



Middle Rio Grande Endangered Species Collaborative Program

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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

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 SAMC shall consist of no more than eight (8) subject matter expert members appointed by the EC. 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
- Up to four (4) flexible subject matter experts selected based on science-related needs, as determined by the EC. The SAMC may provide input on which areas of expertise would benefit the group, but the final decision will be made by the EC.

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

One (1) EC member shall serve in an *ex-officio* advisory capacity to the SAMC. This position will not count towards the eight (8)-count membership, and will not participate as a subject matter expert.

The SAMC will be chaired by the MRGESCP science coordination lead and supported by the Program Support Team (PST). Neither the science coordination lead nor members of the PST will count towards the eight (8)-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 up to eight (8) 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 MRGESC members and external interested parties. Finalized agendas, read-aheads, and minutes will be included in the MRGESC 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, but may not 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 MRGESCP science and adaptive management tools (e.g., conceptual ecological models, geospatial mapper, etc.)
- Any recommended amendments to the S&AM Plan or LTP, including MRGESCP 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 MRGESCP By-Laws. Potential amendments will be open to input from the SAMC and must be approved by the EC.