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.

1. **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.

1. **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.

1. **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.