

San Acacia Reach Roundtable

January 13,2016

AM Session

Follow Up Items

Save Our Bosque Task Force - Long Range Plan

Save Our Bosque Task Force - Fundraising Plan

Rhodes Property - Maintenance of Improvements

Rhodes Property - Phase II Habitat Restoration

Rhodes Property - Phase II Partnership Development

Rhodes Property - Future Ownership

Armendaris Ranch - Project Partnership Development

Armendaris Ranch - Project Funding, Design and Construction

Socorro County – Socorro Valley Bosque Hazardous Mitigation Project Phase I and II

Socorro County – Partnership Development

Corps of Engineers – Partnership Development

Corps of Engineers – Project Development

Bureau of Reclamation – Future Research for Yellow Billed Cuckoo (YBCU)

Bureau of Reclamation – Dustin will provide SOBTF with River Mile designations

Bureau of Reclamation – Discuss with Task Force management plans for YBCU

Bureau of Reclamation – Discuss with landowners and other stakeholders opportunities in the area of the San Juan Drain

Interstate Stream Commission – Updated Research in Water Use within Reach

Interstate Stream Commission – Depletions Analysis for Planned Habitat Restoration

Interstate Stream Commission – Additional Partnerships for Habitat Restoration

Outstanding issue for all: Grazing on the river

Interstate Stream Commission – First round of additional projects underway Spring and Fall 2016

Fish & Wildlife Service – Rio Grande Emphasis Area Outreach efforts

Fish & Wildlife Service – Maps for YBCU and Southwestern willow flycatcher (SWFL) available for San Acacia Reach

Fish & Wildlife Service – New Mexico Meadow Jumping Mouse Habitat Description

Fish & Wildlife Service – Yellow Billed Cuckoo Habitat Description, Nest Searches in 2017

Fish & Wildlife Service – Future Partnerships for Endangered Species Habitat Restoration

Fish & Wildlife Service – Sevilleta NWR Unit A’ planting of 20,000 trees. SOBTF assistance?

Fish & Wildlife Service – Sevilleta NWR Outreach for Habitat Management Plan when available

Fish & Wildlife Service – Sevilleta NWR Design assistance for Units C, D and east side of the river

Fish & Wildlife Service – Partners for F & W Prescribed Fire use to remove brush piles & debris

Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District – Building Incentives for Crop Efficiencies in Changing Hydrological Environment

Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District – Changes in Authorizations of Reservoirs

Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District – Partner in planning and mapping of San Acacia Reach projects

Socorro Soil & Water Conservation District – Evaluate how the Tamarisk leaf beetle will affect control work

Bureau of Geology – Study of surface/groundwater interactions in San Acacia Reach

Bureau of Geology – Socorro/Sierra Regional Water Plan Update project proposals

Bureau of Geology – Infiltration, upwelling, seepage research and monitoring

Bureau of Geology – Geodatabase development

Rio Grande Agricultural Land Trust – Staffing and Funding Opportunities Developed

Rio Grande Agricultural Land Trust – Outreach plans, outreach to other landowners in the San Juan Drain area

Rio Grande Trails – Participants would like more involvement in planning

NM State Forestry – Planning for Future Funding Opportunities

Proposed Information to be Shared

Summary of Habitat Restoration for Endangered Species planned for the San Acacia Reach

Opportunities for assistance with monitoring of Habitat Restoration Projects

Flipchart Notes

Note: See presentations, exhibits and handouts as well – listed by order of presentation from list of presenters.

Save Our Bosque Task Force reported that they are currently working on a Fundraising Plan and a process to prioritize future projects (5 year plan).

Socorro County reported that there is funding, approximately 14 million available from FEMA and DHS for Hazard Mitigation including fire, drought, flooding.

Corps of Engineers reported that the 1135 Program is for aquatic, riverine, wetland habitat restoration, requires a non federal cost share and local sponsor, and has a 10 million dollar max amount awarded.

Bureau of Reclamation reported that they are working on plans for fire rehabilitation following the San Marcial fire of 2015.

Interstate Stream Commission reported that NM has met their compact obligations for 2015.

Interstate Stream Commission reported that there is approximately 950 acre feet in the Strategic Water Reserve to date. When working on habitat restoration within a 600 foot wide "floodway" there is no depletions offset required. Permits or offsets are needed outside this area for any new net depletions due to habitat restoration.

Interstate Stream Commission reported that they have been designing restoration projects in a 36 mile stretch of river, part in the San Acacia Reach (highway 60 downstream to Brown Arroyo). A report on this design work is available.

Fish and Wildlife Service reported that the Rio Grande is an Emphasis Area for Region 2. Some potential projects for them are the North Boundary Bosque del Apache NWR Infrastructure changes, the Channel Realignment Project (also on BdA), a habitat restoration project on Sevilleta NWR, and a project on Big Bend. A FWS team is looking at options.

Fish and Wildlife Service reported on the Landscape Conservation Design effort, provided an update on the Landscape Conservation Cooperative, in our case we are in the Desert LCC, and Strategic Habitat Conservation Initiative. A brochure clarifying these programs is available.

Fish and Wildlife Service reported on the Yellow Billed Cuckoo and potential consultation needs for this species when doing work on the river. Initially, a two mile buffer will be established around territories. Consultation will allow proponents to determine if a smaller buffer is possible. No work that would disturb the nesting of this species should occur between April 15 and September 1.

Fish and Wildlife Service Bosque del Apache NWR reported that they have put in a proposal for salt cedar control on the active floodplain and the managed area of the refuge. They are also working on numerous NM meadow jumping mouse projects.

Fish and Wildlife Service Sevilleta NWR reported that their Habitat Management Plan is available.

Partners for Fish and Wildlife reported that they have approximately \$136,000 available for projects each year, statewide. They are working with the Task Force to update the Cooperative Agreement that allows the Task Force to serve as fiscal agent to private lands projects.

Bureau of Land Management reported that they are going to rehabilitate 24.5 miles of the Quebradas Scenic Byway this year prior to monsoon season. Primarily they will be working on low water crossings.

Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District reported that they are working to balance land management and agricultural deliveries with newer obligations for endangered species and environmental health. They

are expecting schedule changes in delivery and delivery improvements in the future. They are working on infrastructure improvements and fire rehabilitation (Highway 60 north) projects right now.

Socorro Soil and Water Conservation District reported that they receive \$150,000 annually through the mill levy. They provide many cost sharing programs to landowners in the district including salt cedar control. Landowners have to be involved, monitor projects and provide maintenance. Their prescription for slash piles to be burned safely is 10 feet by 10 feet by 10 feet.

Bureau of Geology Aquifer Mapping Program reported they are currently working on a project to contour groundwater storage in the region.

Rio Grande Agricultural Land Trust reported that they are part of a North American Wetland Conservation Act grant proposal for our area, along with La Joya Farms (Contreras, NM), Armendaris Ranch, Bosque del Apache NWR, and Valle del Oro NWR.

State Forestry reported that approximately 300 permits are issued yearly to wood cutters in the San Acacia Reach MRGCD lands.

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PM session

Questions:

US Army Corps of Engineers (COE) - *Angel asked Julie* whether funds can be used on private lands?

- Yes, but sponsor must be a government agency; the Task Force is part of the solution; alliance with Socorro County makes it stronger
- Private lands should have to have a private easement/conservation easement.

Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) - *Yasmeen asked Vicky* where/when is the next vegetation mapping and what is the extent of the 5-year mapping?

The next planned Reclamation vegetation mapping project along with the groundtruthing involved will include the bosque from the south boundary of Isleta Pueblo to Elephant Butte Reservoir and will be done this summer. Last mapping in this area was done in 2012. As a follow up from the original question, here is added information from Darrell Ahlers, Reclamation Denver office: "Reclamation will also be generating a new SWFL Habitat Suitability Model maps based on the new veg maps in early 2017. We are in the process of developing a YBCU Habitat Suitability Model, but that may take a little longer. It is much harder to quantify exactly what veg types are the most important to YBCU habitat since they cover such a large area compared to SWFLs. More than likely, it is a combination of veg types that dictate the quality of YBCU habitat."

Reclamation - *Gina asked Lori* about priorities for cuckoo habitat restoration, San Marcial reach goes from where to where?

- Black Mesa (south boundary of Armendaris Ranch) to Elephant Butte, BOR property down to reservoir pool.
 - <http://mrgescp.dbstephens.com/>
 - http://mrgescp.dbstephens.com/MRGESCP%20DBMS_Users_Manual_111714.pdf
 - <http://archive.is/mrgescp.dbstephens.com>

Reclamation - *Gina asked Jen how the San Acacia reach is used by the minnow? What are the priority habitat characteristics for the reach?*

- Water retention is most valuable for silvery minnow; a wetted river, shallower areas on the floodplain for spawning, retention within the reach.
- How were sites selected for long term minnow monitoring?
 - 20 monitoring sites were selected in the mid-90's; 9 are in the San Acacia reach
 - Monitoring is done by a variety of agencies
 - Pre monitoring occurring, not sure of allowing new sites to avoid too much monitoring. Request a permit to monitor. Dependent on where the species best utilize the reach.
 - Habitat restoration monitoring is being done carefully and it is hoped that the collaborative website will provide useful data for all collaborators

Interstate Stream Commission (ISC) - *Gina asked Rolf to explain where, in the pie chart shown in presentation, is infiltration into the shallow aquifer?*

- ET estimates come from range of consumptive uses- gaged inflows based on average- Took in low flow and floodway at San Marcial. Pie chart is specific to time period **Which time period used?** Outstanding question – *requested clarification*

ISC- Nick asked Rolf & Stacy about the relationship between surface water and aquifers; how much Infiltration contributes to communities?

- Socorro's water is mostly near M mountain, lots of information is available on recharging shallow aquifers, and there are many models to provide answers.

ISC- *Cecilia asked Page* about the terms of strategic water reserve leases; What are leasing terms? Who are they with? If with farmers, is it working? Any interest from farmers?

- The largest lease is from the City of Los Lunas, for 920 acre-feet
Another is with the state, for 30 acre-feet, from the hospital at Los Lunas
Los Lunas requires developers to bring water rights with them
In its 40-year plan, Los Lunas does not anticipate a need for the water it has leased to ISC. The ISC doesn't have much interest in short-term leases on agricultural land; not wanting short term leases.

ISC- *Dustin asked Page* about depletions offsets for water salvage by taking out salt cedar. Since the riparian evapotranspiration in the reach is so high, why isn't this taken into account in terms of water savings?

- No, the variables involved in salt cedar water use aren't clear. Vegetation is not taken into account.

Rio Grande Agricultural Land Trust- *Dustin asked Cecilia* about the San Juan Drain on La Joya Farms property, and dispute on the floodplain lands west of the drain?

- There is disputed property, 178 acres, where the San Juan enters the Rio Grande across from where the Rio Puerco enter the Rio Grande; Dustin indicated resolution of title to the land would be valuable and that he would like to see the land used for habitat conservation; Bureau of Reclamation is working on drains,
- Cecilia would like to pursue education outreach to landowners in this area; on conservation easements and on what programs are available to them.
- All would like to see the land restored either way.

US Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) - *Gina asked Andrew* about stakeholder involvement in the USFWS Region II Rio Grande Emphasis Area?

- Conversation is currently limited to USFWS
- Not ready to involve other entities.

USFWS - *Gina asked Andrew* about Landscape Conservation Designs (LCDs) and Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (LCCs). How are LCC's beneficial to the bosque?

- LCCs focus on large scale - regional; they are partnership-driven; there are 21 LCCs nationwide; we are in the Desert LCC, along with a number of much larger areas
- LCDs could be a way to bring everyone together to plan, design and restore bosque
- Try to make a holistic management scheme, seeking partnerships to make things happen. Look on USFWS homepage.

USFWS - *Gina asked Vicky* how we can assist with cuckoo habitat restoration?

- see the link to the Sacramento site for suitability information; admittedly, it is pretty general and not necessarily useful locally; telemetry and habitat utilization studies have been done; protocol for surveys could use refinement; location of nests would be good to have
- Further comment: the 2 mile buffer is daunting, work with Vicky to refine required buffers, areas to avoid

USFWS - *Yasmeen asked Vicky* to discuss the definition of historically occupied areas for the cuckoo and the decision to establish the 2-mile buffer. What's a Historic Territory? Where did 2 mile buffer for cuckoo's come from?

- definition goes back only a couple of years
- Not often changing occupied areas within older vegetation
- Reclamation used telemetry data and looked at home ranges of the cuckoo. Different measures of territories. Cuckoo protocol for surveys helps determine the buffer zones. Detections are not as accurate as territories.
- 2 mile buffer is based on telemetry data from Elephant Butte, the Narrows, where most activity has been recorded, and range-wide data; they are working with territories rather than

detection; less than 12 acres is not even considered; a limited genetics study has been done, and further genetics studies are probably coming in the future; data collection is ongoing

- There was additional discussion regarding buffers and clarification on when consultation is needed.

USFWS - *Rolf asked Jon* whether they had looked at the salt budget, salts on surface and shallow groundwater table for Area D?

- He mentioned that it has small flow and high salt. He added that the area is at the bottom of the Albuquerque groundwater basin. A discussion followed regarding presence of high salt in Unit D.
- Currently researching, want to look into the information. Some areas so salty nothing is growing.

Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District - *Gina asked Mike* how the Task Force can help with Bosque management, trails, fuels, planning

- Having Yasmeen on the board to bring info from the mission, as well as limitations
- Priorities will be set and shared with board once in place, no specifics yet

New Mexico Bureau of Geology (NMBG) - *Andrew asked Stacy* for more info on Aquifer Mapping Program and storage analysis work? What do you see as priorities for management on the river?

- o Would like to propose ideas after reevaluating previous work
- o Considering greater research in the reach

NMBG - *Gina asked Stacy* about work on the Socorro/Sierra Regional Water Plan update; where should we develop research and monitoring projects?

- Several project ideas have been discussed (i.e. monitoring water levels, re-running seepage analysis with climatic/sedimentation changes in effect, database development - projects that are in a document NMBG and others are working on for regional planning) - but without a funding plan, many of these projects are just pipe dreams. Once we have a few clearly defined issues to address, we can pursue funding and hopefully have stakeholder backing.

Where do we go from here?

What are the main gaps? Funding, partnerships, maintenance...

Planning and Coordination

- Better coordination at coming up with a more incorporated plan as a whole, rather than broken within agencies. Get a picture of all the projects on the river or agencies will inevitably trip over one another.
- Update to conceptual restoration plan. Keeping track of what work needs to be done.
- Organize an informal roundtable for 5 year planning
- Bureau of Reclamation is planning for the next 10 years, maybe MRGCD would be a good partner
- Follow up on who's doing restoration in the next 5 years.
- Get the Website up; FWS did shape files 4 years ago; start there for GIS database
- Brainstorm on getting ourselves organized to make a planning document.

- See how restoration projects fit together.
- Focus group on mapping priorities and completed work.
- Prepare a planning document

Funding

- Continue connecting agencies and outreach to encourage more productive work in asking for funding.
- Task force becoming a non-federal partner. Be able to contract out Bosque work.
- The Task Force is preparing a 5 year fund raising plan for habitat restoration, maintenance, and outreach
- Task Force would like to build a relationship with Socorro County as non-federal lead
- Armendaris Ranch plans to fund their restoration projects starting in FY 2017
- Revisit McCune Foundation for funding
- COE costs share program Section 22 is planning assistance to the states.
- Sharing agency info and names where grants and other funding is available.
- Task Force is vitally important in raising funds and establishing contacts. Doris is willing to assist as she can with fundraising and outreach to the state legislature.

Outreach

- More PR and awareness.
- Coming up with formal outreach plan.
- Outreach for public use.
- Outreach to legislators at the Roundhouse

Public Meeting Planning Exercise

Topics suggested include:

- Overview of Restoration in the Reach – current and planned
- Corps of Engineers update on levee project
- MRGCD update on 2016 irrigation season
- Sevilleta NWR highlight restoration projects, refuge outreach
- Trails planning and Quebradas work
- County FEMA project outreach
- Regional Water Plan update outreach

Suggestion to have presentation and individual stations around the room for one on one discussions

Suggestion to have NM Speaker of the House Tripp speak

Suggestion to invite attendees to future field trip to projects in the reach

Focus Areas and Priorities (*) by Agency

The lists below are based on the presentations by entities, highlighting the types of work they are doing in the reach. The reason we listed these for all to see was to show how much there was going on in the reach and how much opportunity there was for greater communication, partnerships, and cooperative planning. We asked participants to put a star where they thought it was most important for the Task Force to focus, for there to be greater partnerships.

Restoration

Task Force *
Rhodes Ranch *
Armendaris Ranch (*Partners Program)
Socorro County
US Army Corps of Engineers *
Bureau of Reclamation *
Interstate Stream Commission *
USFWS *
BLM
MRGCD
SSWCD
NMBG
RGALT
State Forestry

Monitoring and Research

Task Force *
Bureau of Reclamation
Interstate Stream Commission
USFWS*
MRGCD
SSWCD
NMBG
RGALT
US Army Corps of Engineers (PAS Program)*

Water and Land Management

Task Force?
Rhodes Ranch *
Armendaris Ranch
Socorro County
US Army Corps of Engineers
Bureau of Reclamation *
Interstate Stream Commission

USFWS
BLM
MRGCD
SSWCD
NMBG
RGALT
State Forestry

Outreach/Funding

Task Force
Rhodes Property *
Armendris Ranch
Socorro County
Us Army Corps of Eng
Bureau of Reclamation
Interstate Stream Commission
USFWS
BLM
MRGCD
SSWCD
NMBG
RGALT
City of Socorro
State Forestry

Public Use

Task Force
MRGCD
City of Socorro
USFWS

Other

Task Force – Recreation
Socorro County - Planning
BLM – Road maintenance

Resources Discussed

<http://mrgescp.dbstephens.com/>

MRGESCP.DBStephens.com

<http://mrgescp.dbstephens.com/MRGESCP%20DBMS Users Manual 111714.pdf>

<http://archive.is/mrgescp.dbstephens.com>