



# Middle Rio Grande Endangered Species Collaborative Program

*Est. 2000*

## **Executive Committee (EC)**

### **Workshop Summary**

**December 10, 2024; 9:00 AM – 4:00 PM MST**

Albuquerque, NM

Executive Summary

Summary

Appendices

Appendix 1: Workshop Agenda

Appendix 2: Workshop Attendees

Appendix 3: Acronyms

Appendix 4: Read Aheads Referenced in this Document (*to be added to final summary*)

Settlement Agreement Terms 11.19.24

2024.01.18\_MRG ESP Multi-Year Plan 2024-2027

## Executive Summary

Executive Committee (EC) members of the Middle Rio Grande Basin Endangered Species Collaborative Program (MRGESCP) met December 10, 2024, in a day-long facilitated workshop at the Pueblo Cultural Center in Albuquerque, New Mexico. The primary purposes of the workshop were to:

- Share key updates related to, and discuss implications of, the recent settlement agreement;
- Review the MRGESCP's existing multi-year plan 2023 – 2027 to create a preliminary list of priority actions regarding the listed species preservation/conservation that could be started and/or completed in calendar year 2025; and
- Share and affirm the Collaborative's purpose and Executive Committee member roles and responsibilities and the Collaborative's structure in light of the changed landscape.

Co-Chairs Mark Kelly and Wayne Pullan opened the workshop praising the progress the Collaborative has made and underscoring the opportunities ahead of the group.

A panel session on the Settlement Agreement (Agreement) provided a high-level summary of the Agreement which requires consultation be reinitiated and a new BO be issued in three years. Pending completion of the new BO, the Agreement includes interim measures to: a) implement conservation measures in 2016 BO with high priority on species monitoring and b) implement water savings through fallowing/environmental water leasing, on-farm upgrades, infrastructure efficiency improvements for interim species protection.

Reclamation will continue implementing the 2016 BO while creating a new BO at the same time which will be a significant demand on resources (people, funding, time). As a part of the anticipated Biological Assessment (BA), BOR and USFWS have agreed to revisit the following:

1. Development of clearly defined, prioritized, and enforceable conservation measures taking into account the Rio Grande silvery minnow's (RGSM) 3-year lifespan.
2. Analysis of the impacts of climate change on river flows and species.
3. Analysis of river management impacts on RGSM recovery and survival.
4. Analysis of the impacts of river drying on RGSM populations, and the efficacy of mitigating these impacts with targeted use of water to support the species.
5. Separate from the baseline condition determination, analysis of the impact that certain water rights administrative actions or voluntary reductions in water diversions may have on (a) river flows and minnow population viability, (b) long-term impacts, and (c) proposed conservation measures.
6. Analysis of habitat suitability for RGSM in Cochiti Reach, and assessment of the potential ecological benefit of providing volitional fish passage at Angostura diversion dam, as a stand-alone measure and in combination with habitat restoration in the Cochiti Reach.
7. Analysis of the impacts on river flows and species from development and use of a 30,000- to 50,000-acre-foot conservation pool.
8. Incidental take levels or surrogates for all covered species consistent with Service's jeopardy determination.

Panel speakers remarked that re-consultation is an opportunity to revisit issues, look into better options, and must identify specific and focused actions that will make a difference for the listed species.

Using the **MRGESCP Multi-Year Plan 2023-2027** the EC identified 20 potential actions (below) from the 49 existing immediate and short-term priorities that will make a meaningful impact for species conservation and could be initiated and/or completed in the next 12 months. The group also identified

actions currently funded by one or more Signatories (see detailed tables in this document). At the next EC meeting, the group will review the items below and decide which to proceed with in 2025.

<b>Priority Code*</b>	<b>MRGESCP Multi-Year Plan 2023-2027 Priority Action Description To be initiated and/or completed in next 12 months.</b>
CS-I-1	Develop likely future scenarios by applying current climate data and models to the MRG. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Harness the expertise of regional climate scientists with experience in developing appropriate scenarios.</li> </ul>
CS-ST-1	Continue developing strategies to maintain ecosystem functions under different climate scenarios.
CS-ST-2	Consider potential changes in hydrology and geomorphology, and associated impacts to the ecosystem and listed species.
HR-new	Identify areas for restoration "RCOA".
VI-I-2	Clarify authorities and management roles related to vegetated islands and bank-attached bars.
WO-I-1	Using the responses from the survey of water managers on their roles in managing drying in Angostura Reach and additional signatory input, document the roles, responsibility, and available flexibility in water operations in the MRG.
WO-ST-5	Stakeholder and public outreach and education on conservation strategies and benefits of changes to water operations
WO-new	Inventory actions done in basin. Maintaining an inventory of all activity from each agency/org including upcoming timelines, areas, goals.
RD-I-3	Develop public messaging strategies related to conservation actions and monitoring during river drying.
RD-ST-2	Create a decision tool to <u>assess</u> management alternatives regarding drying in the MRG.
RD-ST-3	Document lessons learned regarding management response to drying, in years when the opportunity arises.
RD-ST-4	Incorporate findings from studies of the use of outfalls and irrigation infrastructure to affect the rate, duration, and extent of drying, into recommendations.
RD-new	Temperature in outfall v mainstem. How to manage the trade-offs.
SM-I-1	Finalize the revisions to the RGSM conceptual ecological model to include the genetics and propagation /augmentation programs and undertake a peer review of the revised model.
SM-I-4	Incorporate the following questions into the climate scenario planning effort: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How will RGSM habitat availability be affected by climate change?</li> <li>• How will forecasted shifts in the hydrograph impact RGSM population trends?</li> </ul>
SM-ST-1	Use the RGSM population models to evaluate RGSM management actions under different conditions projected for climate scenarios, if feasible.
SM-ST-3	Identify the sites in the MRG to target with habitat restoration for RGSM.
SM-ST-4	Identify vital ecosystem functions related to RGSM life history and management strategies.
SM-ST-5	Investigate the feasibility of a 10(j) population outside the current RGSM range.
SM-new	Propagation plan / Coordination of funds. Important to refine existing plan/funding.

\*Please refer to multi-year plan for code definitions.

The EC catalogued the Collaborative Program's purpose, strengths, limitations, and signatory needs for fuller engagement. The Collaborative is recognized as a place to share information, ideas, problem-solve issues related to species conservation on the MRG. A core strength of the group is the deep knowledge of the diverse members, the long-term relationships with one another and the shared commitment to

communication and coordination. The primary limitations identified tie to the absence of central Program funding as well as budget limitations including pending reductions. A perceived over-emphasis on process deters some Signatories from greater collaboration in the Program. Among EC members there is a desire to actualize more of the ideas within the group and an interest among several members to improve public education and engagement.

For many EC signatories, the Collaborative Program needs to achieve tangible results with clear benefits directly to the listed species and their habitats in the MRG for members to engage more fully. Additionally, members need more time, more people, and a consistent funding mechanism are also needed to support more engagement.

At the end of the day participants brainstormed how the current CP structure could be adapted to be more action and product oriented and responsive to emergent issues in the face of limited resources and the need for a new BO.

Participants identified some process changes (e.g. open space time on EC agendas) and several possible substantive ad hoc groups (e.g. water management, monitoring, adaptive management implementation, rapid response). Jennifer F. proposed three possible structural models for a water management group that could include ESA and adaptive management components:

1. An EC of Water Management agencies within the Collaborative Program, advised by and supported by non-water management members.
2. A Water Management subgroup, within the Collaborative Program. Parallel to SAM Committee for example.
3. A Water Management Team outside of, and separate from, the Collaborative Program with scaled back CP scope.

EC members were asked to consider the strengths and limitations of each option, how they may impact each Signatory and to let Jennifer know. The PST will discuss the options more fully at its next meeting.

The Workshop adjourned after participants shared with one another their responses to either of the questions below.

1. *What is something that you've changed your mind about today?*
2. *What excites you about the Collaborative Program moving forward?*

**Workshop Action Items**

Action	Lead	By When
1. Review and consider three models for a water mgmt. group e.g. adaptive mgmt. implementation, ESA compliance discussions happen as a part of, or parallel to, the CP: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. An EC of Water Management agencies within the Collaborative Program, advised by and supported by non-water management members.</li> <li>2. A Water Management subgroup, within the Collaborative Program. Parallel to SAM Committee for example.</li> </ol>	Executive Committee members	Early CY 2025

3. A Water Management Team outside of, and separate from, the Collaborative Program with scaled back CP scope.		
2. Use workshop products to plan focus for upcoming EC meeting in CY 2025. Including discussion of item 1 above.	PST	Early CY 2025
3. Schedule co-chair debrief call.	PST	January 10, 2025
4. Finalize Workshop draft summary and distribute.	Sarah	January 10, 2025

## Workshop Summary

### Welcome, Introductions, Agenda Review

Non-Federal Co-Chair Mark Kelly, Albuquerque Bernalillo County Water Utility Authority (ABCWUA) opened the meeting and welcomed the Executive Committee (EC) members. Mr. Kelly noted that the Collaborative is at a critical inflection point and the workshop is an opportunity to take stock of where the Collaborative has been and to plan how the Collaborative proceeds. He encouraged everyone to give unabashed opinions, the goal of the workshop is to have everyone on the same page on the path forward.

Federal Co-Chair Wayne Pullan, Regional Director, Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) added that collectively the EC has made such progress with the Collaborative Program. Mr. Pullan believes in this process because this group has come together in the interest of the river and the interest of the species to reach a solution. This effort represents a huge amount of commitment among the EC members. He added that it is important that the relationships within the Collaborative are improved with the workshop. Mr. Pullan encouraged the EC to consider how the Collaborative or part of this group, can implement adaptive management approaches resulting in real action.

Workshop Facilitator, Sarah Palmer, DOI Office of Collaborative Action and Dispute Resolution (CADR), asked attendees to introduce themselves and their role on the EC. See Appendix 1. Ms. Palmer provided a high level reviewed the agenda and workshop objectives noting that this is not a decision-making meeting. The outcome of the workshop is to use the discussions to kickstart individual meetings. There were no questions about the agenda.

**Decision:** Workshop agenda approved.

Ms. Palmer asked the group what ground rules they needed to have productive discussion. Members identified the following group agreements for the day:

- Respect, take the time to listen to other perspectives.
- Honesty- be real with why you're here (open and honest).
- Strive for balance between the interest of the entities'/organizations'/agencies' interest and the river's best interest. We need to speak for the river today, and speak for our personal interests.
- Trust one another – space to speak freely.
- Make an effort to listen to others, invite others into the conversation.
- Be clear about the objectives for each agenda topic.

**Decision:** Workshop group agreements approved.

### Summary of the Settlement Agreement and its Implications on the Collaborative Program

The objective of this session was to provide a high-level overview of the recent (November 2024) settlement agreement and its potential implications for the MRGESCP.

Chandler Farnsworth, DOI SOL, provided background for the recent settlement agreement in WildEarth Guardians v. US FWS, BOR and MRGCD regarding the 2016 Biological Opinion (BO). The settlement agreement (see Appendix 4) requires consultation be reinitiated and a new biological opinion be issued

by October, 2028. Reclamation and the Service have agreed to consider eight issues, as appropriate, during consultation.

1. Development of new conservation measures (including focus on the RGSM's 3-year lifespan).
2. New analysis of the impacts of climate change using the current climate science.
3. Analysis of river management impacts, such as irrigation water delivery, use of drains, and wasteways, on the RGSM.
4. Analysis of the impacts of river drying on RGSM and the efficacy of mitigating these impacts with targeted use of water.
5. Analysis of the impact of certain water rights administrative actions, including voluntary reductions in diversions.
6. Analysis of habitat suitability for RGSM in Cochiti Reach (upstream of Angostura) and assessment of potential benefits of fish passage at Angostura Diversion Dam.
7. Analysis of potential impacts on river flows and species form a 30,000- to 50,000 ac-ft conservation pool.
8. Incidental take levels or surrogates for all covered species consistent with Service's jeopardy determination.

The settlement agreement includes interim measures pending completion of the new BO:

1. Implement remaining conservation measures in 2016 BO with high priority on species monitoring.
2. Implement water savings through fallowing/environmental water leasing, on-farm upgrades, infrastructure efficiency improvements for interim species protection.

Jason Casuga, Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District (MRGCD), is excited about re-consultation, he sees it is an opportunity to revisit issues, look into better options and address questions important to the MRGCD. Water is tied to the culture of the middle valley and there are apprehensions among irrigators. He noted that the San Juan Chama Project (SJCP) water is important to MRGCD.

Grace Haggerty, NM Interstate Stream Commission (NMISC), congratulated the group on reaching a settlement, noting that the State is still analyzing what the letters and settlement say. Although the State did not intervene in the lawsuit, the State is going to engage now that the settlement has been reached. Moving forward the State will work with all the parties here.

Jennifer Faler, BOR, is going to continue implementing the existing BO while creating a new BO. This will require a lot of work and resources to implement the current BO while developing the process for the upcoming BO. She noted that BOR's focus is to reduce/limit depletions on the river and that others will need to step up to keep eliminating the depletions. This species (MRGSM) and this river are going to need people to step up to save them. Moving forward BOR's limited resources will necessitate a focus on working on the current BO and the new BO.

Deb Hill, US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), noted that the settlement process brought to light how the old BO consultation was a bit like a kitchen sink with 87 conservation efforts, spreading resources too thinly. Ms. Hill emphasized the need to focus on the more impactful actions: i.e., the actions that are really going to help. She added that there are fewer questions on the biology and instead questions about how to keep water in the river and keep the RGSM in the water until fall. Looking at the river as a whole, what can be done to make a difference in the ecosystem to help save the species?

### Questions and Discussion

- Paul T. asked what is needed to expand on these responsibilities.
  - Deb H.: It needs to be a larger conversation.
  - Jason C.: Need to analyze the impact on the compact of water operations. Satisfying the compact is a conservation measure because it unlocks more water. It's time to arguably ask those questions. We have to account for political and legal rules on the river.
  - Grace H.: In many years, there is a water debit (100k acre feet). The compact has to be addressed. The river system is senescing in places and we can't force down high flows and sediment. It is important to evaluate how we hold water in our reservoirs because of climate change. (Lots of constraints-biologically, politically, legally).
  - Wayne P.: Note that five of the eight issues start with "analysis of" and those analyses have to be included in the new BO due in 3 years.
  - Chandler F: We are obligated to consider these analyses.
  - Jason C.: The MRGCD has analysis in place that can be expanded to show BOR what the impacts look like. The analysis can help make a reliable Rio Grande. We need to do a better job about the public facing document and provide better educational materials.
- Kyle H. remarked the EC have all become students of CPUE (catch per unit effort). Reclamation and the Service need to look back a little bit but also towards the future.
  - Jennifer F.: Long-term monitoring will continue. Using last year results to plan for current year and future years.
  - Deb H.: We struggled with the CPUE keep hitting the .3 threshold for a sustainable habitat for the minnow. We're really needing a bigger picture analysis, where are management actions needed to keep the minnow going? We have to look at all of the life stages of the minnow.
  - Grace H.: Early analysis indicated that there are no trends with the minnow except for they do well in high flow environments. Minnows don't spawn in low flow environments. There are no tools in the toolbox in the reservoir system to account of the minnow. How do we get to enough minnows to at least have recruitment for the minnows in a couple years? Do we need to move the minnow ultimately?
- Hira W.: Reclamation is still trying to implement current conservation efforts. Are there some priority ones trying to be accomplished before the new BO is implemented?
  - Jennifer F.: BOR has funding for the monitoring aspect of the BO. Other priorities are fish passage and propagation facilities. There are some undermanaged items that need to have effort put into them. BOR does not have additional funding/ staffing to address all conservation measures.
- Hira W.: Are we assuming that what is good for the minnow is good for the rest of ecosystem? I'm hearing a lot about the minnow but what about the other species?
  - Deb H.: We need to be wholistic.
  - Jennifer F.: The reductions in water make it really good for the birds, but bad for water conveyance.
- Mark K.: Reclamation is looking for help with eight items. My perspective, speaking for the river, we all want to help BOR with those items. How do you see the Collaborative Program helping Reclamation with those items?
  - Jennifer F.: Deb said it best. There are a lot "recommend", "develop" in the current BO. Moving forward need to focus on what matters. No big packets and instead choose 2-3 more impactful items (choose the best option, re-develop the other two items). We need a hyper-focused program that prioritizes water delivery.



- Deb H.: We are going towards a future where it's safe to say it's not going to get better but only worse (referencing limited water, climate change). Critical to combine efforts and resources to achieve a practical and necessary goal.
- Jason C.: If the Collaborative Program is the keeper of history and education it can have a big impact. Put aside individual agency mission statements (with respect that we all have them) and work towards a common goal for this river. My goal is to help people understand the MRGCD system. How do we educate the whole state about our water history? Can we educate the community and help them understand water in the middle valley and its impact?
- Jennifer F.: I would love to have everyone get a better understanding on what each agency is actually doing on the river and the work efforts.
- Francesca S.: I know FWS is coming out with their 25-year conservation plan as it pertains to endangered species. Does that play a part in the new BO?
  - Deb: We don't have a 25 year plan, but a 5 year plan.
- Kyle H.: Who is the most important stakeholder not in the room? WildEarth Guardians have been litigating for years and they never have to show up. We need to get them involved in the planning.
  - Jennifer F.: We need to create the space to have them be willing to discuss [their interests] with the MRGESCP. Their goals and approaches may not align with the MRGESCP goals.
  - Jason C.: At the beginning of settlement discussions it (WEG joining the MRGESCP) was made as a common goal but that dropped off as conversations continued.

**For further EC consideration:** Do we have the right members/entities that are the best fit for our goals and our needs? Are there other groups/individuals that need to be involved?

### **Collaborative Program Priorities to Advance Species Conservation in the Next 12 Months**

The objective of this session was for EC to identify actions from their existing priorities that will make a meaningful impact for species conservation.

Process: Participants first worked in groups of 6-8 people followed by a large group discussion. Each small group identified which priorities from the list of immediate and short-term priorities in the **MRGESCP Multi-Year Plan 2023-2027** could be started and/or achieved in the next 12 months. Priorities were organized into topics, based on the existing work plan and grouped into the three categories listed below. In some cases, a topic was discussed in two categories, e.g. management of vegetated islands and bank attached bars was discussed in adaptive management implementation and water management small groups. If a priority was missing the groups added them to the bottom of each table.




1. Adaptive Management Implementation
  - Climate scenario planning
  - Habitat restoration planning, design, and assessment
  - Management of vegetated islands and bank attached bars
2. Water Management (Conservation, Storage, Spring Peaks)
  - Water operations and flexibility
  - Strategic planning for river drying management in the MRG
  - Management of vegetated islands and bank attached bars

3. Listed Species Management and Science
  - Rio Grande Silvery Minnow
  - Southwestern Willow Flycatcher
  - Yellow-billed Cuckoo
  - Pecos Sunflower
  - New Mexico Meadow Jumping Mouse

After lunch EC members reviewed each chart and noted with a sticky dot the priorities their entity/organization/agency was funding.

The tables below summarize the group discussions from the morning and early afternoon sessions. Items with blue stars identify actions to initiate and/or complete in the next 12 months. Actions, regardless of priority, that are currently funded are denoted with a \$ and the abbreviation of the funding entity. See Appendix 3 for a list of entity acronyms.

**Adaptive Management Implementation: Climate Scenario Planning**


Start and/or complete in next 12 months	Priority from 2023-2027 Work Plan	Notes	Currently Funded?
<b>Immediate (2023)</b>			
CS-I-1 	Develop likely future scenarios by applying current climate data and models to the MRG <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Harness the expertise of regional climate scientists with experience in developing appropriate scenarios</li> </ul>	CS-I-1 and CS-ST-2 are related and connect to the MRG Basin Study led by BOR and MRGCD.	\$ - BOR \$ - NMISC \$ - ASW
CS-I-2	Host a Climate Scenario Planning Workshop designed to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Determine which key ecosystem functions are threatened by climate change</li> <li>• Identify scientific uncertainties that influence management decisions</li> <li>• Begin developing strategies to mitigate impacts of future changes in the system by targeting key ecosystem functions</li> </ul>		
<b>Short-Term (2024-2026):</b>			
CS-ST-1 	Continue developing strategies to maintain ecosystem functions under different climate scenarios	See above, CS-I-1	\$ - ASW \$ - MRGCD \$ - SA
CS-ST-2 	Consider potential changes in hydrology and geomorphology, and associated impacts to the ecosystem and listed species	Some aspects underway, e.g. USACE. Note: this priority benefits non Silvery Minnow listed	\$ - BOR \$ - FWS \$ - SA \$ - UNM

		species (see last table).	
CS-ST-3	Investigate the cultural and socio-economic impacts of the changing ecosystem		
CS-ST-4	Engage the public through outreach and education regarding <u>climate trends and changes in the bosque</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify actions that can be carried out by members of the public to help mitigate impacts</li> </ul>	Underlined language links to: WO-ST-5; RD-I-3	\$ - BDD \$ - BEMP \$ - CABQ-OS \$ - MRGCD \$ - FWS \$ - UNM

Full group observations: Don't include scenarios with pre-1921 flows, 45-50K cfs.


**Adaptive Management Implementation: Habitat Restoration Planning and Assessment**

Start and/or complete in next 12 months	Priority from 2023-2027 Work Plan	Notes	Currently Funded?
<b>Immediate (2023):</b>			
HR-I-1	Develop a standardized framework to guide restoration planning that includes identification of response metrics to measure and track progress/success		
HR-I-2	Recommend updates to the habitat restoration geospatial database, "RioRestore"		
HR-I-3	Organize habitat restoration monitoring plans and protocols into a compendium for MRG restoration practitioners		
HR-I-4	Investigate potential funding opportunities (especially long-term) and partnerships in support of habitat restoration projects		
<b>Short-Term (2024-2026):</b>			
HR-ST-1	Update RioRestore	Underway!	\$ - NMISC
HR-ST-2	Forecast expected changes to vegetative communities based on the climate scenarios		\$ - BEMP
HR-ST-3	Develop restoration strategies to maintain ecosystem functions, exploring the roles of both native and non- native species		
HR-ST-4	Recommend modifications to habitat restoration practices to incorporate climate scenarios, targeting vital ecosystem functions		
HR-ST-5	Integrate signatories' wildfire prevention, mitigation and restoration best practices		\$ - CABQ - OS

HR-ST-6	Investigate feasibility and value of disposing or repurposing of post-construction materials, such as vegetation and sediment		\$ - NMISC
HR-ST-7	Develop strategies to adaptively manage habitat restoration		
<b>Missing:</b>			
HR- 	Identify areas for restoration "RCOA"		\$ - MRGCD \$ - NMGFD \$ - SA \$ - USACE

Full group observations: need to have ongoing conversations, trying to identify certain areas of restoration. An ongoing project that can contribute to the prioritization is the Natural Heritage New Mexico Riparian Ecological Assessment Project, which is identifying riparian conservation opportunity areas (RCOAs).


**Adaptive Management Implementation: Management of Vegetated Islands and Bank-Attached Bars**



Start and/or complete in next 12 months?	Priority from 2023-2027 Work Plan	Notes	Currently Funded?
<b>Immediate (2023)</b>			
VI-I-1	Develop a glossary for terminology related to vegetated islands and bars, to improve communication and collaboration among stakeholders		
VI-I-2 	Clarify authorities and management roles related to vegetated islands and bank-attached bars		\$ - BOR \$ - NMISC \$ - USACE
VI-I-3	Begin developing a conceptual model representing ecosystem functions and physical river conditions related to vegetated islands/bars in order to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Account for spatial and temporal successional changes</li> <li>Explore trade-offs regarding habitat formation/loss for different species</li> <li>Characterize trends and conditions</li> <li>Assess management alternatives</li> </ul>		
VI-I-4	Determine feasibility of developing a map of locations of vegetated islands and bank-attached bars in the MRG, with a plan for regular updates		
<b>Short-Term (2024-2026):</b>			
VI-ST-1	Fill in critical data gaps for maps and models, where possible		\$ - NMISC

VI-ST-2	Update map of locations of vegetated islands and bank- attached bars in the MRG		
VI-ST-3	Refine conceptual model of ecosystem functions and physical river conditions related to vegetated islands/bars in the MRG to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inform further scientific research</li> <li>• Recommend adaptive management strategies</li> </ul>		
VI-ST-4	Investigate the effects of vegetated islands and bank- attached bars on water conveyance and sediment transport processes		\$ - MRGCD
<b>Missing:</b>			
VI-	Monitor vegetation, fuel load and wildlife on islands and bars.		\$ - ASW \$ - BEMP \$ - CABQ – OS \$ - MRGCD \$ - UNM

Full group observations: ESA activities are throughout these tables. Some aspects are currently underway and seem achievable within 12 months. Tables illustrate the ongoing need for continuous collaboration and discussion as projects and actions are taken/ completed its worth sharing with the group.

### Water Management: Operations and Flexibility



Start and/or complete in next 12 months?	Priority from 2023-2027 Work Plan	Notes	Currently Funded?
<b>Immediate (2023):</b>			
WO-I-1 	Using the responses from the survey of water managers on their roles in managing drying in Angostura Reach and additional signatory input, document the roles, responsibility, and available flexibility in water operations in the MRG	Broaden from Angostura reach to three reaches.	\$ - BOR \$ - MRGCD \$ - NMISC \$ - UNM \$ - WA
WO-I-2	Based on likely climate scenarios, project potential effects on water operations related to changes in the hydrograph	Still relevant but not urgent.	
<b>Short-Term (2024-2026):</b>			
WO-ST-1	Identify opportunities for coordination and flexibility regarding water operations	Still relevant but outside of MRGESCP.	
WO-ST-2	Identify flexibilities and multiple-use benefits of any changes to water operations	Regarding Abiquiu storage. Urgent in relation to MAT? <i>See full group discussion below.</i>	\$ - NMISC \$ - USACE
WO-ST-3	Identify research needs regarding conservation improvement to water operations	Still relevant but not urgent.	




WO-ST-4	Tie Collaborative Program planning efforts into external planning efforts (e.g., 50-Year Water Plan, Rio Grande Basin Study, ABCWUA’s 100-Year Plan, NM Water Resources Research Institute)	Still relevant but not urgent.	
WO-ST-5 	Stakeholder and public outreach and education on conservation strategies and benefits of changes to water operations	Broaden focus and ties to RP-I-3	\$ - ASW \$ - BEMP \$ - BDD \$ - FWS \$ - NMISC \$ - UNM \$ - WA
<b>Missing:</b>			
WO- 	Inventory actions done in basin. Maintaining an inventory of all activity from each agency/org including upcoming timelines, areas, goals.		\$ - WA

Full group discussion: Regarding WO – ST- 2 is the MAT going to happen this spring? Can the Collaborative Program and the MAT team work together for a measurable result within 12 months?




In the next 12 months, progress can be made to educate the community on water, how it works, what we do and the common goal.

**Water Management: Strategic Planning for River Drying in the Middle Rio Grande**

Start and/or complete in next 12 months?	Priority from 2023-2027 Work Plan	Notes	Currently Funded?
<b>Immediate (2023):</b>			
RD-I-1	Describe the decision environment for management of drying in the MRG using the ad hoc group’s survey and summary report		
RD-I-2	Identify research questions related to drying in the MRG		\$ - MRGCD \$ - USACE
RD-I-3 	Develop public messaging strategies related to conservation actions and monitoring during river drying	Still relevant. Tie to WO-ST-3.	\$ - BDD \$ - FWS \$ - MRGCD \$ - UNM \$ - WA
<b>Short-Term (2024-2026):</b>			
RD-ST-1	Where appropriate, include and update river drying considerations in ecosystem-level and species-level conceptual models		
RD-ST-2 	Create a decision tool to <u>assess</u> management alternatives regarding drying in the MRG		\$ - BDD \$ - BOR \$ - MRGCD

			\$ - UNM \$ - USACE \$ - WA
RD-ST-3 	Document lessons learned regarding management response to drying, in years when the opportunity arises		\$ - BOR \$ - FWS \$ - WA
RD-ST-4 	Incorporate findings from studies of the use of outfalls and irrigation infrastructure to affect the rate, duration and extent of drying, into recommendations		\$ - ASW \$ - BOR \$ - MRGCD \$ - NMISC \$ - WA
RD-ST-5	Continue to refine the strategic plan for management of drying		
<b>Missing:</b>			
RD- 	Temperature in outfall v mainstem. How to manage the trade-offs.		\$ - ASW

**Listed Species: Rio Grande Silvery Minnow (RGSM) Management and Science**

Start and/or complete in next 12 months?	Priority from 2023-2027 Work Plan	Notes	Currently Funded?
<b>Immediate (2023)</b>			
SM-I-1 	Finalize the revisions to the RGSM conceptual ecological model to include the genetics and propagation /augmentation programs, and undertake a peer review of the revised model		\$ - NMGFD \$ - UNM
SM-I-2	Provide guidance on recently published RGSM population models, including data inputs, model assumptions, and appropriate application of each model		
SM-I-3	Develop a plan to update and refine the RGSM integrated population model based on new data		
SM-I-4 	Incorporate the following questions into the climate scenario planning effort: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How will RGSM habitat availability be affected by climate change?</li> <li>• How will forecasted shifts in the hydrograph impact RGSM population trends?</li> </ul>		\$ - BOR
<b>Short-Term (2024-2026):</b>			
SM-ST-1 	Use the RGSM population models to evaluate RGSM management actions under different conditions projected for climate scenarios, if feasible		\$ - BOR \$ - UNM \$ - USACE


SM-ST-2	Consider RGSM management in the development of the ecosystem-level conceptual model for the MRG		
★ SM-ST-3	Identify the sites in the MRG to target with habitat restoration for RGSM		\$ - ASW \$ - WA
★ SM-ST-4	Identify vital ecosystem functions related to RGSM life history and management strategies		\$ - USACE
★ SM-ST-5	Investigate the feasibility of a 10(j) population outside the current RGSM range	Linked to SM-LT-4 see below.	\$ - FWS \$ - NMGFD
<b>Missing:</b>			
★ SM-	Propagation plan / Coordination of funds. Important to refine existing plan/funding.		\$ - BOR \$ - NMISC \$ - UNM \$ - WA
This small group also identified silvery minnow priorities from the Long Term (LT) for 2027 and beyond priority list as important to take action on in the next 12 months.			
SM-LT-1	Continue to evaluate RGSM management actions as future scenarios and models are updated.		\$ - FSW
SM-LT-2	Recommend adaptive management actions for RGSM taking into consideration effects of climate change and maintenance of ecosystem functions important to RGSM survival and recovery.		
SM-LT-3	Investigate the need for a new RGSM propagation facility and, if supported, provide recommendations for design and construction.		
SM-LT-4	Provide recommendations for implementing a potential 10(j) RGSM population, if determined to be feasible.		\$ - FWS \$ - NMGFD

Full group discussion: all of the silvery minnow priorities remain relevant. Missing from the list was the Propagation plan and conservation of funds. Of the long-term priorities identified SM-LT-2 has potential to be completed in 12 months. SM-LT-3 is actively being worked on, followed by a report can be achievable in 12 months.

**Listed Species (non-RGSM) Management and Science for Southwestern Willow Flycatcher, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Pecos Sunflower, and New Mexico Meadow Jumping Mouse**

Start and/or complete in next 12 months?	Priority from 2023-2027 Work Plan	Notes	Currently Funded?
<b>Immediate</b>			
LS-I-1	Monitoring presence / absence of YBC and SWFL.		\$ - ASW \$ - FWS \$ - NMISC \$ - USACE



CS-ST-2 	Consider potential changes in hydrology and geomorphology, and associated impacts to the ecosystem and listed species	See notes in Climate Scenario Table.	\$ - BOR \$ - FWS \$ - SA \$ - UNM
CS-ST-4	Engage the public through outreach and education regarding <a href="#">climate trends and changes in the bosque</a> . Identify actions that can be carried out by members of the public to help mitigate impacts	See notes in Climate Scenario Table.	\$ - BDD \$ - BEMP \$ - CABQ-OS \$ - MRGCD \$ - FWS \$ - UNM
VI-I-3	Begin developing a conceptual model representing ecosystem functions and physical river conditions related to vegetated islands/bars in order to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Account for spatial and temporal successional changes</li> <li>• Explore trade-offs regarding habitat formation/loss for different species</li> <li>• Characterize trends and conditions</li> <li>• Assess management alternatives</li> </ul>		
HR-I-1	Develop a standardized framework to guide restoration planning that includes identification of response metrics to measure and track progress/success.	Related to HR-ST-3 and HR-LT-4	
HR-ST-3	Develop restoration strategies to maintain ecosystem functions, exploring the roles of both native and non- native species	Related to HR-I-1 and HR-LT-4	
HR-LT-4	Apply ecosystem approach to habitat restoration projects throughout the MRG.	Related to HR-I-1 and HR-ST-3	

**Action Item:** At the next EC meeting review the items with blue stars and decide which to proceed with in 2025.

### **Confirming the Collaborative's Purpose and Executive Committee Roles & Responsibilities**

The purpose of this session was for the EC to affirm the Collaborative's purpose and Executive Committee member roles and responsibilities.

Process: EC members posted their responses to the following questions on flip charts:

1. What is the purpose of the Collaborative?
2. What are the Collaborative Program's strengths & limitations?
3. What do you/organization that you represent need to be more engaged as an EC member?

Where EC members shared a perspective it was noted with their agency/organization/entity acronym. The group then reviewed and discussed the responses. A summary of each discussion is below.

### **Purpose of the Collaborative Summary**

EC members describe the purpose of the Collaboration Program as a platform for signatories to problem-solve and address challenges related to conservation in the Middle Rio Grande. Protecting endangered species through implementation of the Endangered Species Act and improving ecosystems through coordinated river measures were important topics frequently mentioned. The Collaborative Program is a space for communication, collaboration, coordination and information exchange to advance MRG species and ecosystems.

Detailed comments from chart. Participants acronyms of agency/entity/organization or individual are listed alphabetically.

1. **Advise.** BDD, BOR, MRGCD
2. **Stay informed of ongoing conservation projects.** ASW, BEMP, BDD, BOR, NMDGF
3. **Identify actions that can be taken to protect MRG species.** ABCWUA, BOR, OSD
4. **Maintain a community that runs on a direct democracy.** BEMP
5. **Coordinate activities on the river for the benefit of the species.** BEMP, BOR, UNM
6. **Bring us together as a group to discuss.** BEMP, BOR, NS (individual)
7. **Provide space for agencies and groups to collaborate on endangered species issues.** ABCWUA, BOR, NMDGF, NMISC
8. **To collaborate and coordinate a species recovery / ecosystem improvement projects while protecting water rights/uses.** ABQWUA, BOR, FWS, NMGFD, USACE
9. **To bring together experts on the system to collaborate to the benefit of the ecosystem.** BEMP, BOR, MRGCD
10. **Keep the river beautiful by working together.** ASW, BEMP, BOR, NMISC
11. **Keep an “eye on each other” (attributable to J. Stomp).** BOR
12. **To get us un-siloed.** BDD, BOR, FWS
13. **Facilitate, streamline ESA compliance for water management actions.** ABQWUA, BOR, FWS, MRGCD, NMISC, USACE
14. **Problem-solve big problems together.** ABQWUA, ASW, BEMP

**MRGESCP Strengths and Limitations Summary**

**Strengths:** The Collaborative Program's strengths are linked to the wealth of information and knowledge its diverse members possess. EC members see strength in their collective commitment to communicating and collaborating to solve problems related to the MRG.

**Limitations:** The primary limitations identified tie to the absence of central funding for the Program as well as budget limitation including pending reductions. A perceived over-emphasis on process deters some from greater collaboration, and phrases like "paralysis by analysis" were mentioned. There is a desire to actualize more of the ideas within the group rather than have them exist solely in the concept stage and an interest among several to improve public education and engagement.

Detailed comments from chart. The number in parenthesis is the number of agency/entity/organization’s concurring with the comment.

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Limitations</b>
Lots of well-informed partners. (7)	Who’s brining the water? (2)
Coordination and awareness. (2)	Get stuck in agenda building. (6)
A structure and willingness for collaboration. (2)	Process stymies collaboration. (3)

Communication. (3)	Imposing budget reallocations/ cuts. Need others to think about funding. (2)
Diversity of representation. (4)	No central funding. (7)
Community. (1)	Authority. (1)
Friends : ) (1)	A strong strategic plan for implementation is absent. (1)
Ideas. (2)	Action. (2)
Great people to solve problems with. (3)	Lack of focus. (4)
	Limited capacity/bandwidth of EC members to focus on MRGESCP. (1)
	Pretty siloed. (2)
	Public engagement. (3)
	Leadership (1)

### Needs for Greater Engagement as an EC Signatory Summary

To increase EC Signatory engagement, the Collaborative Program needs to achieve tangible results with clear benefits directly to the listed species and their habitats in the MRG. Members need more time, more people, and a consistent funding mechanism to engage more fully. Greater transparency in science, decision-making, and creating action items to follow research recommendations is also needed.

Detailed comments from chart. The acronym of the entity/agency/organization or individual who made the comment is listed first followed alphabetically by acronyms of others who share the need.

2. A long-term funding mechanism and clear metrics of benefits/products/results. USACE
3. Clear products with direct species benefits or relevancy to my agency. NMDGC, BOR
4. A release from other paid duties. NS (individual)
5. Action needs to follow research and recommendations. No more paralysis by analysis. MRGCD, ABQWUA, BOR
6. Positive results for species. ABQWUA, BDD, BOR, FWS
7. Facilitation of work we do (e.g., more inclusion on project reviews in MRG by technical guidance staff at DGF). NMDGF
8. Funding (more time and more people). BEMP, ASW, NMDGF, NMISC, NS, OSD
9. Transparency in science and collaboratively funded projects. NMISC, BOR, UNM
10. Listen to needs/ concerns of signatories. UNM, BEMP, BOR
11. Feedback on implemented projects and opportunity for collaboration on adapting such projects. Unattributed, ABQWUA, BOR, FWS
  - a. A participant commented: *Would love to help, but see need [above] funding (consistent, long-term funding).*
12. Projects with management relevance. BOR, ASW
13. Tangible results commensurate with resources expended. NMISC, BOR, FWS, NMGFD, USACE

### Full group discussion regarding engagement needs

Sarah noted themes in some of the initial comments which are underlined in the list above. During the discussion the group added a need generally for clear goals for CP, [to] define roles of research, action, and reporting.

An EC member asked, do we know that more engagement is the answer? Perhaps some orgs/individuals need less engagement? Some interpreted the question on the chart to mean “more effective engagement”. Jennifer F. offered that from a federal standpoint there are plenty of [federal] employees who would work on the program but are reluctant to do so as there is very little tangible results.

**For further EC discussion:** What tangible actions can the EC take to respond to these needs?

**Does the current Collaborative Program structure support the actions identified in the morning?**

The purpose of this group discussion was for the EC to discuss if its current structure can support implementation of the priority actions (items with stars) preliminarily identified in the morning session.

Process: the current structure of the MRGESCP was posted (see below). Recognizing the structure was updated in 2018, the EC was asked if the structure still works and is responsive to the needs identified in the morning session. The EC discussion follows.

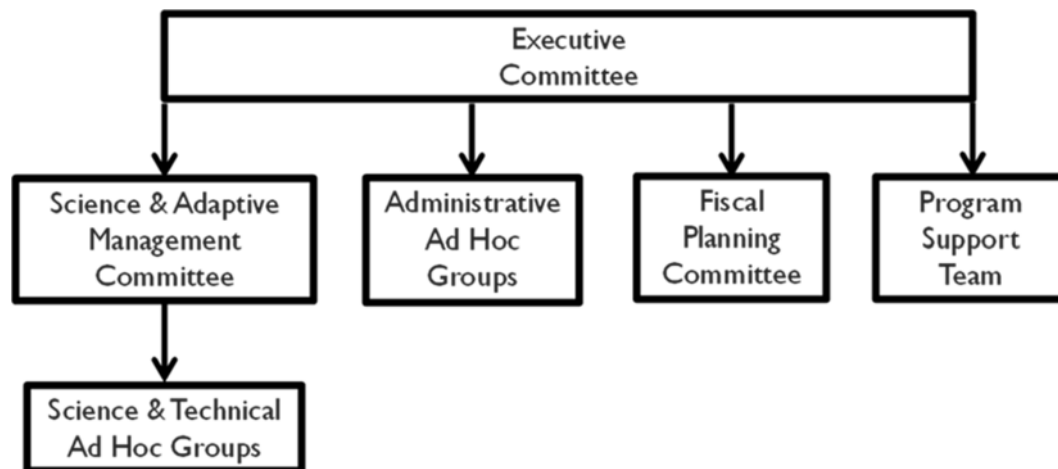


Figure 4. Collaborative Program hierarchical structure.

From page 20 of “Long-Term-Plan-for-Science-Adaptive-Management\_EC-approved-2022.03.23\_revised-2022.06.23”

**Missing/Needed in the Current Structure**

- Implementation of projects, studies, and adaptive management.
- Monitoring
- BO team- Currently ‘big’ decisions related to the BO happen outside of the EC, within agencies, because EC is not a group decision making entity.
- State Water Plan subgroup
- Rapid Response Team- When urgent matters arise and need quick resolution- the current structure is not nimble enough to support rapid action, therefore entities are going outside of the EC for faster resolution.
  - Would the “spawn or bust” would have been as successful if there were any different group/entities/members?
  - The spawn or bust was a successful collaboration, however it did not have the desired results with the minnow.

- Potential to develop a rapid response team- it’s possible with adjustments being made to the EC bylaws.
- BOR proposes forming a Water Management Group with ESA and adaptive management components. Three options:
  1. An EC of Water Management agencies within the Collaborative Program, advised by and supported by non-water management members.
  2. A Water Management subgroup, within the Collaborative Program. Parallel to SAM Committee for example.
  3. A Water Management Team outside of, and separate from, the Collaborative Program with scaled back CP scope.
- Support for the current process. People complain about siloing- imagine if this process wasn’t in place. There is potential for an independent BO team strictly for this task.
- The absence of tangible results from the Collaborative Program makes it difficult to dedicate time and/or funds to the Program.
- The funding issue is a major pain in accomplishing actions.
  - Should there be an additional Ad Hoc group to search for central funding to apply to actionable items to reach tangible results?
  - Keep the FPC and enhance its functionality.

Process Adjustments

- Create request for specific feedback to accompany technical documents that EC members are being asked to review. It’ll be a much more effective use of time.
- Simplify process, create space to share. Eliminate so much formality that allows people to benefit more from long meetings that have impact on teams/ entities.
- How many of us have been assigned to read a document, provide a review/comment, and turn back to any of the current subgroups in an insufficient timeframe? This highlights the need for an improved process.

**Action item for EC:** Alert Jennifer F. if any of the Water Management Group options would interfere with a signatory’s ability to remain as a Collaborative Program signatory.

Next Steps/Tasks/ Plus Delta

Sarah recapped next steps:

- 1) Sarah will prepare a draft summary of today’s discussion and share it with the group in early January.
- 2) Debbie and team will schedule an EC meeting in early 2025 to take next steps regarding the preliminary priorities identified today as well as for the EC to discuss the structural options for a water management group.
- 3) EC members evaluate the options for the water management group and give feedback to Jennifer Faler.

Plus/Delta – things that were good about today, things to change next time.

Plus	Delta (to change for next time)
Communicated well [with each other]	Room with windows

Q & A on settlement	Add more time to discuss pros/cons of the CP structure and options.
Narrowing of priorities i.e., picking 1 or 2 things to focus on.	Need more engagement with FWS and NMGFD, would like to include Refuges, Fisheries, and ESA from each.
New voices	Include acequia associations and farmers on the EC.
Cookies	Change process and space
	Add specific issues facing the basin [to future agendas]
	Needed a longer meeting – 2 days rather than 1

### **Key Take Aways and Adjourn**

Due to time constraints Sarah asked members to share with a neighbor their response to one of the questions below and once they shared the group was adjourned.

3. *What is something that you've changed your mind about today?*
4. *What excites you about the Collaborative Program moving forward?*



- Pecos Sunflower
- New Mexico Meadow Jumping Mouse
- Water management (e.g., conservation storage, spring peaks)
  - Water operations and flexibility
  - Strategic planning for river drying management in the MRG
  - Management of vegetated islands and bank attached bars

Small Group Sharing

Full Group Discussion & Reflection: As a group, where will we have the most impact on the ground?

**Read ahead: MRGESCP Multi-Year Plan 2023-2027.** *Please focus on the immediate and short-term priorities. Which are still relevant? Which are urgent? What is missing?*

12:00 – 1:15 *Lunch – on your own.*

1:15 – 1:30 What is on your mind about the Collaborative from this morning's discussion?

1:30 – 2:30 Confirming the Collaborative's Purpose and Executive Committee Roles & Responsibilities - Sarah Palmer, Facilitator  
 Blue: What is the purpose of the Collaborative?  
 Yellow: What are the Collaborative Program's strengths & limitations?  
 Green: What do you/organization that you represent need to be more engaged as an EC member?

Individual reflection and sharing followed by full group reflection & discussion

2:30 – 2:45 *Break*

2:45 – 3:45 Group discussion: Does the current Collaborative program structure support the actions identified? If not, what is missing?

3:45 – 3:55ish Next Steps/Tasks/ Plus Delta – Sarah Palmer, Facilitator

Key Take Aways –

3:55ish – 4:00 *What is something that you've changed your mind about today?  
 What excites you about the Collaborative Program moving forward?*

4:00ish Adjourn

Review and bring with you:

- Agenda
- MOA: [https://webapps.usgs.gov/mrgescp/documents/2022-MOA-and-Signature-Pages\\_2022.03.23\\_Final.pdf](https://webapps.usgs.gov/mrgescp/documents/2022-MOA-and-Signature-Pages_2022.03.23_Final.pdf)
- Settlement Agreement and related correspondence between Reclamation and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- MRGESCP Multi-Year Plan 2023-2027 (attached). Please focus on the immediate and short-term priorities. Which are still relevant? Which are urgent? What is missing?
- Collaborative Program By-Laws: [https://webapps.usgs.gov/mrgescp/documents/MRGESCP\\_2021\\_MRGESCP-By-Laws\\_adopted-2021.07.28\\_amended-2023.03.30.pdf](https://webapps.usgs.gov/mrgescp/documents/MRGESCP_2021_MRGESCP-By-Laws_adopted-2021.07.28_amended-2023.03.30.pdf)



**Appendix 2. Workshop Attendees**

<b>Organization</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Role on EC</b>	<b>Notes</b>
ABCWUA	Mark Kelly	Primary, Non-Federal Co-chair	
ABCWUA	Francesca Shirley	Alternate	
Audubon SW	Tucker Davidson	Alternate	
Audubon SW	Paul Tashjian	Primary	
BEMP	Kim Eichhorst	Primary	
BEMP	Ara Winter	Alternate	
BEMP	Matt Leister	Alternate	
Buckman (BDD) Board	Kyle Harwood	Alternate	
COA Open Space	Colleen McRoberts	Primary	
COA Open Space	Dustin Chavez	Alternate	
COA Open Space	Jo Strange		
MRGCD	Anne Marken	Primary	
MRGCD	Amelia Barrow	Alternate	
MRGCD	Jason Casuga		
MRGCD	Casey Ish		Afternoon only
NMDGF	Ginny Seamster	Primary	
NMISC	Grace Haggerty	Primary	
NMISC	Michelle Hunter	Alternate	
NMDOJ	Bill Grantham	Primary	Morning only
Pueblo of Santa Ana	Nathan Schroeder	Alternate	
Pueblo Sandia	Scial (M. Scialdone)	Primary	Morning only
USACE	Ryan Gronewold	Alternate	
USACE	Hira Walker	Alternate	
BOR	Jennifer Faler	Primary	
BOR	Wayne Pullan	Federal Co-Chair	
BOR	Lynette Giesen	Program Manager, COR	
BOR	Shay Cresap	Workshop support	
US DOI Office of Collaborative Action and Dispute Resolution	Sarah Palmer	Workshop facilitator	
US DOI Office of Solicitor	Chandler Farnworth	NA	Morning only
USFWS	Debra (Deb) Hill	Alternate	Had to leave at 3.
UNM-ARID	Debbie Lee	PST	Observing
UNM-ARID	Wyatt Donner	Workshop support	
UNM	Megan Osborn	Alternate	
UNM	Becky Bixby	PST	Observing
UNM	Tom Turner	Primary	Had to leave around 3.

**Appendix 3. Acronyms Used at Workshop and in this Document**

ABCWUA = Albuquerque Bernalillo County Water Utility Authority (also uses “WA”)

ASW = Audubon Southwest

BOR = Bureau of Reclamation

BEMP = Bosque Ecosystem Monitoring Program

BDD = Buckman Direct Diversion

CABQOS = City of Albuquerque Open Space Division (also uses “OSD”)

FWS = Fish and Wildlife Service (also uses USFWS)

MRGCD = Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District

NMGFD = New Mexico Game and Fish Department

NMISC = New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission

OSD = City of Albuquerque Open Space Division (also uses “CABQOS”)

SA = Santa Ana Pueblo

Sandia = Pueblo of Sandia

WA = Albuquerque Bernalillo County Water Utility Authority

UNM = University of New Mexico

USACE = US Army Corps of Engineers

**Appendix 4. Workshop Read Aheads Referenced in this Document**

To be inserted:

**Settlement Agreement Terms**

**MRGESCP 2023-2027 Multi-Year Plan**