

Upper Rio Grande Basin  
Water Operations Review

***Upper Rio Grande Basin  
Water Operations Review and  
EIS Summary of Public Scoping Process***



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Contract # DACA47-97-D-0009  
Delivery Order #3

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# Upper Rio Grande Basin Water Operations Review and EIS Summary of Public Scoping Process

## 1.0 Introduction

Public meetings were held to solicit input for preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and a comprehensive system-wide review of the water operations activities that are conducted under the existing authorities of the Joint Lead Agencies (JLA), the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (COE), the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR), and the New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission (NMISC), in the Rio Grande basin above Fort Quitman, Texas. The project, called the Upper Rio Grande Basin Water Operations Review (Review) and EIS, will consider changes primarily of the storage and release of water at reservoirs in the basin.

To ensure compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations (Title 40, Code of Federal Regulations [CFR], Parts 1500–1508) implementing NEPA, the COE NEPA regulations (33 CFR Part 230), BOR NEPA regulations (45 FR 47944 [7/17/80] as amended by 48 FR 17151 [4/21/83]), Department of Interior Manual 516 DM 1-7, and other applicable federal and state environmental legislation, the JLA will prepare a programmatic Water Operations EIS that documents the Review process and informs the public about the resource conditions and effects of any proposed actions on the environment. NEPA compliance includes public involvement activities such as scoping meetings. This activity, as well as additional public involvement activities, have been identified and scheduled in a Public Involvement Plan (September 30, 2000) developed for the Review.

## 2.0 Scoping Process

### 2.1 Preparation

In preparation for the scoping meetings, a market survey was conducted by interviewing community representatives and interested stakeholders. The goal of this survey was to assist the Project Managers in determining who the stakeholders are, how and where they get information, identifying their primary issues, and understanding their perceptions and knowledge of the JLA and their responsibilities. The Project Managers used this information to help develop the informational materials for the meetings and to select the methods for advertising the public meetings. The names and addresses of those interviewed were added to the mailing list.

The survey was conducted in five geographic areas of the basin and included representatives from nine stakeholder groups. It concluded that there is a very high level of interest about surface water issues. Based on survey results, documented in the “Stakeholder Opinion Research for the Upper Rio Grande Basin Water Operations Review EIS”, sixty percent of the people interviewed stated that their primary source of community information is the newspaper. A large majority prefer to receive information about the Water Operations Review through direct mail and the newspaper.

The Project Managers sent a newsletter to almost 400 people in early June 2000 that summarized the purpose and goals of the Review and included a list of the times and locations of all public scoping meetings. The newsletter was also distributed at other meetings to those not on the mailing list. Public notices listing the scoping meetings were published in at least one local newspaper in advance of each meeting. (**See sample in Appendix C.**) The Project Managers and Executive Committee members also called or faxed key stakeholders to encourage their attendance at the scoping meeting in their area.

## 2.2 Scoping Meetings

All public scoping meetings were held from 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. and were informal, using an open house format. **Table 1** lists the meeting dates and locations. Attendees were encouraged to sign in and view displays by the technical teams that provided background information on the resources to be evaluated during the project. Displays included maps of the basin, which located areas of interest to their resource, graphs, lists of known issues, and other information. Available to everyone at the door were two project fact sheets, a basin map, and a newsletter. Handouts were also available from most of the technical teams at their display tables. **Appendix D** contains copies of the fact sheets and handouts. Media kits were provided to members of the press.

**Table 1. Public Scoping Meeting Dates and Locations**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Meeting Site</b>
Wednesday, June 28	Alamosa, Colorado	Alamosa Elks Lodge 406 Hunt
Thursday, June 29,	Taos, New Mexico	Kachina Lodge 413 Paseo del Pueblo Norte
Wednesday, July 26	Española, New Mexico	Northern NM Community College 921 Paseo de Oñate
Wednesday, August 9	Chama, New Mexico	El Méson Lodge South Highway 84/64, 87520
Thursday, August 17	Albuquerque, New Mexico	Indian Pueblo Cultural Center 2401 12 <sup>th</sup> Street NW
Wednesday, September 20	Santa Fe, New Mexico	Radisson Hotel 750 N. St. Francis Drive
Wednesday, September 27	El Paso, Texas	Hilton Hotel 2027 Airway Boulevard
Tuesday, October 17	Las Cruces, New Mexico	New Mexico State University Corbett Center
Wednesday, October 18	Socorro, New Mexico	New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology Macey Center 801 Leroy Place

At approximately 6:30 p.m., a short slide presentation about the project was made by one of the Project Managers, followed by questions from the audience on the presentation. Specific questions on technical issues related to the resources to be studied were asked in the informal discussions at each display table after the slide presentation.

Questions and comments made by the public during and following the slide presentation were documented and are included in **Appendix A**. Each technical team representative was equipped with a flip chart so comments made during their discussions could be recorded. In addition, comment cards (**See Appendix B.**) were distributed at the registration table, which were collected at the meeting or mailed to a Project Manager later. These comments were categorized, grouped, and are summarized in the next section.

### **3.0 Meeting Results**

#### **3.1 Attendance**

Attendance at the public scoping meetings ranged from one to forty people, counting only those in attendance who are not representatives of the JLA or cooperating agencies. Good discussion occurred at every meeting and some important issues were raised that will be considered by the technical teams during the development and analysis of the alternatives.

#### **3.2 Comments**

Comments are defined as statements or questions that are pertinent to the Review and EIS or that, while not directly within the scope of this project, are pertinent to water operations and management in the basin. Those outside the scope of this project will be documented and passed along to the appropriate agency for study under a different program.

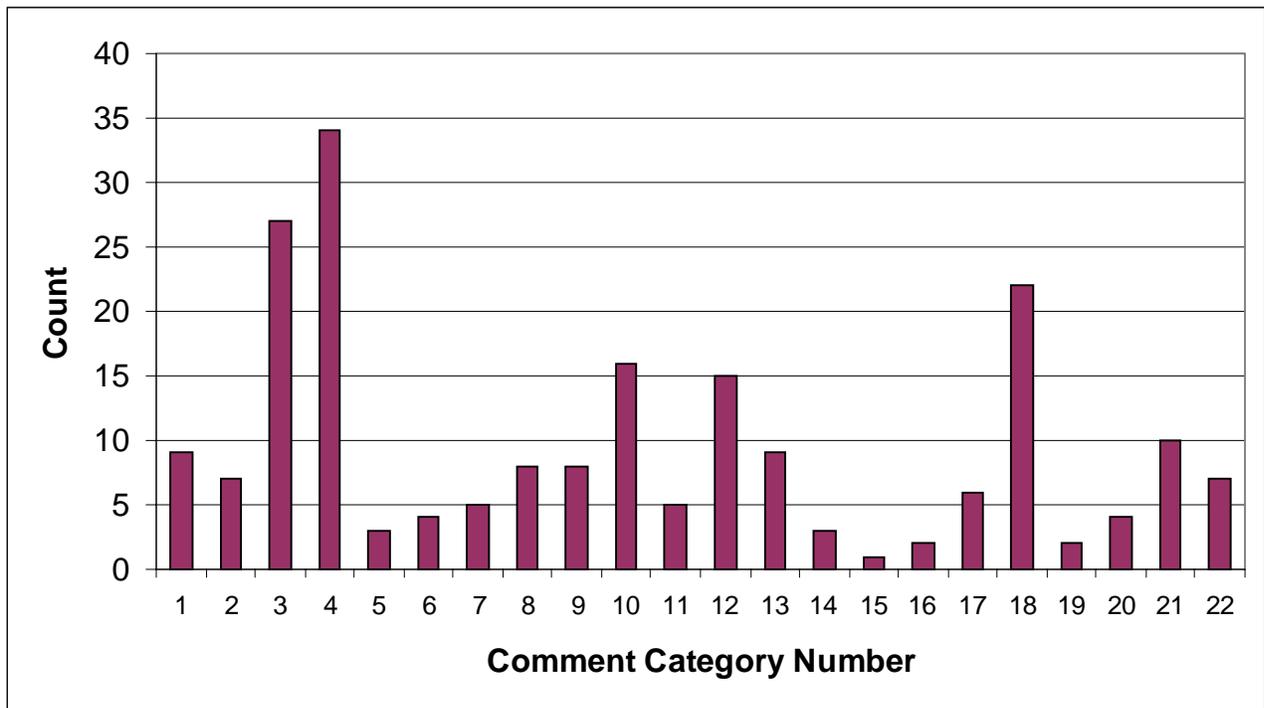
All comments have been reviewed and categorized according to their content. Those questions and comments made during the discussion following the presentation at the meetings received responses at the meeting. They were also passed along to the appropriate technical team for consideration, along with those comments received on the cards. The comments from the public scoping meetings are available for review online at <http://www.spa.usace.army.mil/urgwops/> or by contacting one of the three Project Managers.

There are twenty-two main categories, listed below. Additional categories or subcategories will be identified as needed throughout the project. The information following each category briefly describes the type of question or comment that was included under this category.

1. EIS and Scoping Process—how alternatives will be selected; how scoping and the meetings were conducted; in general, how the EIS will be developed.
2. Purpose and Need—goals for the project and EIS; who authorized the study; why the effort is being made.
3. Agencies and Authorities Involved/Project Scope—what agencies are involved; why some agencies are not involved; types of operations under consideration; definition and extent of authorities limiting the project.
4. Content, Methodology, Alternatives—definition of the system to be studied; models to be used in analyses; methodology and thoroughness of analysis.
5. Issues for Further Study but Outside Scope—suggested studies that cannot be included under this effort but that will be recorded for consideration under other programs.
6. Socioeconomics—effects of water operations and possible changes on local economies.
7. Environmental Justice—potential effects of changes in water operations on minority groups or small communities.
8. Land Use, Water Rights—impacts of land use along the river on river flows and water quality; potential effects of changing water operations on water rights.
9. Agriculture—potential effects of changing water operations on farmers and ranchers; need for evaluating the impacts of changing water operations on agriculture.
10. Riparian and Wetland Ecosystems—potential effects on bosque and other riparian or wetland areas; impacts on wildlife habitat; invasive plants of concern.

11. Cultural Resources—requirements for consultation; extent of survey and documentation.
12. Aquatic Systems—flows needed for fish; requirements for consideration of endangered species; effects on aquatic habitat from water operations decisions.
13. Water Quality—water quality standards and how they would be used; modeling.
14. Recreation—need to consider; importance of recreation businesses to the economy.
15. River Geomorphology—consider from historical perspective.
16. Sedimentation—sediment load, contamination, removal.
17. Hydrology and Hydraulics—effects of flows on groundwater; losses due to evaporation.
18. Water Operations/Structures—uses of dams; types of options to be considered in the alternatives; possible addition or removal of specific structures; why some structures not included in project; flood control.
19. Cumulative Impacts—effects of increasing population and water demands;
20. Relationship to Other Concurrent Projects—how this project relates to other water-related projects in the basin; effect of decisions from this project on other projects or agencies’ work.
21. Public Involvement—public outreach opportunities; ways for the public to provide comments; meeting notification; comments on the meeting content and format.
22. Other Issues—not related to the Review and EIS.

Comments are grouped by main category in the graph below. Some comments were assigned to more than one category, so the total of the comments categorized below is greater than the total number of comments received.



**Figure 1. Comments Received During Scoping Process, Grouped by Category.**

#### **4.0 Upcoming Public Involvement Activities**

It became clear during the scoping meetings that the stakeholders would like to discuss potential alternatives before they are selected and analyzed in the EIS. In response, the Project Managers committed to holding additional meetings to facilitate public discussion of alternatives. Other public outreach activities planned to be ongoing include the following.

- ◆ Press releases
- ◆ Newsletters
- ◆ Presentations to interested groups and organizations, as requested
- ◆ Presentations and briefings to tribal governments
- ◆ Workshops and tours
- ◆ Public meetings to discuss Review progress
- ◆ Public hearings on draft EIS

Comments and questions from the public can be submitted to the Project Managers through the web site, telephone, comment cards, or fax throughout the Review.

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**Appendix A:  
Notes from Public Scoping Meetings**

**Comments from Upper Rio Grande Basin Water Operations Review Public Scoping Meeting; Alamosa, Colorado; Elks Lodge; June 28, 2000**

Following is a summary of the questions, comments, and issues raised during the discussion that followed the formal presentation of the purpose and objectives of the Upper Rio Grande Basin Water Operations Review and EIS at the scoping meeting in Alamosa, Colorado. They are presented in the order they were discussed.

- ◆ What is the potential for taking water from Colorado for the Rio Grande silvery minnow?
- ◆ Will groundwater depletion by private organizations be addressed?
- ◆ Who authorized the study and the funding?
- ◆ How can the Compact be kept as a sideboard?
- ◆ Don't see the need for the study to include the Closed Basin.
- ◆ Is the EIS based on the way the system works now or on the proposed changes?
- ◆ How will the alternatives be ranked?
- ◆ Why is the EIS not evaluating economic impacts, only environmental impacts?
- ◆ How much will endangered species concerns drive the study? Isn't the bottom line the impacts to the Rio Grande silvery minnow?
- ◆ Will no private water operations be reviewed?
- ◆ What is the project really looking at? What do you hope to derive from Colorado? I heard that the agencies want to take Colorado water to augment flows for the Rio Grande silvery minnow.
- ◆ What would Rio Grande flows look like if they mimic natural flows? How could this be done and still maintain flood control?
- ◆ Would the project affect the groundwater at the Great Sand Dunes?
- ◆ Is the Rio Grande Reservoir involved?
- ◆ What are the lead agencies hoping to happen regarding the sediment load in the Rio Grande, much of which is contaminated? Do they plan to remove the sediment?
- ◆ Increasing water demands due to increasing population is a large issue. What does this project hope to find out about this issue? The agencies will hear more about this as they go downstream with scoping meetings.
- ◆ Is there a trend toward underground water storage?
- ◆ Will there be consideration of the creation of a conveyance channel to provide water to El Paso?
- ◆ How will the conflicting issues of conveyance efficiency, sustainable riparian systems, and flood control be addressed? How Elephant Butte is operated and how water gets there affects water users in the San Luis valley. Colorado is interested in protecting the Closed Basin Project and the Conejos River basin. It would be difficult to get the buy-in of Colorado people if there are negative impacts to San Luis valley water users.
- ◆ Hope to get a better understanding of the needs of endangered species from this process.
- ◆ What will the entire 5-year effort cost?

- ◆ To determine what the silvery minnow needs, the study must consider their habitat and the river system in 1850. How can the river system, in its current form, be compatible with the silvery minnow or the southwestern willow flycatcher? Endangered species needs cannot be satisfied with the current river system. The silvery minnow habitat problem could be solved by getting rid of the dams on the river.
- ◆ If the lead agencies are bound by existing authorities that are clearly spelled out, is it possible to come up with anything different?
- ◆ What might result from this process?
- ◆ Will the teams look at average flows or extreme conditions such as drought?
- ◆ Is the Management Team dedicated full time to this project?

**Comments from Upper Rio Grande Basin Water Operations Review Public Scoping Meeting; Taos, New Mexico; Kachina Lodge; June 29, 2000**

Following is a summary of the questions, comments, and issues raised during the discussion that followed the formal presentation on the purpose and objectives of the Upper Rio Grande Basin Water Operations Review and EIS at the scoping meeting in Taos, New Mexico. They are presented in the order they were discussed.

- ◆ Will the project look at removing levees or doing non-structural features?
- ◆ What are the environmental justice issues?
- ◆ Environmental justice issue: In some areas, changes in flows could have a negative effect on water quality. If water quality decreases as a result of changing water operations, existing uses of that water, such as irrigation, could be affected.
- ◆ Environmental justice issue: The transfer of water rights could affect minority water users.
- ◆ (In response to information on the Socioeconomics Technical Team display) How is flood damage to houses an issue? Houses should not be built in the floodplain to begin with, so the socioeconomic impacts to these houses due to floods should not be considered.
- ◆ How do socioeconomic impacts relate to those developed for the silvery minnow recovery plan? How much would using the Low Flow Conveyance Channel (LFCC) affect Compact deliveries and how much can landowners use water from the LFCC?
- ◆ Benefits derived from mimicking natural flows include protection of native species, which provides a socioeconomic benefit.
- ◆ Will there be opportunities for public input during the definition of alternatives? Can the public obtain a copy of the alternatives?
- ◆ The sooner people know what alternatives will be considered in the EIS, the better prepared they can be to respond.
- ◆ How does the work product from this review relate to other federal projects?
- ◆ Will the capacity and purpose of the reservoirs be within the scope of this EIS?
- ◆ Reoperating reservoirs has a logical place in a study like this.
- ◆ What will be done with information that might require a change in authority?
- ◆ This process seems to be different in that it will provide more in-depth analysis of operations.
- ◆ Why are you not looking at Platoro and El Vado operations?
- ◆ It appears that three agencies are working together and some others are not. Was there an attempt to include other agencies?
- ◆ A major concern is that this effort will study water operations and how changes would affect resources, but it is losing the opportunity to look at the whole system because it is leaving out some of the reservoirs, which are key components.
- ◆ In response to the answer above, it was recommended that one alternative be used to look at operations outside the existing authorities. How could the system be changed if the agencies had free rein to change the system?

- ◆ Perhaps just the “plumbing” of the entire system could be studied, just the technical issues, without considering the legal issues. The model, URGWOM, could be run for the entire physical system.
- ◆ Recommend an alternative that has the Closed Basin Project release more water from May through September and less during the winter. This would help even out the summer low flows to benefit ecological and recreational values and meets one of the purposes of the Closed Basin Project.
- ◆ Was the MRGCD asked to be a lead agency?
- ◆ The Bureau of Reclamation does direct water releases at El Vado that are not controlled by the MRGCD.
- ◆ What about winter releases of San Juan-Chama water?
- ◆ Will the EIS study sensitive species in addition to endangered species, such as the Rio Grande cutthroat trout below Costilla Reservoir? For example, how has stopping the leakage from some of the dams affected cutthroat habitat?
- ◆ What is meant by the objective of providing a historical baseline?
- ◆ Will more archaeological survey work be done?
- ◆ Will the Cultural Resources Technical Team look at potential additions to the National Historic Register?
- ◆ Will the technical teams study biology and geomorphology from a historical perspective?
- ◆ Will the project look at tribal and state water quality standards?
- ◆ Will teams consider how flows and changes in operations would affect water quality? How the operations of dams affect water quality?
- ◆ Is there a model that can correlate water quantity to water quality?
- ◆ There is a potential for conflict between the needs of the Rio Grande silvery minnow critical habitat, the requirements for flows, and dam operations.
- ◆ To what degree will the operations in the San Acacia reach be included?
- ◆ Additional comments from technical team flip charts:
  - ◆ Consider the effects of flows on aquifer recharge. How might changes in operations affect domestic wells and near shallow groundwater systems?
  - ◆ How might changes in water operations affect wetlands?
  - ◆ Don't forget rafting and kayaking recreational activities.

**Comments from Upper Rio Grande Basin Water Operations Review Public Scoping Meeting; Española, New Mexico; Northern New Mexico Community College; July 26, 2000**

Following is a summary of the questions, comments, and issues raised during the discussion that followed the formal presentation on the purpose and objectives of the Upper Rio Grande Basin Water Operations Review and EIS at the scoping meeting in Taos, New Mexico. They are presented in the order they were discussed.

- ◆ Is this a true NEPA process, without a predetermined Preferred Alternative? Who selects the Preferred Alternative? Will there be one Preferred Alternative or an array of options?
- ◆ People in the Española valley are suspicious that they will be called upon to provide water to the middle Rio Grande valley for the silvery minnow because the people in the upper watershed feel they have less political clout. Acequias above Otowi gage are concerned about getting bought out to satisfy the needs of the minnow.
- ◆ It might be useful to present information on URGWOPS to the regional water planning board.
- ◆ How will traditional cultural properties (TCP) in and near the river be addressed?

**Comments from Upper Rio Grande Basin Water Operations Review Public Scoping Meeting; Chama, New Mexico; El Mesón Lodge; August 9, 2000**

Following is a summary of the questions, comments, and issues raised during the discussion that followed the formal presentation on the purpose and objectives of the Upper Rio Grande Basin Water Operations Review and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) at the scoping meeting in Chama, New Mexico.

- ◆ Will this project affect the adjudication process?
- ◆ Does the project not deal with acequia and tribal issues?
- ◆ Tribes can do what ever they want to do.
- ◆ Most people in northern New Mexico cannot access the Internet. How can they learn about the project and keep up to date with its status and decisions? The lead agencies should have done a better job of getting the word out so more people from the community would attend this meeting and learn about the Water Operations Review and EIS.
- ◆ Agency representatives should talk to schools to teach the students the value of our resources. Bilingual information would also help to get the word out about the project. Other recommendations included setting up an exhibit at public functions like Chama Days and the Albuquerque Arts and Crafts Fair.
- ◆ People are tired of attending meetings and of not having the host agencies really hear their concerns.
- ◆ In response to a proposed change in the surface water area of Abiquiu Reservoir several years ago, a landowners' group formed and was effective in conveying their concerns to the Corps of Engineers. They were directly affected by the proposal and persistent in providing input to the Corps. People can get organized and make the agencies listen to them. In this project, it sounds like the agencies are asking for input at the beginning.
- ◆ El Vado and Abiquiu reservoirs are the "bread and butter" of northern New Mexico. This year these reservoirs are being drained. The local people would like to know when this will stop and why they were not notified that this would happen. People should realize that draining the storage water from the upper reservoirs has an immediate effect on the local groundwater. Maybe water operations are damaging the river right now.
- ◆ Why must the Rio Grande silvery minnow be protected? How will that affect the process?
- ◆ How strong is the regulatory authority of the agencies involved? There is a situation in the Chama area involving the use of pesticides that poisoned the surface water, yet the state departments of Agriculture, Game and Fish, and Environment would do nothing about it. Can the joint lead agencies control these state agencies so they will stop this problem?
- ◆ Is breaching dams, as some agencies are doing in the northwest U.S., an option being considered or is it possible to consider?
- ◆ One person heard that Texas wants to store water in Abiquiu Reservoir.
- ◆ It was recommended that a committee be formed in each community to provide input on the project. Who is on the Steering Committee?
- ◆ Can the general public make recommendations to the Steering Committee?
- ◆ Can the public recommend members to the Steering Committee?

- ◆ Are cultural concerns required to be addressed by law?
- ◆ The group expressed concerns that northern New Mexico rural communities do not have the political clout, population, and money to have their comments carry weight when the agencies select alternative water operations. They also wanted to make sure that the alternatives selected would be equitable and would not harm their part of the basin.
- ◆ Will there be a risk-benefit assessment?

**Comments from Upper Rio Grande Basin Water Operations Review Public Scoping Meeting; Albuquerque, New Mexico, Indian Pueblo Cultural Center, August 17, 2000**

Following is a summary of the questions, comments, and issues raised during the discussion that followed the formal presentation on the purpose and objectives of the Upper Rio Grande Basin Water Operations Review and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) at the scoping meeting in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Other comments made to technical team representatives after the formal presentation are listed at the end of these notes.

- ◆ Why was El Vado not included in the scope of this EIS?
- ◆ How will the Review address prior and paramount Indian water rights? This is unclear and partly incorrect in one of the water operations fact sheets.
- ◆ What are the effects on Indian water rights other than the prior and paramount water rights?
- ◆ Why are the facilities of irrigation districts and acequias not included for consideration of changes to their operations?
- ◆ In formulating the alternatives for the EIS, are you willing to look at changing water diversions and the effect of changing irrigation district diversions?
- ◆ How does an agency become a cooperating agency?
- ◆ It is unusual to have joint lead agencies as co-leads. What assurance do we have that the Records of Decision (ROD) that are issued will not conflict with each other, and that there will be decisions made to cooperatively implement the selected alternative? Why didn't you plan to issue only one ROD?
- ◆ The Middle Rio Grande Water Assembly works with federal, state, and local agencies and can incorporate public input related to all of those agencies. The Water Operations Review could use the Water Assembly's participants for getting public input, and work together for public outreach.
- ◆ In developing the alternatives, how do the lead agencies work outside their funding agreements and enabling acts for making changes to operations? Can you request changes to be made by Congress?
- ◆ Most of the public is not aware of what is an existing authority and what is outside the scope of this project.
- ◆ Will you be considering ways to reduce evaporative losses in the system?
- ◆ How can you do what is needed to regenerate cottonwoods in the Bosque through periodic flooding when parts of the system have new construction in the floodplain? The new buildings built in the floodplain in the Socorro area and the railroad bridge at San Marcial provide constraints to water operations changes that will be difficult to overcome.

Comments from the flip charts, recorded by technical team representatives:

- ◆ Can Regional Water Plans be posted on ISC web site once submitted to the ISC?
- ◆ Comments made to the Riparian and Wetland Ecosystems Technical Team
- ◆ Need to do salt cedar clearing.
- ◆ Bosque flooding–ecosystem health.
- ◆ Flow alternatives vs. ecosystem processes and land-water interface.

- ◆ Use creative engineering to divert flows throughout the levee system to enhance cottonwood regeneration.
- ◆ For NM Game and Fish—Rio Grande silvery minnow predators?
- ◆ Bovine encroachment in riparian areas
- ◆ How many days will overbank flooding last? 24 hours? 30-40 days?
- ◆ Get communities to appreciate how rare the Bosque really is.
- ◆ Trash will be increased and mobilized, including deceased animals, when flooding is released.

**Comments from URGWOPS Public Scoping Meeting;  
Santa Fe, New Mexico; Radisson Hotel; September 20, 2000**

Following is a summary of the questions, comments, and issues raised during the discussion that followed the formal presentation on the purpose and objectives of the Upper Rio Grande Basin Water Operations Review and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) at the scoping meeting in Santa Fe, New Mexico. They are presented in the order they were discussed. Other comments made to technical team representatives after the formal presentation are listed at the end of these notes.

- ◆ What is the time period for URGWOM calculations?
- ◆ How does URGWOM affect the State Engineer's decisions on other projects? How would the state use URGWOM to make decisions? For example, how would the projected diversions and timing of those diversions from the Rio Grande affect return flow credits?
- ◆ Who is using URGWOM?
- ◆ What is the relationship between the Bureau of Reclamation Draft EIS on the Low Flow Conveyance Channel and this Water Operations Review?
- ◆ When scoping began, the Rio Grande Project was not to be included in the Water Operations Review. Now that the federal district court has dismissed this case, will operations be addressed below Elephant Butte?
- ◆ Encourage agencies involved in the Review to look at old issues in the Rio Grande watershed, like the taking of land around Abiquiu Reservoir.
- ◆ The public scoping period is short, relative to the entire project timeline.
- ◆ Give some examples of improved flexibility and cooperation, and of increased efficiency that was referred to as a benefit of this Review.
- ◆ Does the Water Operations Review deal with San Juan water? Why isn't the City of Albuquerque involved?
- ◆ A major part of water loss in the system is due to evaporation. Is there a focus on technology to reduce losses?
- ◆ Why is El Vado Reservoir not highlighted?

From flip chart sheets:

- ◆ Preserve arroyo behind north section of dam.
- ◆ Very informative, learned a lot. Please do more of this.
- ◆ Newsletter to keep people informed would be a good idea.
- ◆ Give us water to raft on. We create jobs, tax base, and economic impact in some of the poorest counties in the nation. 8 cfs at the Colorado state line is unacceptable.
- ◆ Need a minimum pool established at Abiquiu. 75,000 acre-feet would be ideal!
- ◆ Remember the "intrinsic" value of the river—not just its "instrumental" value. It has value in itself, not just what it can do for us.
- ◆ Great to have technical people to answer questions.

**Comments from URGWOPS Public Scoping Meeting;  
El Paso, Texas; Airport Hilton Hotel; September 27, 2000**

Following is a summary of the questions, comments, and issues raised during the discussion that followed the formal presentation on the purpose and objectives of the Upper Rio Grande Basin Water Operations Review and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) at the scoping meeting in El Paso, Texas. They are presented in the order they were discussed.

- ◆ Will the alternatives selected be plugged into URGWOM?
- ◆ How will the area below Elephant Butte benefit from this Review because water operations only address facilities above Elephant Butte.
- ◆ Will water quality be included in URGWOM?
- ◆ What is system efficiency?
- ◆ What is included in “regulatory compliance”?

**Comments from Upper Rio Grande Basin Water Operations Review Public Scoping Meeting; Las Cruces, New Mexico; Corbett Center, New Mexico State University; October 17, 2000**

Following is a summary of the questions, comments, and issues raised during the discussion that followed the formal presentation on the purpose and objectives of the Upper Rio Grande Basin Water Operations Review and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) at the scoping meeting in Las Cruces, New Mexico. They are presented in the order they were discussed.

- ◆ Will you be doing analysis for the river below Elephant Butte?
- ◆ Agriculture is apparently not represented in any of the technical teams.
- ◆ Agriculture should be addressed by a separate technical team, similar to recreation. Why not cover recreation under the Land Use Technical Team and designate a separate team for agriculture, which has a vested interest in water operations and the potential for important impacts to changing operations.
- ◆ A farmer or rancher can contribute a great deal to this project. It doesn't appear that ranching interests are represented either.
- ◆ It is a disservice to represent recreation and wildlife but not include specific representation of agricultural interests. Some of the dams in the basin were built for agriculture, not recreation or fish.
- ◆ Agriculture should be raised in importance by adding a technical team or developing a poster and other information on how it will be addressed.
- ◆ What baseline information will be covered for operation of the Rio Grande Project?
- ◆ How much of the Rio Grande Project is flood control? Is this a minor part of this project?
- ◆ Which litigation are you referring to? You are missing a tremendous opportunity to get baseline river information that is important to Las Cruces.
- ◆ The middle Rio Grande litigation seems to be as disruptive as the litigation below Elephant Butte, but limits have not been placed on evaluating water operations there.
- ◆ Will actions and alternatives be considered outside the river channel and the floodplain? For example, will salt cedar baseline information be collected? You should understand pre-dam vegetation to determine trends and changes in vegetation in the floodplain.
- ◆ Will you only evaluate current conditions or will you compare these conditions with historic data and project the effects of changes?

**Comments from Upper Rio Grande Basin Water Operations Review Public Scoping Meeting; Socorro, New Mexico; Macey Center, New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology; October 18, 2000**

Following is a summary of the questions, comments, and issues raised during the discussion that followed the formal presentation on the purpose and objectives of the Upper Rio Grande Basin Water Operations Review and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) at the scoping meeting in Socorro, New Mexico. They are presented in the order they were discussed.

- ◆ Will URGWOM have scenarios that will analyze the impacts of removing some diversion dams?
- ◆ Does removal of structures “mess up” this study if they are removed after the study is complete?
- ◆ Is the City of Albuquerque’s use of San Juan-Chama water part of this study?
- ◆ In the Socorro County Commission, we have discussed and supported construction of a dike on the west side, across from Bosque del Apache. The Commissioners have heard that this project has been cancelled, and they would like to state that with the construction of Elephant Butte, there has been significant damage to communities upstream along the river. Important cultural resources have been destroyed. The County Commissioners are concerned about what will happen to the remaining communities, like San Acacia and Socorro, if there is no protection from flooding.
- ◆ I am surprised that the USGS is not involved in this project.
- ◆ As a farmer, I am pessimistic about public involvement. Past experience with Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) public meetings on wolves and threatened and endangered species has shown that FWS has the ultimate authority for the Endangered Species Act and can rule any way it wants. Public involvement justifies what FWS or other government agencies want to do. How do you intend to work around the FWS trying to keep the lead agencies from doing anything under the Water Operations Review?
- ◆ On flood control projects—the Socorro County Commissioners received a letter accepting their application for a flood control project. With three lead agencies in the Water Operations Review, it would be beneficial to the commissioners to request support from these lead agencies.
- ◆ Will you be addressing noxious weeds? Perennial pepperweed is a serious problem where there has been earthmoving. Please contact the Socorro Soil and Water Conservation District for more information.
- ◆ Can we get a complete list of all agencies involved in the Water Operations Review?
- ◆ The New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission has spent money supporting the development of regional water plans. Will these plans be incorporated into the Water Operations Review? A comprehensive plan cannot be developed without incorporating the regional water plans.
- ◆ The Socorro/Sierra Regional Water Planning group is directed by a steering committee that is composed of representatives of different water users in the community. We have quarterly meetings and coordinate closely with the NMISC. We hope that all input from the community in prioritizing how water is used becomes part of the Water Operations Review so that our issues and needs are established for this reach without duplicating efforts.

Water in New Mexico is too valuable to run down the river for a few minnows when the minnow is so easy to raise in other locations.

## **Appendix B: Comment Card**



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FROM: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Place  
Postage  
Here

TO: MR. CHRIS GORBACH  
TEAM LEADER  
BUREAU OF RECLAMATION  
505 MARQUETTE NW, SUITE 1313  
ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO  
87102-2162

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**Appendix C**  
**Sample Newspaper Advertisement**

## NOTICE OF PUBLIC SCOPING MEETINGS

For development of a draft Environmental Impact Statement(EIS) for

### **upper Rio Grande basin water operations**

Meetings will be held to gather input from the public on potential issues and concerns that should be considered during the development of the Upper Rio Grande Basin Water Operations Review and EIS. The public meetings will include a presentation, an opportunity to discuss issues and ask questions of staff and managers, and an informal open house where technical teams will provide information on resources as well as receive comments. All meetings will begin at 6:00 p.m. and end at 9:00 p.m.

Alamosa, CO	Wednesday, June 28	Alamosa Elks Lodge, 406 Hunt
Taos, NM	Thursday, June 29	Kachina Lodge, 413 Paseo del Pueblo Norte
Espanola, NM	Wednesday, July 26	No. NM Community College, 921 Paseo de Onate
Chama, NM	Wednesday August 9	El Meson Lodge, South Highway 84/64
Albuquerque, NM	Thursday, August 17	Indian Pueblo Cultural Center, 2401 12 <sup>th</sup> NW
Santa Fe, NM	Wednesday, Sept. 20	Radisson Hotel, 750 N. St. Francis
El Paso, TX	Wednesday, Sept. 27	El Paso Airport Hilton, 2027 Airway Blvd.
Las Cruces, NM	Tuesday, October 17	New Mexico State University, Corbett Center
Socorro, NM	Wednesday, October 18	NM Institute of Mining and Tech., Macy Center

Additional information is available online at <http://www.spa.usace.army.mil/urgwops/> or by calling:

*U.S. Army Corps of Engineers  
Gail Stockton  
505-342-3348  
Fax: 505-342-3195*

*Bureau of Reclamation  
Chris Gorbach/ Leann Towne  
505-248-5379/5321  
Fax: 505-248-5308*

*Interstate Stream Commission  
Rhea Graham  
505-841-9480  
Fax: 505-841-9485*

**Appendix D:  
Handouts from Scoping Meetings**