

MIDDLE RIO GRANDE ENDANGERED SPECIES COLLABORATIVE PROGRAM



Newsletter— September 2018

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Letter from the Deputy Science Coordinator

There has been a lot of conversations in the Collaborative Program about science: what is considered “good science,” how it should be developed, and how it should be used.

Now that Scope of Work (SOW) development is winding down, we can shift our focus to addressing some of these questions in the Science and Habitat Restoration Work Group.

- How should peer review be incorporated into SOW prioritization and development?
 - What are the standards that agencies use to determine “best available science” and how can the Program meet those?
- How should the SOW process correlate with the Long-Term Plan?

Additionally, this fall, WEST is planning to convene a panel of representatives from other programs around the country to come share their experiences and lessons learned. Stay tuned for more information!

Best wishes,

Ashley Tanner, WEST Deputy Science Coordinator



View of Heron Reservoir (Photo credit: Mike Marcus)

PROJECT UPDATES

Bosque del Apache (BDA) National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge) Realignment Pilot Project:

Update provided by Brian Hobbs (bhobbs@usbr.gov)

The project proposes to realign approximately three miles of the Rio Grande within the BDA Refuge, moving the river channel from a perched location to an area of lower elevation east of the existing channel. Sediment plugs are known to form in this area, most recently in 2017. The realignment will promote long-term effective conveyance of water and sediment through this reach, while minimizing the potential for failure of the spoil levee and low-flow conveyance channel (LFCC). A secondary benefit will be the creation and improvement of aquatic, wetland, and native riparian habitat that will benefit listed species. Mowing of a 300-foot wide corridor began in April, after environmental compliance was complete, to conduct an on-the-ground assessment of the final realigned channel location, with the goal to maximize retention of native vegetation. Mowing was planned and implemented in coordination with the BDA Refuge, in accordance with the Refuge's programmatic Environmental Assessment (EA)/Finding of No Significant

Impact (FONSI): 'Control of Non-native Plant Species and Reestablishment of Native Riparian Forest, Wetlands, Grasslands, and In-channel Habitats on the Active Floodplain of the Rio Grande, April 2005.' Environmental compliance for excavation is expected to be complete by late October 2018 and work is expected to begin thereafter (late October/early November).

Rhodes Property Bank Line Habitat Project:

Update provided by Ashlee Rudolph (arudolph@usbr.gov)

The purpose of the project is to provide low velocity floodplain habitat for the Rio Grande silvery minnow (RGSM) during low flow years when there is a minimal spring runoff peak, with expected transition into riparian habitat for the southwestern willow flycatcher (SWFL) and the yellow-billed cuckoo (YBCU). To expand and increase the complexity of the area available to the RGSM when river flows are low, this project proposes to lower the bank line and maximize edge habitat by constructing a series of islands with a flow-through channel connecting them at higher flows. Reclamation is working on the project in partnership with Doris Rhodes and Save Our Bosque Task

(Continued on page 6)

REMINDER

Please fill out the survey to inform the development of the new DBMS platform.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/ZJ7MJ8T>

LISTED SPECIES UPDATE



Rio Grande Silvery Minnow

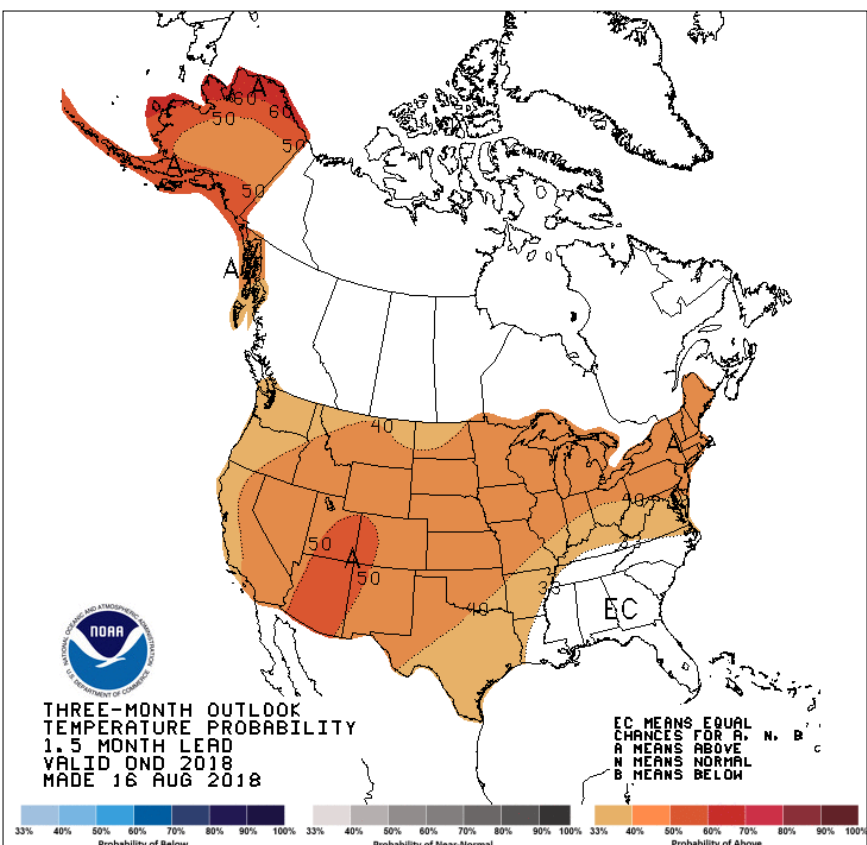
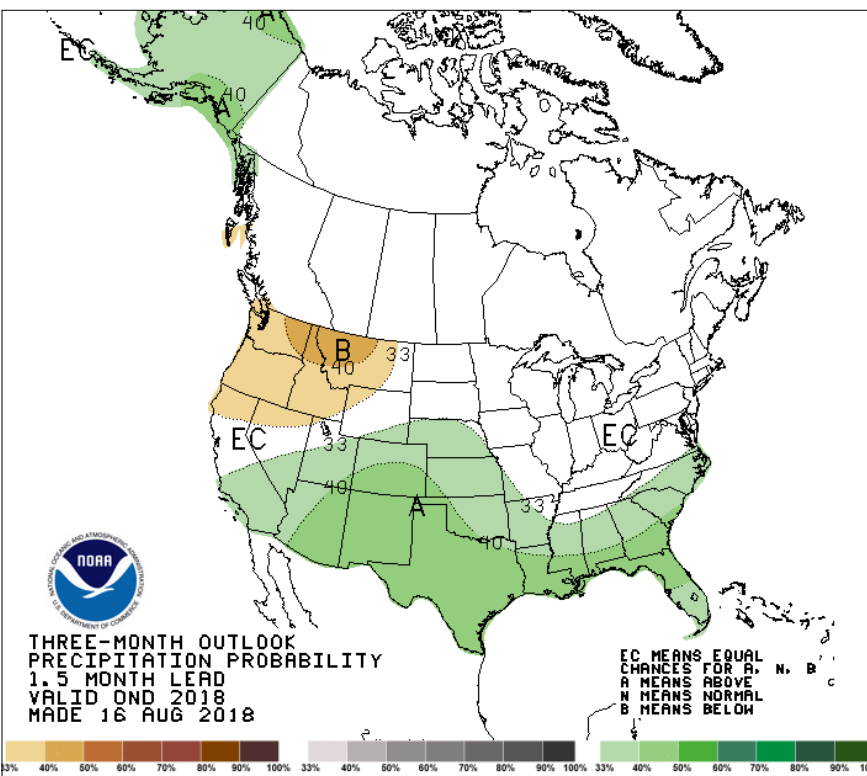
Update provided by Jennifer Bachus,
U.S. Bureau of Reclamation

The Rio Grande Silvery Minnow (RGSM) Population Monitoring (Pop Mon) Program uses standardized seining techniques to catch RGSM along the MRG during seven months per year (Dudley et al. 2018). The Pop Mon Program monitoring during July 2018 reported RGSM as ninth in rank abundance during sampling, with RGSM detected at 55 - 61% of the sampling sites. Overall density at the 20 standard sites was 2.24 RGSM per 100 square meters (m^2). The July monitoring also continued to implement peer review recommendations to sample replacement sites when any of the 20 standard sites are drying during the sampling timeframe. In July, three sampling sites were dry so three replacement sites were used following the protocol. Overall density, including the replacement sites, was 3.00 RGSM per 100 m^2 . Three age classes were detected (young-of-year (YOY), Age-1, Age-2+), similar to prior months in 2018; the majority of detections were Age-1 with few detections of YOY ($n=2$ in July). Across all sites, only one RGSM was a tagged fish (0.3% hatchery recapture). Monthly RGSM sampling has been conducted in August 2018 and results will be available soon.

(Listed Species Update continued on page 5)

2018 FALL HYDROLOGY UPDATE

In mid-September, the National Weather Service Forecast Office in Albuquerque released their 2018 fall outlook (available here: <https://www.weather.gov/media/abq/Briefings/Fall2018Outlook.pdf>)



for northern and central New Mexico. Climate forecast models indicated that precipitation during October and November in 2018 would most likely range from near to above the 1981-2010 climatological averages. Climate model forecasts and recent temperature trends indicate that October and November will range from slightly above to above average temperatures. While over 98% of the state is experiencing at least abnormally dry conditions, only 32% of the state is now in an extreme drought, down from 60% in June and July (available here: <https://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/CurrentMap/StateDroughtMonitor.aspx?NM>). The Albuquerque reach of the MRG will likely remain wet through the end of the year thanks to a lease of 20,000 acre feet of water from the Albuquerque Bernalillo County Water Utility Authority to the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation.

Southwestern Willow Flycatcher (SWFL)

Update provided by Lori Walton, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation

Within the Middle Rio Grande (MRG), upstream of Elephant Butte Dam, 952 individual detections of SWFL were recorded consisting of 326 migrants, 48 unpaired male territories and 289 pairs (337 territories). This represents 35 more territories than in 2017. The increase is due in large part to the growth observed in the southern San Marcial sites. Much of the habitat upstream of the Narrows is still suffering from drought, age and/or saltcedar beetles. Next steps will be to finalize survey and nest monitoring forms, determine nest numbers, and to write the annual report.



New Mexico Meadow Jumping Mouse

Update provided by Jeff Sanchez, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

The water shortage throughout the Middle Rio Grande Valley made it difficult during the early summer months for Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge (BDA NWF) to maintain enough water within BDA's Riverside Canal to support quality New Mexico Meadow Jumping Mouse (NMMJM) feeding and day-nesting habitat. The refuge was able to maintain a minimal amount of suitable habitat for the NMMJM during extremely dry timeframes by utilizing wells and directing all available or accessible water coming into the refuge toward the Riverside Canal where the last known remaining MRG population occurs.



Camera trapping efforts within the known jumping mouse localities, and areas where they historically occurred, will continue until mid-October. During this year's NMMJM activity period, 12 observations have been confirmed. Most observations occurred within one unit where suitable habitat was considered fair or acceptable for this species.

The refuge is planning on conducting habitat creation and habitat restoration efforts focused specifically on the NMMJM in hopes that there is a better winter snow pack yield for the 2019 season.

Force, with baseline information provided by the New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission. A project description has been completed following coordination with the property owner and other involved parties. Environmental compliance is underway, with completion expected by the end of November 2018. Construction is expected to begin in January 2019.

Habitat Improvement Within Escondida Burn Area

Update provided by Devin Seeliger
(dseeliger@usbr.gov)

As part of the larger 2016 Escondida Fire Burn Scar Restoration partnership, this project rehabilitates part of the burn scar through excavation of an abandoned high-flow side channel to provide improved low velocity habitat for the RGSM, with expected transition to riparian habitat for the SWFL and YBCU. The project also includes bank sloping and lowering of a terrace of the arroyo fan at the Arroyo de la Parida to help redirect flow toward the center of the main channel and enhance the existing vegetation. Excavation and grading are complete, and the completion of willow pole planting and seeding is planned. Reclamation will monitor the site in accordance with environmental compliance and adaptive management needs.



SAVE THE DATE

Bosque Ecosystem Monitoring Program

FALL FIELD TOUR 2018

Thursday, October 25th

Management Strategies for a Senescing Bosque

Please join us to learn more about BEMP's
work and research findings.

BEMP staff and partner
groups will focus on a variety of topics
related to managing a senescing bosque
with a focus on fire risk, fuel load, and
tamarisk leaf beetle.

More details forthcoming



Water Conservation: a Key Component in Water Demand Planning

A Presentation by Carlos Bustos, the Water Conservation Program Manager for the Albuquerque Bernalillo County Water Utility Authority, at the MRGESCP Science/Habitat Restoration Work Group Brown Bag on August 16, 2018

With population growth, climate change, and economic development to meet the growing demand on water resources, water conservation continues to be an important component in water demand planning. The Albuquerque Bernalillo County Water Utility Authority (ABCWUA) recently adopted the “Water 2120: Securing Our Water Future.” WATER 2120 addresses the water supply needs for the ABCWUA service area through the year 2120 taking into account climate change and creating an aquifer management level to preserve groundwater resources for future generations. A key element of WATER 2120 is the new water conservation goal of 110 gallons per capita per day (GPCD) by the year 2037. Continued progress in conservation to achieve a GPCD water usage of 110 will further extend water supplies even in the face of climate change. To achieve this new conservation goal, ABCWUA will be emphasizing outdoor (consumptive use) savings over indoor (non-consumptive use) savings, because as the climate changes, the demand for outdoor water use will likely increase and because outdoor water use is consumptive there is not opportunity for reuse or return flow credit. The goal to reduce consumptive use will be achieved by building upon the success of the current water conservation program. When the conservation program begun in 1995 the education and incentive efforts resulted in a reduction in per capita water use of 50% from 1994 to 2016. GPCD in the ABCWUA service area is currently 128 GPCD. By fostering a collaborative culture, ABCWUA will build partnerships with public agencies, industry, commercial and residential customers to support healthy landscapes while promoting water efficiency. Achievement of this modest increase in conservation will reduce water demand at the end of the planning period by 50,000 acre-feet.

A key element of WATER 2120 is the new water conservation goal of 110 gallons per capita per day (GPCD) by the year 2037.



Dale earned a Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering from the U.S. Military Academy and a Master of Science in Civil Engineering from the University of Missouri-Rolla. He is also a licensed professional engineer in Missouri and West Virginia.

Lieutenant Colonel Larry (Dale) Caswell, Jr.

Albuquerque District Commander

Lieutenant Colonel (LTC) Larry (Dale) Caswell assumed command of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Albuquerque District on May 18, 2018.

Prior to assuming command of the Albuquerque District, Dale served as the executive officer for the 555th Engineer Brigade and the deputy chief of staff for the 7th Infantry Division at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Washington. A few of his previous assignments include: Officer Commanding and Senior Tactics Instructor for the Tactics Wing at the Australian School of Military Engineering in Sydney; Operations Officer for the 15th Engineer Battalion (Construction), Germany; Commander, 937th Engineer Company, 8th Engineer Battalion; Commander, C Company, 16th Engineer Battalion (with deployment in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom); Brigade Battle Captain with the 18th Engineer Brigade and Planner with Coalition Forces Land Component Command in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

Originally from Charleston, West Virginia, Dale is married to the former Erin Elizabeth Jacques. They have four children: Victoria, Rebecca, William, and Charles.

UPCOMING DATES

ScW/HR Meeting

Thursday, September 20, 12:30 –2:30 PM
WEST Office
8500 Menaul Blvd NE, Ste B-342

Population Monitoring Work Group

Tuesday, October 2, 9 AM—5PM
WEST Office
8500 Menaul Blvd NE, Ste B-342

Executive Committee Meeting

Friday, September 21, 9:00 AM—3:00 PM
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
2105 Osuna Rd NE, Albuquerque, 87113

BEMP Fall Field Tour

Thursday, October 25, 2018
Details TBD

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Scenic view of the Middle Rio Grande (Photo credit: U.S. Bureau of Reclamation)