d Begin drafting the 2023 Annual Report						X	X										X	X	X
	1.7e Develop the SAMC annual summary presentation to the EC			X				X											X	X
	<b>2.1 Send out regular MRGESCP newsletters</b>							X		X				X		X		X		X
	<b>2.2 Host regular collaborative seminars</b>			X				X			X			X			X			X
	<b>2.3 2023 Science Symposium</b>																			
	2.3a Approve the proposal for the 2023 Science Symposium	X												X						
	2.3b Collect abstracts for the 2023 Science Symposium							X							X	X	X	X		
	2.3c Finalize the agenda for the 2023 Science Symposium			X				X											X	
	2.3d Host the 2023 Science Symposium	X		X				X												X
	<b>3.1 Information and Data Quality Standard</b>																			
	3.1a Convene the hybrid ad hoc group to discuss data and information quality standards									X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

General Collaborative Program Administration

Communication and Information Sharing

Science Decision Support Planning and Tools Development

3.1b	Develop a project template to document data and information quality standards for signatory projects	X		X															
<b>3.2 Survey of Manager Confidence in MRGESCP Science Support</b>																			
3.2a	Present results of the 2022 survey	X									X								
3.2b	Incorporate the objective of the survey of manager confidence into the Annual Program Evaluation for 2023																	X	X
<b>3.3 Evaluate and refine project evaluation criteria to align with management needs</b>																			
3.3				X						X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
<b>3.4 Conceptual Ecological Models</b>																			
3.4a	Complete the revisions to the Rio Grande Silvery Minnow (RGSM) Conceptual Ecological Model to incorporate genetics considerations and the augmentation program			X	X					X	X	X	X	X					
3.4b	Initiate an Internal Science Review of the draft revised Rio Grande Silvery Minnow (RGSM) Conceptual Ecological Model			X	X				X						X	X	X		
3.4c	Draft a conceptual ecological model for the New Mexico meadow jumping mouse			X	X				X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			
3.4d	Draft a conceptual ecological model for the Pecos sunflower			X	X				X			X	X	X	X				
<b>3.5 Climate Scenario Planning Workshop</b>																			
3.5a	Plan Climate Scenario Planning Workshop for the Middle Rio Grande to develop strategies for managing listed species in the future			X					X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
3.5b	Link climate forecast models with projected on-the-ground impacts to species and habitat			X					X			X	X	X					
	Host a field trip to the Whitfield Wildlife Conservation Area																	X	
3.5c	Host a Climate Scenario Planning Workshop	X		X					X									X	
3.5d	Compile and present results from Climate Scenario Planning Workshop			X					X										X
3.5d																		X	X
<b>3.6 Send a survey to solicit input and feedback on data relationship visualization options for the Program Portal</b>																			
3.6								X	X						X	X	X		

Implementing Adaptive Management Activities

<b>4.1 Continue RGSM Hypothesis Development S&amp;T Ad Hoc Group</b>																			
4.1				X								X	X	X					
4.1a	Explore research hypotheses regarding the influence of mesohabitat on fish distribution (Rec #4)			X						X	X	X	X	X					
4.1b	Compare and contrast various RGSM population models, and determine most appropriate uses for each (Rec #7)			X						X	X	X	X	X					
<b>4.2 Provide Recommendations for Drying in the Angostura Reach</b>																			
4.2a	Survey of water managers regarding roles and flexibility in planning for and controlling drying				X				X	X	X								
4.2b	Provide recommendations for management actions and data collection in response to potential drying in the Angostura reach in 2023	X		X	X				X			X	X						
4.2c	Develop public messaging strategies in concert with recommendations for drying in 2023	X	X						X				X	X					
4.2e	Evaluate effectiveness of the drying response plan, and refine recommendations for 2024 (contingent on drying in Angostura Reach)	X		X	X				X								X	X	X
<b>4.3 Convene Restoration Guidance S&amp;T Ad Hoc Groups to define restoration goals, monitoring/maintenance considerations, and metrics to document success</b>																			
4.3a	Evaluate use of the Society of Ecological Restoration (SER) Recovery Wheel's applicability and usefulness to plan and evaluate ecosystem restoration in the MRG			X	X							X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
4.3b	Compile and review a compendium of restoration resources for the MRG			X	X							X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>4.4 Vegetated Islands and Bank-Attached Bars in the MRG</b>																			

	4.4a	Develop a glossary of technical terms related to management of vegetated islands/bars			X	X							X	X	X				
	4.4b	Develop conceptual model representing the vegetated islands/bars phenomenon			X	X							X	X	X				
Coordination of Signatory Activities	5.1	Host quarterly HR coordination meetings				X	X		X			X			X			X	
	5.2	Identify coordination opportunities related to the spring/summer hydrology	X				X			X									
	5.3	Provide updates on coordination activities related to the spring/summer hydrology, and lessons learned	X				X											X	
	5.4	Provide updates on the implementation of signatory activities from the Long-Term Plan					X	X		X			X			X		X	

[Link to full Meeting Materials List](#)

## Executive Committee Meeting September 28, 2023

*See the following meeting material on the page below:*

FPC Memo on Portal Funding Options [read-ahead]





# Middle Rio Grande Endangered Species Collaborative Program

*Est. 2000*

DATE: September 28, 2023

TO: The Middle Rio Grande Endangered Species Collaborative Program (MRGESCP)  
Executive Committee (EC)

FROM: MRGESCP Fiscal Planning Committee (FPC)

RE: Program Portal Funding Options

---

The MRGESCP website, the Program Portal, is contracted out to the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS). The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) is currently funding maintenance and development of the Program Portal and has committed to doing so until the end of calendar year 2024. USACE cannot commit to funding the Program Portal past that date. Baseline funding for Program Portal maintenance is approximately \$72,000 a year; this includes staff labor and software and hosting fees, but does not include any additional development.

The EC had requested the FPC discuss potential options if USACE cannot continue funding the Program Portal. The FPC identified the following options for EC discussion:

**1. Signatories provide pass-through funding to USACE to fund USGS to continue supporting the Program Portal.**

If USACE is willing to accept pass-through funding from other signatories, they will remain the contracting entity with the USGS. This option may limit who can provide money. It is easier for USACE to accept money from other federal agencies.

**2. Another signatory takes on the USGS contract.**

Several signatories have indicated the full contract amount is more than they can take on. USGS may also be limited with what entities it may contract with.

**3. Signatories pool money to fund USGS with one signatory taking on the contracting role.**

The Collaborative Program signatories have legally not been able to pool money into a general fund. However, it is unclear whether the signatories could pool money for a specific contract. Exploration of this option will require input from legal and contracting experts.

**4. Signatories rotate who holds the contract with USGS.**

USGS has indicated this is not preferred, as it causes logistical difficulties each time the contracting agency changes.

At this time, the FPC does not recommend changing to another website developer from USGS as it would require a complete redo of the Program Portal, as it is currently integrated with the USGS infrastructure.

The FPC recommends the EC present its top option(s) to legal and contracting experts for further input, as that would provide clarity on the feasibility of the different options.

[Link to full Meeting Materials List](#)

Executive Committee Meeting  
September 28, 2023

*See the following meeting material on the page below:*

VSWCD membership request letter [read-ahead]



*Providing resource conservation for a quality environment demonstrated through active leadership, cooperation, and partnership*

Wayne Pullan, Federal Co-Chair  
Mark Kelly, Non-Federal Co-Chair  
Middle Rio Grande Endangered Species Collaborative Program  
c/o Western EcoSystems Technology, Inc.  
901 Lambertson Pl NE, South Suite  
Albuquerque, NM 87107

Dear Mr. Pullan and Mr. Kelly,


This letter of interest is being submitted by the Valencia Soil & Water Conservation District (VSWCD) to your organization in order to be considered for membership in the Middle Rio Grande Endangered Species Collaborative Program (MRGESCP/Collaborative Program). After meeting with some of your staff and learning more about your initiatives, we believe there would be mutual benefit in VSWCD becoming a member of the MRGESCP. This letter will outline who we are, how our goals align with those of the MRGESCP, and what our organization has to offer in advancement of the goals of the Collaborative Program.

Many people are unfamiliar with Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs). These are political subdivisions governed by the state within which they exist. The template for this type of conservation entity was created in the 1930s after the Dust Bowl era in the United States. SWCDs were designed to help local farmers, ranchers, and other citizens of an area institute sound practices for land and water usage. All fifty states in the United States have some form of SWCDs and New Mexico currently has forty-seven of these Districts. While their goals are similar, each SWCD is adapted to fit the needs of the community and the particulars of the geography within their borders. Established in 1947, the VSWCD mission and vision are focused on our geographic region in central New Mexico which includes several ecosystems and habitat types, including the Bosque along the Rio Grande, which winds through our District. We also serve a range of peoples and cultures, including the Pueblo of Isleta and the Pueblo of Laguna. Since we now manage close to 300 acres of conservation lands adjacent to the Rio Grande Bosque, the work in our District includes habitat conservation and restoration in a way unique among SWCDs in New Mexico. The three properties we currently manage are: Whitfield Wildlife Conservation Area (WWCA) which contains 97 acres, Rio Abajo Conservation Area (RACA) which contains 139 acres, and the Stacy Unit which contains 43 acres. Our Vision at VSWCD is to provide resource conservation for a quality environment demonstrated through active leadership, cooperation, and partnership. Our Mission is to provide education, technical assistance, and recognition to current and future stewards of the land in natural resource conservation. Our operations are overseen by a Board of seven Supervisors; five are elected, and two are appointed with guidance from the Pueblos of Isleta and Laguna.

We feel VSWCD is a good fit for membership in the Collaborative Program in relation to MRGESCP's goal "to establish a framework for collaborative adaptive management to increase climate resilience in support of listed species and their habitats in the Middle Rio Grande." This goal aligns with our VSWCD vision of resource conservation for a quality environment. Much of the land in our District lies within the Collaborative Program area. Being a member of the MRGESCP would be a symbiotic relationship in respect to our parallel goals.

VSWCD is in a position to enhance the work of the Collaborative Program. We regularly collaborate with local agricultural, conservation, and tribal agencies. As noted above, since our origin the local agricultural sector has been a core constituency for our district, one that can bring unique perspectives and experiences to the Collaborative Program. Therefore, we bring already established relationships with agencies and peoples who are stakeholders in our District and are in the Collaborative Program's area. We also partner with several existing Collaborative Program signatories, including Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District, Bosque Ecosystem Monitoring Program, Audubon Southwest, and the Pueblo of Isleta. Also, in alignment with Collaborative Program goals, we recently hosted a workshop in April 2023 which focused on a climate adaptive approach to replanting at WWCA after the Big Hole Fire of 2022. This work is ongoing and will provide useful data as the project progresses. In addition to this project, the 280 acres of conservation land managed by VSWCD are possible habitat sites for listed species, some of which may already be present at these sites. Thus, VSWCD can offer land use for study, research, habitat restoration, and planning for climate resilience. In turn, the work done by the MRGESCP in our District, and elsewhere in the Collaborative Program area, can help inform us as we continually work to better fulfill our mission to assist current and future stewards of the land in the area of natural resource conservation. Over time, we believe VSWCD membership will afford many benefits to meet Collaborative Program goals.

In closing, we at VSWCD appreciate the opportunity to join your Collaborative Program as a member organization. The work of conserving our environment and protecting listed species cannot be done alone. Through collaboration we can not only do more for our respective stakeholders, but also help all citizens in our state learn more and work together toward a common goal of a better tomorrow for all. Thank you for taking the time to read this letter of interest from the Valencia Soil and Water Conservation District in application for membership with the Middle Rio Grande Endangered Species Collaborative Program.

  
Abel M Camarena (Aug 28, 2023 20:30 MDT)

Aug 28, 2023

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Abel Camarena  
Chair, Valencia Soil and Water Conservation District





# MRGESCP Application VSWCD 28AUG23 fin

Final Audit Report

2023-08-29

Created:	2023-08-29
By:	Andrew Hautzinger (AndrewHautzinger@valenciaswcd.org)
Status:	Signed
Transaction ID:	CBJCHBCAABAAGfIKfISi3WbzIQ_KZsnvukX7KsK6b-nZ

## "MRGESCP Application VSWCD 28AUG23 fin" History

-  Document created by Andrew Hautzinger (AndrewHautzinger@valenciaswcd.org)  
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-  Document emailed to abelcamarena\_bos@valenciaswcd.org for signature  
2023-08-29 - 2:25:10 AM GMT
-  Email viewed by abelcamarena\_bos@valenciaswcd.org  
2023-08-29 - 2:25:40 AM GMT- IP address: 104.47.59.254
-  Signer abelcamarena\_bos@valenciaswcd.org entered name at signing as Abel M Camarena  
2023-08-29 - 2:30:29 AM GMT- IP address: 199.45.131.150
-  Document e-signed by Abel M Camarena (abelcamarena\_bos@valenciaswcd.org)  
Signature Date: 2023-08-29 - 2:30:31 AM GMT - Time Source: server- IP address: 199.45.131.150
-  Agreement completed.  
2023-08-29 - 2:30:31 AM GMT

[Link to full Meeting Materials List](#)

Executive Committee Meeting  
September 28, 2023

*See the following meeting material on the page below:*

Climate Futures Planning Workshop Update [presentation]



# Field Trip to Whitfield Wildlife Conservation Area

September 26, 2023

























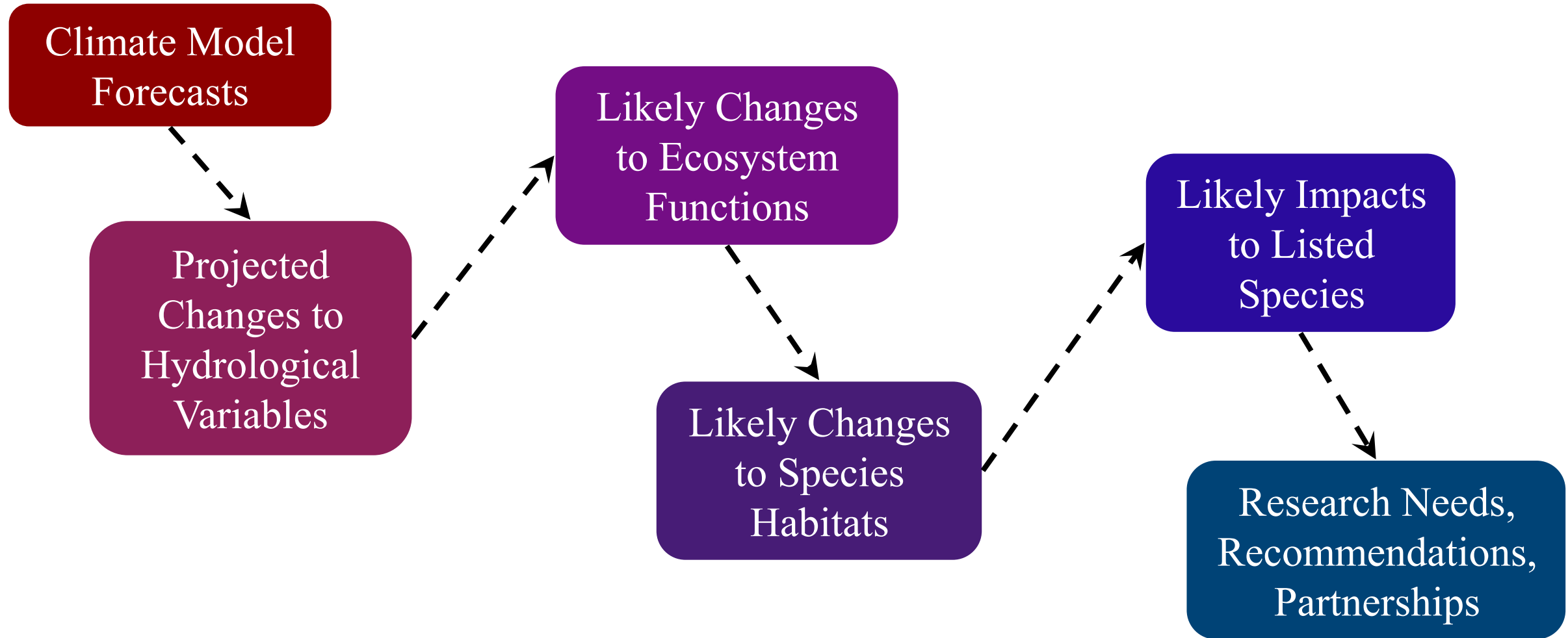








# Climate Futures Planning Workshop



[Link to full Meeting Materials List](#)

## Executive Committee Meeting September 28, 2023

*See the following meeting material on the page below:*

Introducing VSWCD and the Whitfield Complex [presentation]





## Introducing Valencia SWCD and the Whitfield Complex to the

## Middle Rio Grande Endangered Species Collaborative Program's Executive Committee



September 28th, 2023

### Talk Outline:

- ❖ - VSWCD Overview
- ❖ - History of VSWCD
- ❖ - VSWCD programs (EE Rocks!)
- ❖ - Whitfield Complex Lands
- ❖ - Big Hole Fire (day of the fire)
- ❖ - Why the Collaborative Program?



Andrew Hautzinger, District Director

# Valencia Soil and Water Conservation District Mission, Board of Supervisors & Staff

*Providing resource conservation for a quality environment demonstrated through active leadership, cooperation, and partnership*

- VSWCD Board of Supervisors:

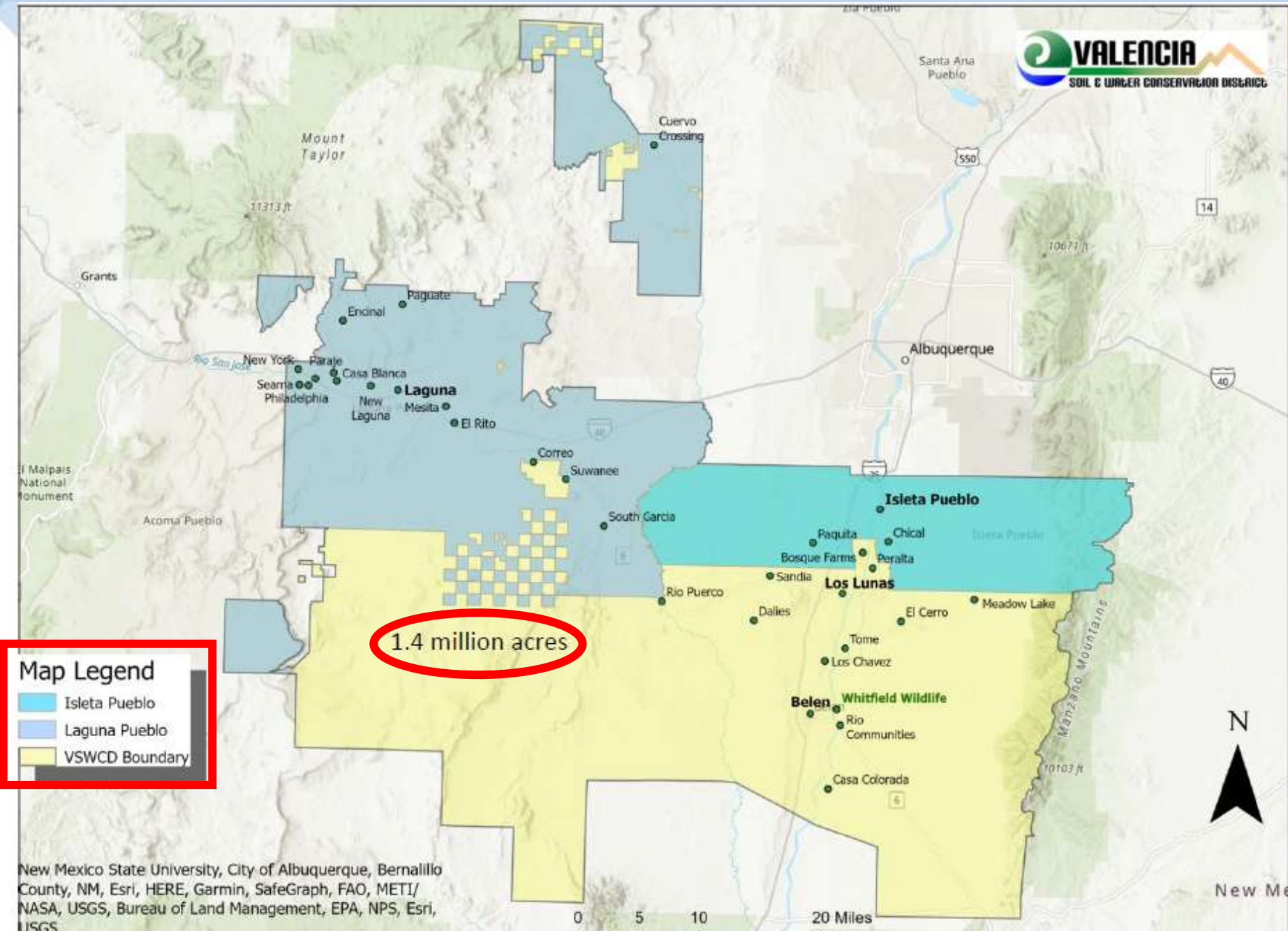
- Abel Camarena, Chair
- Teresa Smith de Cherif, Vice Chair
- Duana Draszkiwicz, Treasurer
- Richard Bonine, Board Supervisor (Laguna)
- Gail Goodman, Board Supervisor
- Priscilla Abeita, Board Supervisor, Isleta Appointed Seat
- Pamela Cordova, Board Supervisor

- VSWCD Staff:

- Andrew Hautzinger, District Director
- Johnny Chavez, Conservation Program Manager
- Megan McCready, Business Manager
- Laura McCann, Education Manager



# Valencia Soil & Water Conservation District:



**Map Legend**

- Isleta Pueblo
- Laguna Pueblo
- VSWCD Boundary

1.4 million acres

New Mexico State University, City of Albuquerque, Bernalillo County, NM, Esri, HERE, Garmin, SafeGraph, FAO, METI/ NASA, USGS, Bureau of Land Management, EPA, NPS, Esri, USGS

# VSWCD & MRGESCP: Shared Conservation Priorities

**Need for Effective Adapted Management built on Ecosystem Function informed by Data:**

- 🌳 --Collaborative Program needs space for adaptive management and experimentation;
- 🌳 --VSWCD has flexibility to be a living laboratory;
- 🌳 --VSWCD wants to use pilot studies to inform management of the Whitfield Complex,
- 🌳 --Restoring post-Big Hole Fire with fire- & climate-adaptations, testing climate science tenets;
- 🌳 --Both parties want to contribute to resilient climate planning in Middle Rio Grande--Test Cases Are Needed (e.g., assisted migration);
- 🌳 --VSWCD needs to supplement capacity.



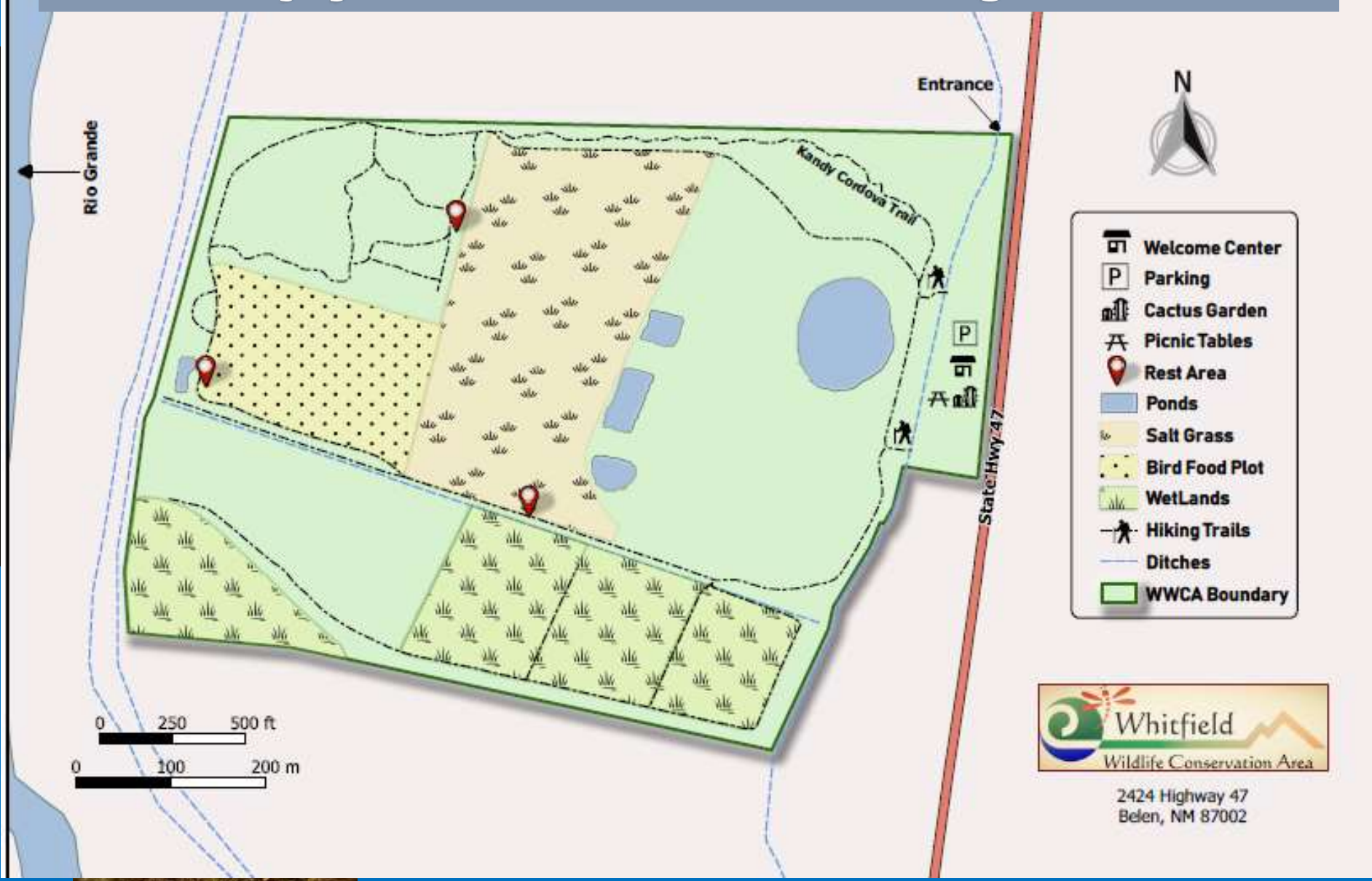
# VSWCD Community- Focused Conservation Programs

- ❖ Environmental Education Program (County's only one)
- ❖ Whitfield Conservation Area Complex: Premier Wildlife Viewing Location in Valencia County
- ❖ Outdoor laboratory to address key management questions / areas of uncertainty
- ❖ Financial Assistance for citizen conservation proj's
- ❖ East Valencia Urban Gardens Program—8<sup>th</sup> year!
- ❖ Leader in Conservation Priorities (e.g., bosque management with climate- & fire-adaptations)



# Whitfield Conservation Area Complex: 3 Units

Come enjoy WWCA's 1.2-mile walking trail around



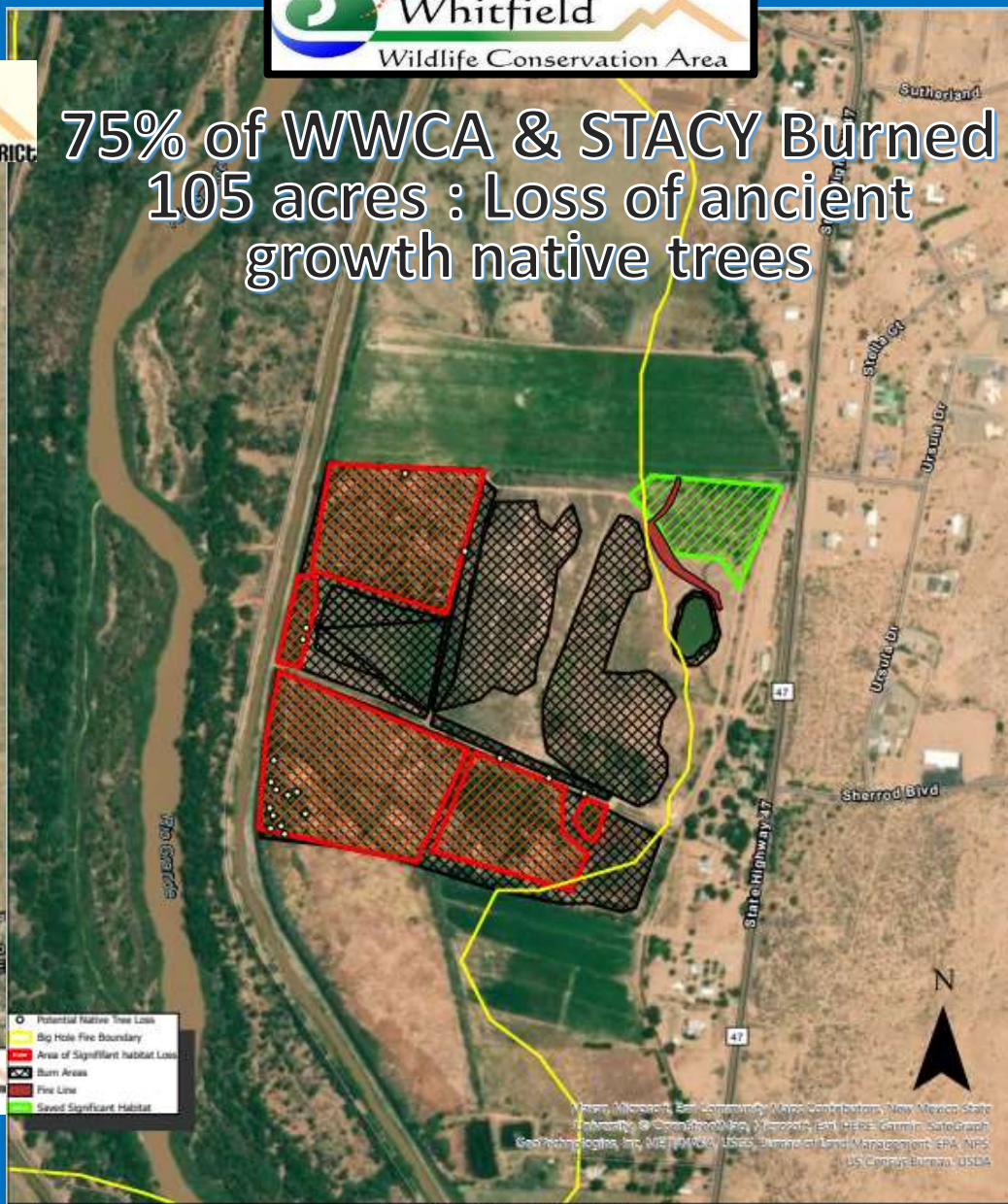
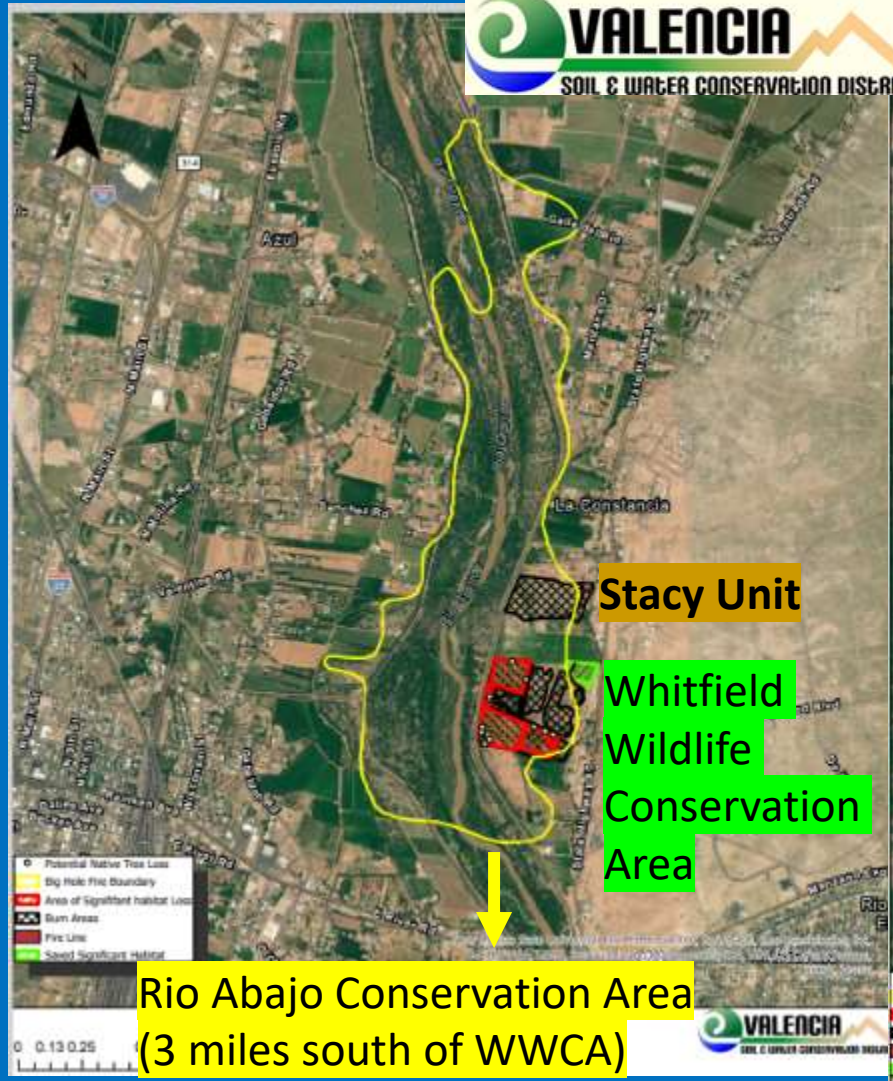
2424 Highway 47  
Belen, NM 87002

**BIG HOLE FIRE --April 11<sup>th</sup>, 2022-- +800 Acres**

Potentially the county's biggest bosque fire (and only VALCO fire ever included in a fed. emergency declaration)(DR-4652).



**75% of WWCA & STACY Burned  
105 acres : Loss of ancient  
growth native trees**



Big Hole Fire April 11th 2022  
Whitfield Wildlife Conservation Area





# Whitfield wildlife Conservation area History of Transformative Conservation



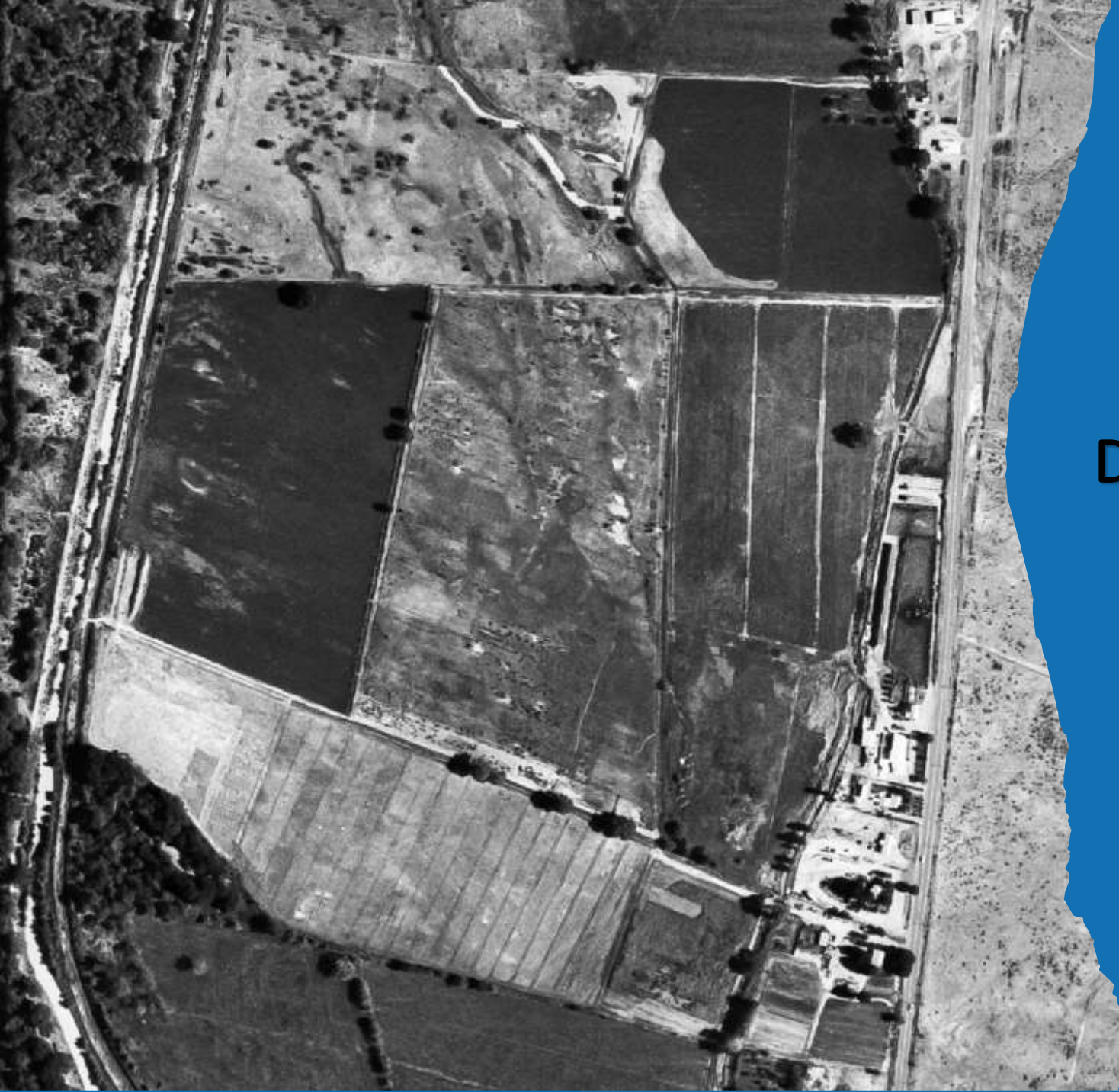
# The Whitfield Land in 1949



# 1967-1979 Curran Dairy Farm

- During this time, John N. Curran and his wife, Ruby, owned the Curran Dairy (present day WWCA).





1971

# Curran Dairy Farm



Whitfield 1996

Write a description for your map.

# 2003: The land is donated to the PEOPLE of NM by the Whitfield Corporation

In 2003 the Whitfield Corporation met with USDA-NRCS employee, Santiago Misquezu. He suggested donating the land to the Valencia Soil and Water Conservation District (VSWCD).

2007



2008



2009



2009





2009



# Big Hole Fire: Drone photo taken a week after 4-11-22 fire



(↓ STACY ↓)

(Moya Farms)

(WWCA)

(MRGCD lands)

San Juan Drain



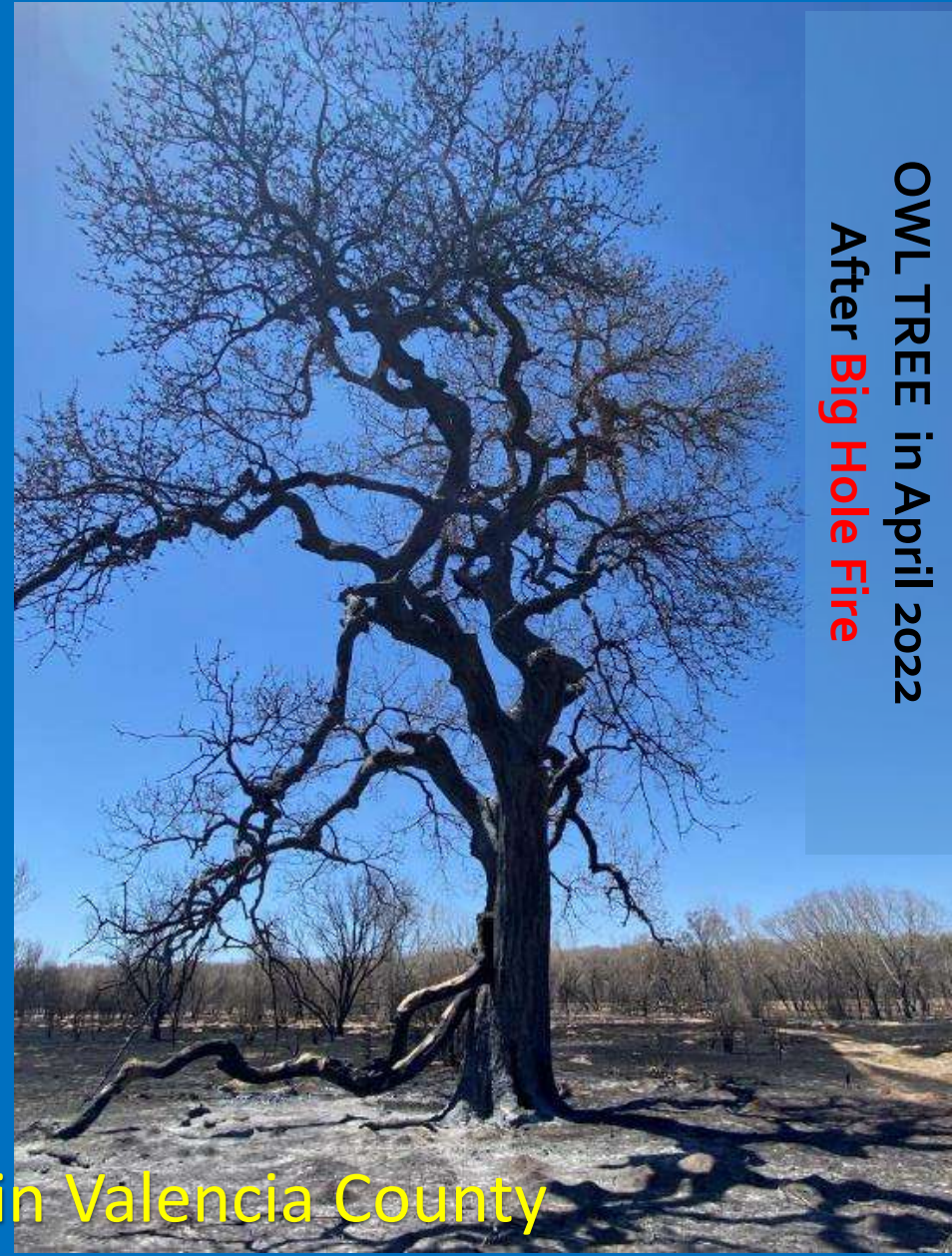
# Whitfield's Iconic OWL TREE



OWL TREE in 2021 w/ 3<sup>rd</sup> Grader Drawing



Most Visited Tree in Valencia County



OWL TREE in April 2022  
After Big Hole Fire

# VSWCD Community- Focused Conservation Programs

- ❖ **Environmental Education Program** (County's only one)
- ❖ **Whitfield Conservation Area Complex:** Premier Wildlife Viewing Location in Valencia County
- ❖ **Outdoor laboratory** to address key management questions
- ❖ **Financial Assistance** for citizen conservation proj's
- ❖ **East Valencia Urban Gardens Program**—8<sup>th</sup> year!
- ❖ **Leader in Conservation Priorities** (e.g., bosque management with climate- & fire-adaptations)



# Environmental Education Program

Laura McCann

Environmental Education Manager



**SCHOOL PROGRAM:** K-12 In-School and at Whitfield Wildlife Conservation Area's Outdoor Classrooms / Full EE Curriculum with Full Time Educator!

**MASTER NATURALIST PROGRAM:** Quality Adult Environmental Education Certification Program

**CONSERVATION EVENTS:** Earth Day Fiesta, Farmers Appreciation Day, Whitfield Under the Stars and lots more!

**Community Centered Approach**

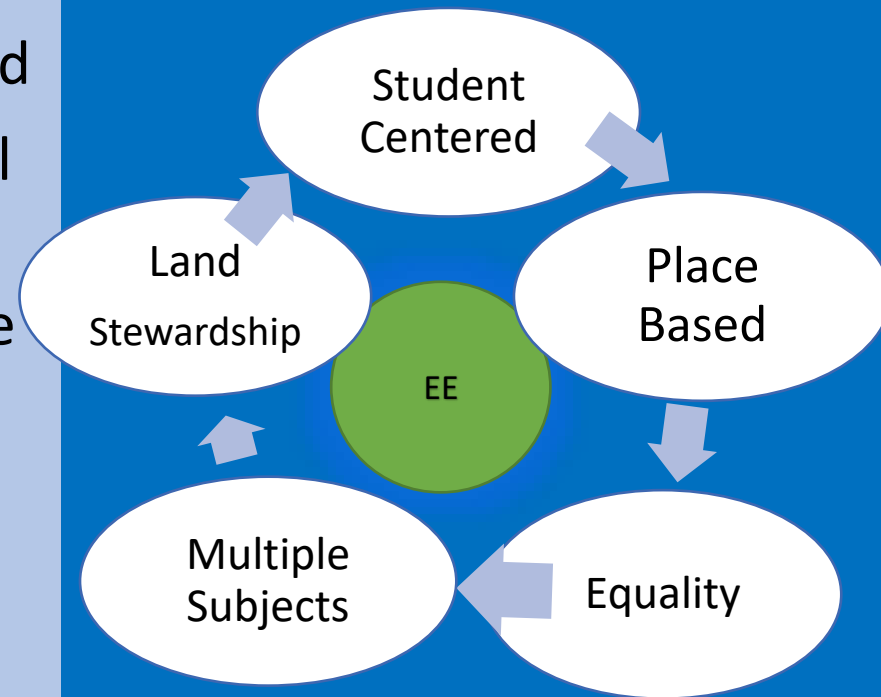


# Whitfield School Programs

**Classroom Visits, Whitfield Visits, Organization Visits:  
Over 3,200 student-educator interactions every year**

# Focus on Environmental Education

- **Student Centered:** Students feel valued, holistic approach, connected
- **Place Based:** Hands on, experiential learning,
- **Equality:** All students can access, be included, connected, relatable
- **Multiple Subjects:** Cross cutting concepts, NGSS incorporated, curriculum supported
- **Land Stewardship:** Creating future stewards to help protect these sacred spaces and places for all life.



# Review of the Year Since the Big Hole Fire:

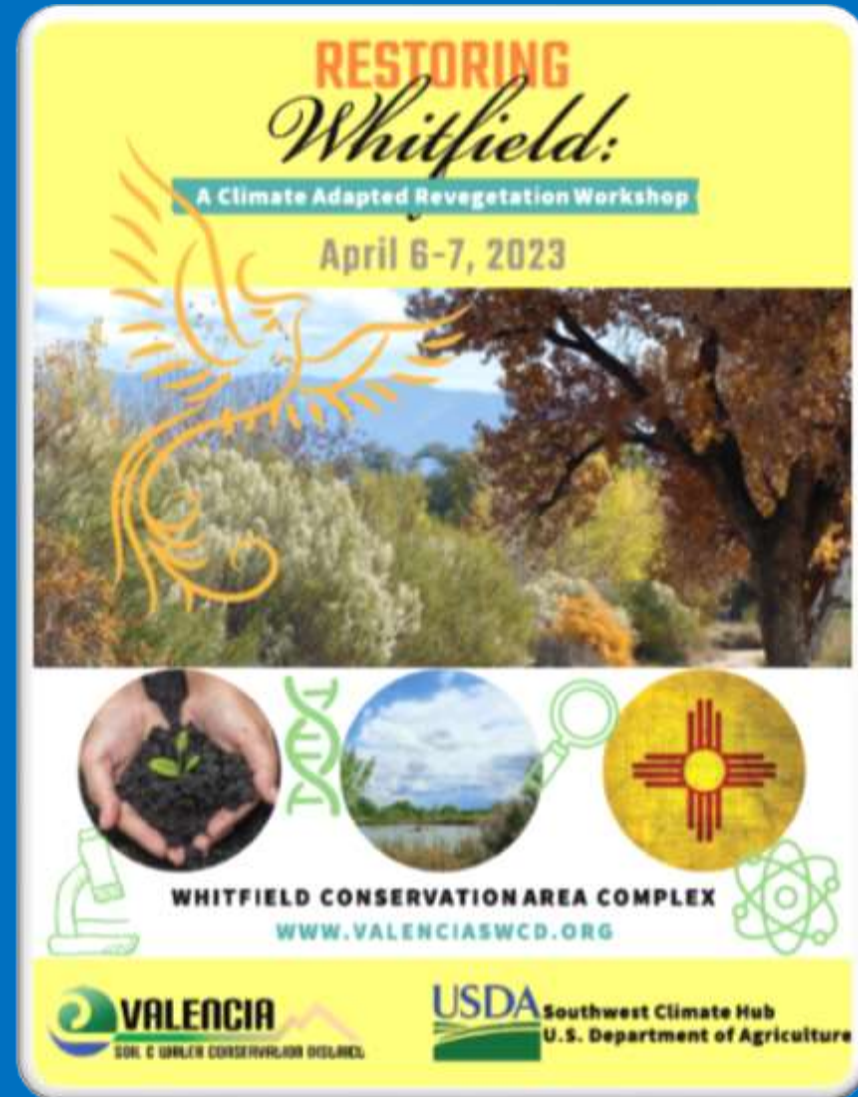
## ❖ Immediate Post-Fire Actions & Assessment:

- 105 acres burned April 11<sup>th</sup>, 2022 (75% Whitfield & Stacy)
- Irrigate burned areas/cease travel on scar
- 1,000 burned trees, including over a dozen ancient trees (cottonwood/willows)
- Developing Restoration Design & Native Plant List (Climate- and Fire-adapted)
- **\$ECURE FUNDING** (29 FEMA Zoom calls and counting...) \$0 to date
- Expand Partnership Network (e.g., **MRGESCP**)
- Held a RESTORE WHITFIELD Workshop (April 6-7, 2023)



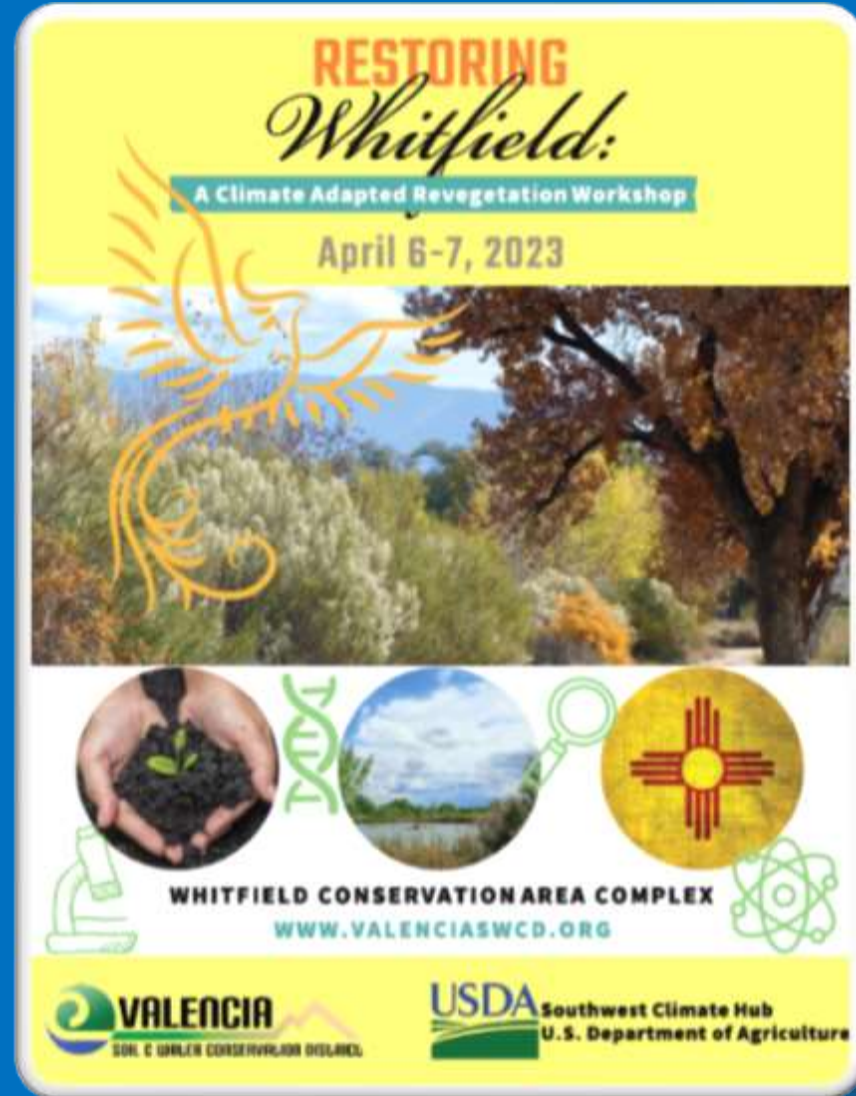
# Restoring Whitfield Workshop:

- ❖ 1 ½ Day session focused on improving bosque management
- ❖ 38 fire- & climate-adaptation experts contributed to preliminary climate-adapted response plan



# WORKSHOP KEY ASSUMPTIONS:

- ❖ The climate & the hydrology of the MRG is changing; as are the fire dynamics.
- ❖ The **Big Hole Fire** is an opportunity to plan for greater resiliency and more effective **adaptive management** of the bosque's habitat.



# VSWCD APRIL WORKSHOP: Next Steps

❖ **EARLY OUTCOME:** VSWCD is working with USGS Ft. Collins Science Center to develop a **PLANT MATRIX MANUAL** (with ecologists Pat Shafroth & Eduardo Gonzalez w/hoped for South Central CASC support)

❖ Key next steps: Partners focused on working closer to improve collaboration / learn effective mitigation strategies (e.g., 2023/2024 workshops, etc.).

RESTORING WHITFIELD: A WORKSHOP TO DEVELOP A CLIMATE ADAPTED REVEGETATION DESIGN FOR THE WHITFIELD COMPLEX LANDS ALONG THE MIDDLE RIO GRANDE  
(April 6-7, 2023)

Summary of Results  
June 30, 2023

*New River/New World*



United States Department of Agriculture  
Southwest Climate Hub



# VSWCD's Partners Make All the Difference:

(\*) Funding Partners

- AmeriCorps VISTA (\*)
- Albuquerque Community Foundation (\*)
- Bosque Ecosystem Monitoring Program (\*)
- Central New Mexico Audubon (\*)
- CLIMAS (U of AZ)
- Environmental Education of NM
- Friends of Whitfield (\*)
- Isleta Reach Stewardship Association
- MRG Endangered Species Collaborative
- Middle Rio Council of Governments
- MRG Conservancy District
- New River / New World, LLC
- NM Game & Fish
- NM Outdoors Recreation Division

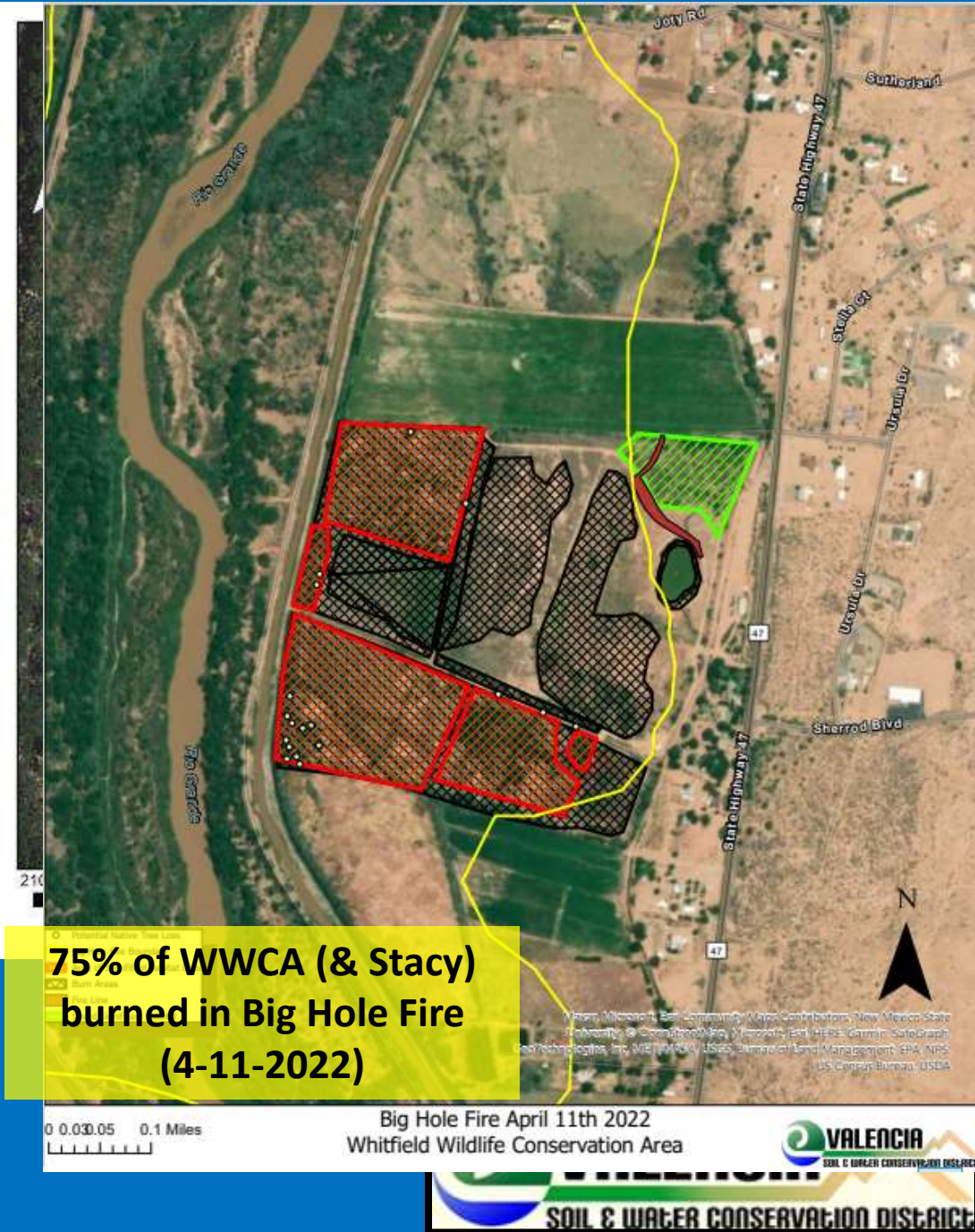
- NM Youth Conservation Corps (\*)
- NM State Forestry (\*)
- Pueblo of Isleta
- Pueblo of Laguna
- Pueblo of Santa Ana
- Salazar Center for North American Conservation (\*)
- UNM Dept. of Water Resources
- USDA SW Climate Hub
- USDA-NRCS Wetland Reserve Prog. (\*)
- USGS-FORT Science Center
- USGS-South Central CASC
- Valencia County Fire Department (\*)
- USFWS NWRS and Eco Services
- 2023 Peregrine Accelerator Cohort 

# VSWCD's KEY QUESTIONS:

- ❖ What are key considerations for the restoration design, particularly with regard to the long-term viability of **plants** in context of **climate change**?
- ❖ What are strategies to reduce the severity of wildfires?
  - Strategic Bosque Thinning?
  - Using Fuel Breaks of various designs?
  - On-demand Water sprinkler systems?

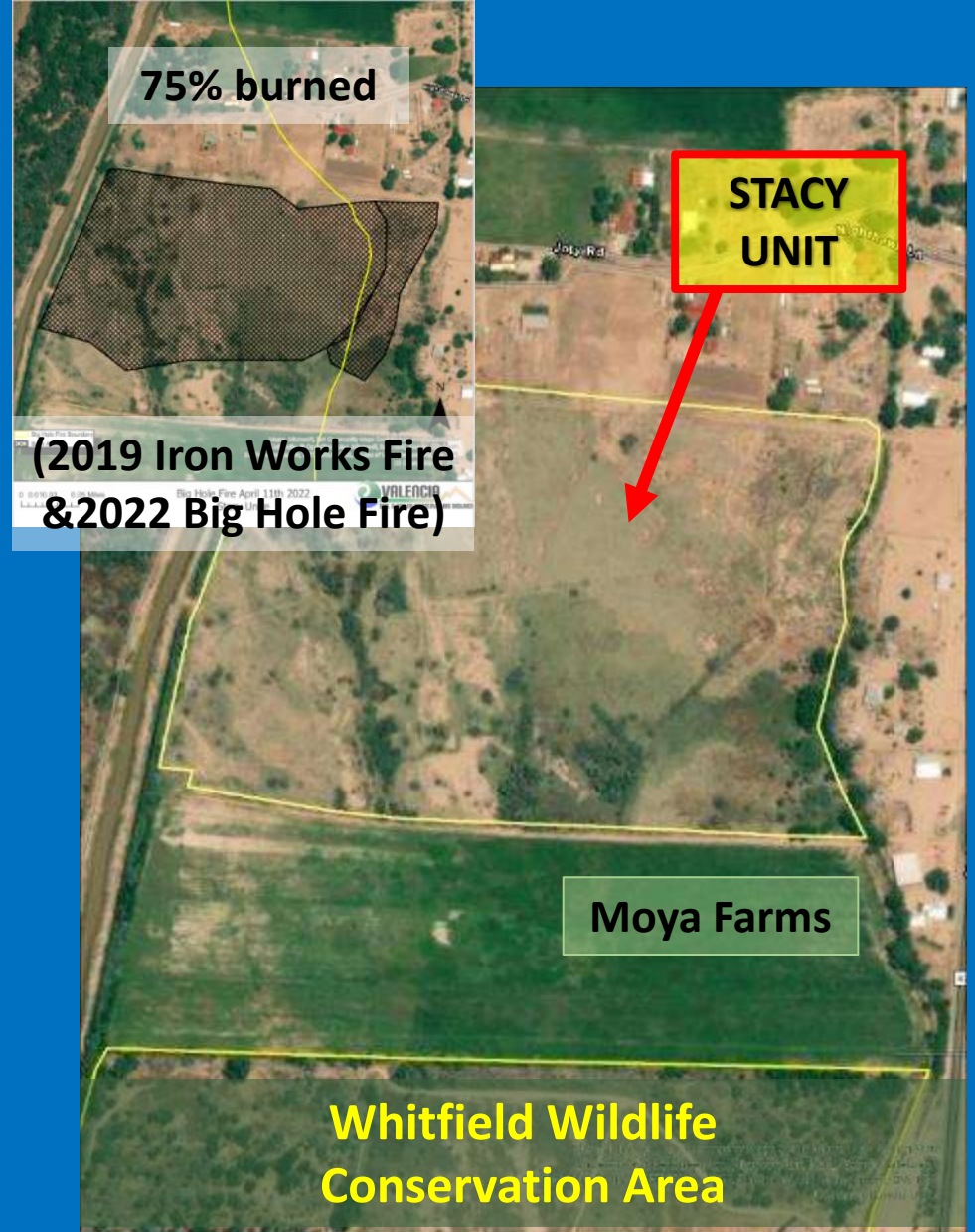
# Whitfield Wildlife Conservation Area

- 97-acre wildlife preserve established in 2003
- Donated to VSWCD by the Whitfield Corporation
- WWCA is a designated WETLAND RESERVE PROJECT (USDA-NRCS)
  - ❖ Developed Wetlands, 11 Independent Units
  - ❖ Championed by Athena Cholas (NRCS)
- Huge **Environmental Education** Program: Valencia County's only Outdoor Classroom



# Stacy Unit

- ❑ 43-acre Start-Up (2015 donation):
- ❑ Large stand of Alkali Sacaton Grasses
- ❑ Has water rights / no water infrastructure
- ❑ Horse Grazing Management Focus (fire abatement)
- ❑ **Mental Health / Mindfulness Garden?** Relax and recharge public area, perhaps a la NPS –RTCA Prescription Trails/ Prescription Parks



# Rio Abajo Conservation Area

- ❑ 147-acre mixed riparian w/ uplands
- ❑ Est. 2009: Cover's 2 river miles
- ❑ Fire Reduction Funding (FY22-23)
  - ❑ Thinning 50-acre grove
  - ❑ Restoration
  - ❑ Prototype Fuel Breaks
- ❑ Long-term Sentinel Monitoring Site

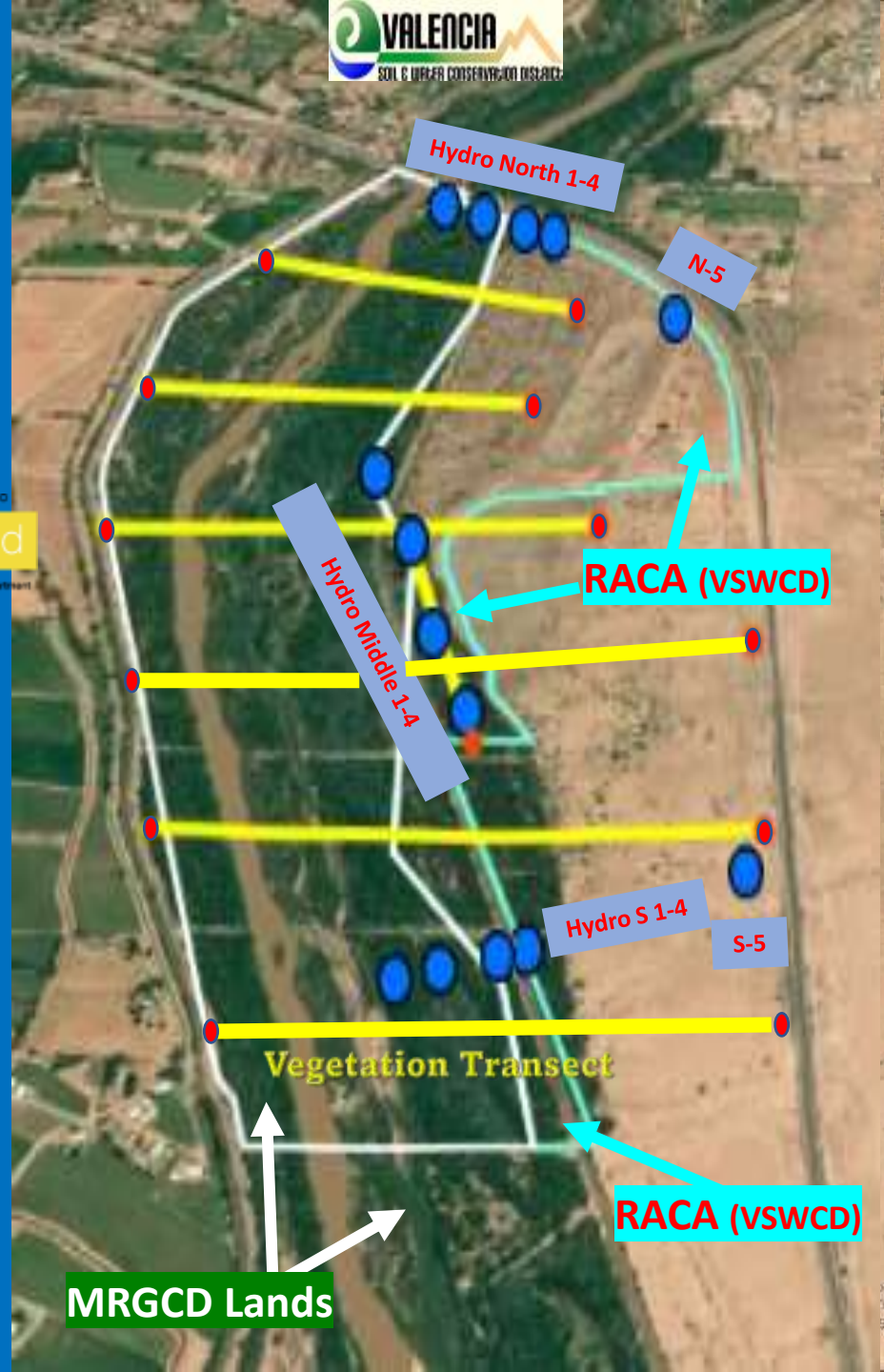
❑ **Done July 2022!!!!**

❑ 14 planned shallow monitoring water wells (3 transects)(6 installed; 8 to go )

❑ 6 Vegetative Transects

❑ Photo Point & survey monumentation)

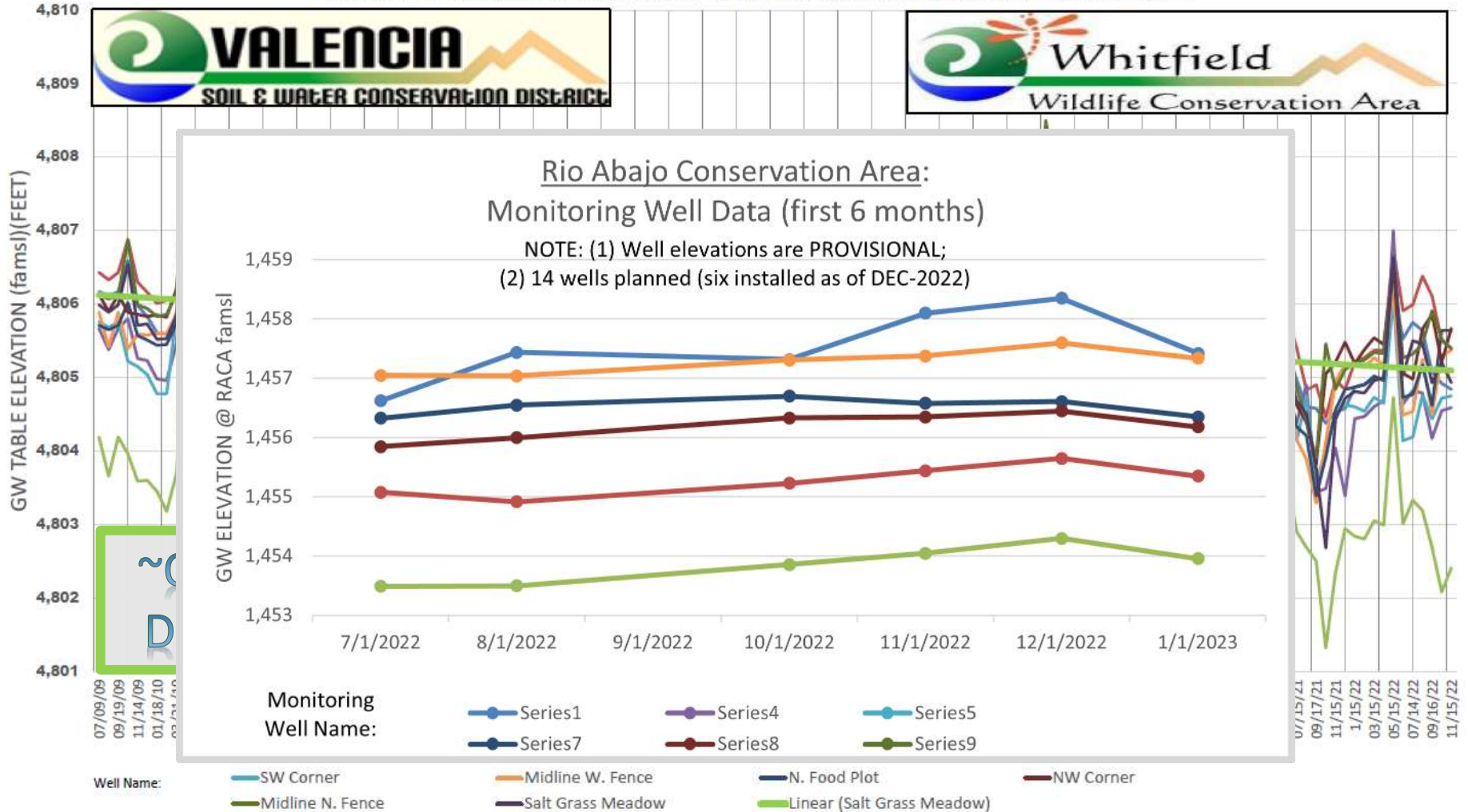
❑ **ii Pre-treatment data baby!!**





# Groundwater Monitoring @ Whitfield Wildlife Conservation Area: 13 Years of Monthly Tape Downs (by Volunteers like Ron Goes!!) (2009-2022)

WWCA Shallow Monitoring Wells ---Groundwater Elevation Observations: 2009-2022  
Chart of GW ELEVATIONS, Calculated from Monthly Measurements of Distance to Groundwater below Meas. Point (Top of Outer Casing (6" steel))



**BIG HOLE FIRE --April 11<sup>th</sup>, 2022-- +800 Acres**



75% of WWCA & STACY Burned 105 acres : Loss of ancient growth native trees



**Stacy Unit**

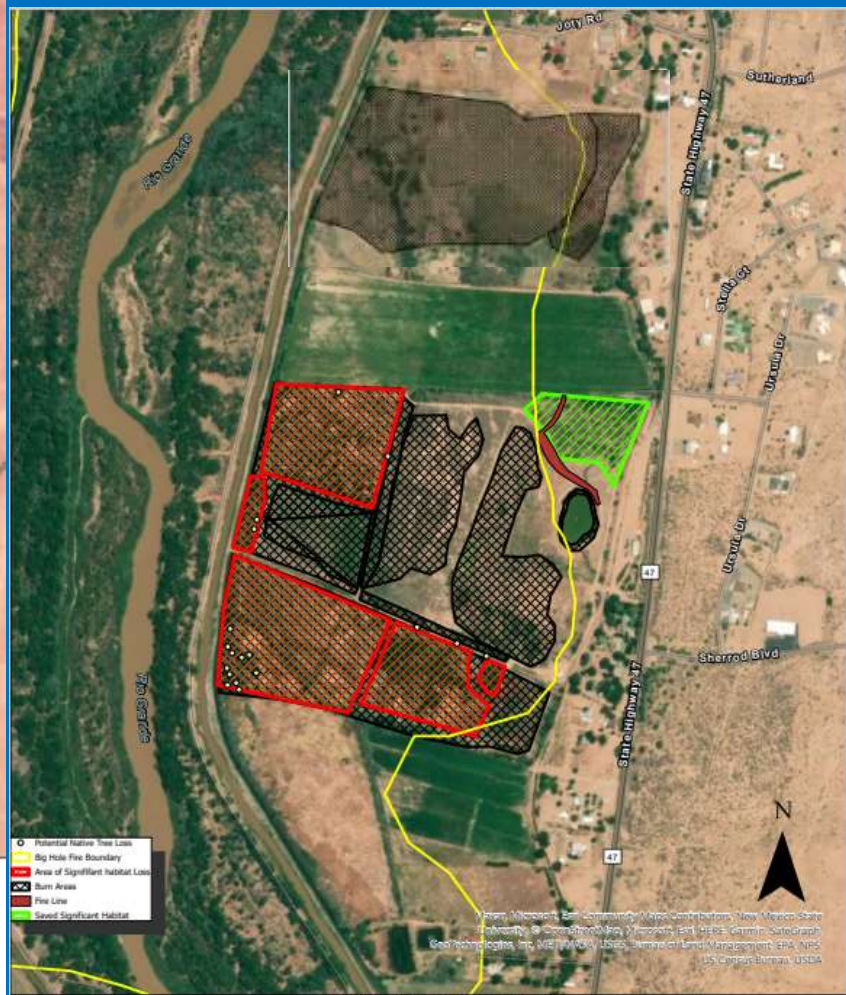
**Whitfield Wildlife Conservation Area**

Big Hole Fire Whitfield/Stacy Unit Map Scale: 1:40,575

**Rio Abajo Conservation Area (3 miles south of WWCA)**



Current Time: 7/16/2010 8:57 AM to 2/8/2011 3:10 PM



- Potential Native Tree Loss
- Big Hole Fire Boundary
- Area of Significant Habitat Loss
- Burn Areas
- Fire Line
- Signif. Significant Habitat

0 0.0305 0.1 Miles

Big Hole Fire April 11th 2022 Whitfield Wildlife Conservation Area

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# BIG HOLE FIRE: Whitfield Burning



# Neighbors helping neighbors, the La Constancia Way





**Another BEFORE FIRE picture of the WWCA West Gate (and someone's Mountain Bike) ...**



**And an April 13<sup>th</sup>, 2022 picture of the gate and the melted art sculpture 'ode to the power of fire'**



**Outdoor classroom  
Before & ...**

**After**



Finally, this photo taken as sunset approached the day of the **fire** of April 11<sup>th</sup>, 2022...



...same spot Oct. 21, 2020 (with Andrew's **three granddaughters** in one of our Whitfield's outdoor classrooms)

# POTENTIAL STRATEGIES TO REDUCE SEVERITY OF FUTURE WILDFIRE EVENTS

## • PATCHY MOSAIC REVEGETATION DESIGN

- Climate- & Fire-Adapted NATIVE PLANT LIST
- STRATEGIC DESIGN & PLACEMENT OF FUEL BREAKS
- UNDERSTORY MANAGEMENT
- COLLABORATE w/ WITH LOCAL FIRE COMMUNITY on FIRE RESPONSE PLAN
- STRATEGIC USE OF WATER
- PRESCRIBED BURN PROGRAM (for grassland components)
- STRUCTURED GRAZING: GOATS back in the BOSQUE?





1935

STACY UNIT  
(VSWCD)

Whitfield  
Wildlife  
Conservation Area  
(VSWCD)

0 0.05 0.1 0.2 0.3 0.4  
Miles

Slide courtesy of Paul Tashjian

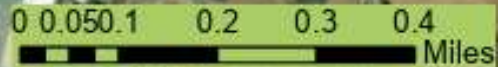




**RECENT**

**STACY UNIT  
(VSWCD)**

**Whitfield  
Wildlife  
Conservation Area  
(VSWCD)**



# MRGESCP--Securing species recovery through:

- 🌳 -- Understanding Ecosystem Functions
- 🌳 -- Drawing on Expertise and Collaboration
- 🌳 -- Preparing for Greater Uncertainty



## Species of Interest

The MRGESCP supports activities that focus on the following listed species in the Middle Rio Grande:

New Mexico Meadow  
Jumping Mouse



Photo Credit: U.S. Fish and  
Wildlife Service

Pecos Sunflower



Photo Credit: U.S. Fish and  
Wildlife Service

Yellow-Billed Cuckoo



Photo Credit: Andy Reago  
and Chrissy McClarren

Southwestern Willow  
Flycatcher



Photo Credit: Shannon  
Caruso

Rio Grande Silvery  
Minnow



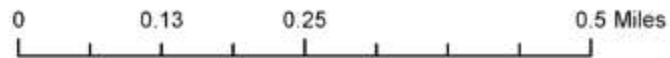
Photo Credit: Joel Lusk

# Pre-\*Climate Futures Workshop Walkaround Whitfield & Stacy Units

September 26<sup>th</sup>, 2023

## Walkabout Highlights:

- 1 Start (Visitor Center)
- 2 Moist Soil Units (SWIFL?)
- 3 Mucky SW Corner (YBCU?)
- 4 San Juan Drain / MRGCD (site of new pedestrian bridge)
- 5 Stacy Unit -- 43 ac grasslands
- 6 Return loop through WWCA's NW Forest and Owl Tree
- 7 Ode to Kandy Cordova and good neighbor Ronnie Moya



\*Oct. 24-25, 2023 (MRGESCP)

6/15/2023 2:46 PM

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Welcoming Remarks offered by VSWCD Vice Chair Teresa Smith de Cherif in the Whitfield Visitors Center



# Whitfield Complex: Restoration Concepts

- Applying Climate-adapted & Fire-adapted Diverse Native Plant List

- **Fuel Break design, to provide:**

- Access for Firefighters
- Defensible Space
- Demonstration of different designs and types of fuel breaks



Stacy Unit



Whitfield Wildlife Conservation Area



Rio Abajo Conservation Area

## Legend

- Irrigation Fuel Break
- Road Fuel Break
- Shaded Fuel Break
- Greenstrips
- Brown Strips devoid of Vegetation
- Mowed Fuel Break
- Whitfield Wildlife Conservation Area
- Stacy Unit
- Rio Abajo Conservation Area
- Possible Future MRGCD Fuel Break
- Existing PNM Easment




**STRAW DAWG  
FUEL BREAK IDEAS**

0 0.13 0.25 0.5 Miles

# PILOT PROJECT Opportunity: **Post-Fire** Restoration

## Whitfield & Stacy Units:

### BASIC 3 POST-FIRE RESTORATION CHOICES:

-  -- Do Nothing
-  -- Plant Back As Was
-  -- Do Something Different (e.g., climate- & fire-adapted design)



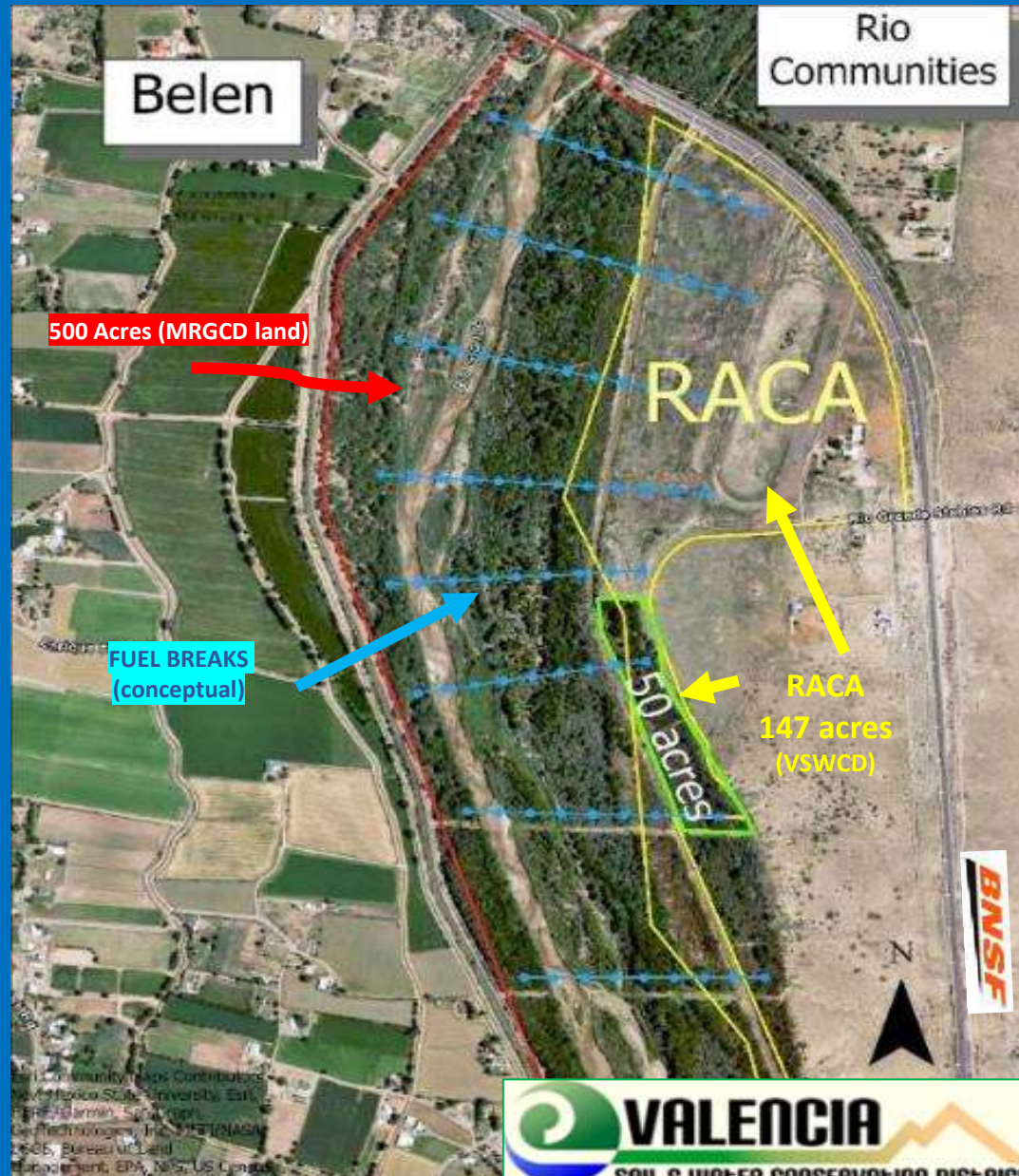
**POST-BURN PILOT PROJECT**  
**OPTIONS @ WWCA and STACY**

# PILOT PROJECT Opportunity: Pre-Burn Site

## Rio Abajo Conservation Area

### Pre-burn Pilot Study Location

- 🌳 147 acre mixed riparian site to showcase Bosque management restoration techniques
- 🌳 Applying climate-science guidance
- 🌳 Thinning / Fuel Reduction / Native Retention
- 🌳 **Fuel Break** Design Opportunity
- 🌳 Monitoring---already begun at RACA with Long-term Sentinel Site (July 2022).





**Current Forest Thinning Project at RACA made possible through EMNRD-State Forestry partnership**



**Highly Flammable Understory of 50-acre Rio Abajo Conservation Area's Cottonwood Stand**  
**(2021 photo on left, with October 2022 photo on right)**

# MIDDLE RIO GRANDE ENDANGERED SPECIES COLLABORATIVE PROGRAM:



## 16 SIGNATORIES



BUREAU OF  
RECLAMATION



**BIG THANKS to The MRGESCP Executive Committee for considering VSWCD's membership in the program.**



**Visit Whitfield & be on the look out for newly most popular bird The Phoenix!**