

**Notes from Upper Rio Grande Basin Water Operations Review
Interdisciplinary NEPA Team Meeting; April 12, 2001; 1:00 PM;
Corps of Engineers Conference Room, Albuquerque**

In attendance:

Neal Ackerly, Dos Rios Consultants/Corps

Scott Anderholm, USGS

Deb Callahan, USBR

Ellen Dietrich, SAIC/Corps

Darrell Eidson, Corps

Hector Garcia, USBR

Susan Goodan, SAIC

Rhea Graham, NMISC

Walter Hines, CH2M Hill/ City of
Albuquerque

Conrad Keyes, Jr., EWRI of ASCE

Bill Leibfried, SWCA/NMISC

Charles Lujan, San Juan Pueblo

Anna Munoz, USFWS

Claudia Oakes, SWCA/NMISC

Brian Ortiz, USFWS

Christine Pacheco, NMED

Gary Rutherford, Corps

Gail Stockton, Corps

Leann Towne, USBR

Julie Tsatsaros, NMED

- ❖ Clay Mathers presented the GIS Pilot Study that was used to test the potential for and obstacles to integration of varied technical team data. The study tried to integrate GIS data from the Aquatic Systems, Riparian and Wetlands, Cultural Resources, Geomorphology, Water Quality, and Socioeconomics Technical Teams for part of Reach 14. The progress to date was presented to act as a catalyst for discussion. Clay conveyed some of the lessons learned through this Pilot Study, which are summarized below.

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- A valuable lesson learned during the development of the Pilot Study is the **importance of communication between the technical teams and the GIS staff** importing and manipulating technical team data. Clay stressed that the sooner the GIS specialists know what data are available and intended to be used by each technical team, the better the GIS staff will know what to do with the data and in what form they should be applied. This will result in better analyses.
 - One time-consuming task was organizing the data provided by each team and converting datasets into a useable format that can be integrated with data from other teams. The effort for the Pilot Study is just a small sample of the magnitude of this integration task for the overall project.
 - Clay recommended making use of the GIS Technical Team liaisons assigned to every technical team to discuss data collection and use. **It was recommended that the GIS Team publish the list of team member assignments on Team Link, so that everyone is aware of these assignments.**
 - He stressed the importance of knowing the geographic focus and purpose of the data that are intended to be used, and of understanding the potential problems of their use.
 - In some cases, teams will have to deal with a wealth of data, which will require them to determine carefully what data they really need and convey that to the GIS specialists.

- Teams need to remember that the GIS staff are unable to interpret the data or decide which data are needed. Each team, in cooperation with the GIS Technical Team, should address this need.
- Clay stressed the importance of having all technical teams determine how much of their localized, in-depth data would be useful, especially if they plan to use it to characterize a larger area. It will be critical not to be too bogged down in detailed data for a small area unless the team knows that the analysis can be extrapolated to a larger area. Since there will not be uniform data across the project area, representative data may have to be used by most teams.

❖ **Clay summarized by reiterating that teams should make every effort to communicate with the GIS Technical Team concerning data types, problems, and uses, to ensure that as much data as possible can be integrated from every team.**



- **Leann suggested that GIS Technical Team representatives should be invited to the next meetings of each technical team.**

❖ Walter Hines presented an overview of the City of Albuquerque's Drinking Water Project.

- The project includes an EIS to evaluate the impacts of alternative methods to use the San Juan-Chama water for municipal and industrial supply, replacing groundwater as the primary source.
- There are three diversion alternatives under consideration.
 - Using the Angostura diversion channel;
 - Constructing a new diversion structure using an inflatable dam in the river near Paseo del Norte; and
 - Underground collector pipes across the riverbed.
- Documents on the screening criteria used to evaluate potential alternatives and the conceptual design of the proposed alternatives are available from the City.
- The Draft EIS is expected to be available in June.
 - In the EIS, the City has assumed that approximately 47,000 acre-feet per year (afy) of San Juan-Chama water would be available in the river at Albuquerque. The City would divert approximately 94,000 afy when the system is running, and return 47,000 afy at the Southside wastewater treatment plant.
 - Currently the City diverts approximately 60,000 afy, plus 110,000 afy pumped from the aquifer, and returns about 55,000 afy to the river.
 - The hydrology report should also be available in May.
 - The No Action Alternative assumes that there is no city San Juan-Chama water in the river system from Heron Reservoir downriver.
- There will be a town hall meeting on April 20, 2001 to present and discuss the City's preferred alternative at the Convention Center.

❖ Technical Team Status

- URGWOM Integration/Water Operations Technical Team—Leann, for Don Gallegos, Team Leader
 - Held their last meeting last week and discussed water operations for the current water year.



- They discussed how water is released and how operations decisions are made for the reaches from Heron to Abiquiu Reservoirs. She recommended that **all technical team members read the notes on Team Link to understand these important water operations activities.**
- They also discussed how El Vado authorities fit into the water operations picture.
- Their next meeting is scheduled for May 3 at 1 p.m. in the Operations Conference Room at the Corps.
- Aquatic Systems Technical Team—Bill Leibfried
 - Bill is the new co-team leader, along with Rick Fike of the Corps.
 - Their last meeting was held on April 10, in which they discussed the aquatic habitat modeling effort that will begin soon.
 - They also reviewed and modified their criteria and discussed data collection and evaluation.
 - Bill introduced two new team members from the USFWS, Brian Ortiz and Maija Mencks.
 - They plan to coordinate with the Water Quality and Riparian and Wetlands Technical Teams regarding potential overlap within the Work Plans.
 - Their next meeting is scheduled for May 8 at 1:00 p.m. at the Corps. They plan to discuss adaptive management and monitoring.
- Land Use, Socioeconomics, Environmental Justice, Recreation, and Agriculture Technical Team—Gary Rutherford, Susan Goodan
 - Their last meeting was held on April 13 with the URGWOM Integration/Water Operations Technical Team to help the team understand how water operations would affect their resources. Susan pointed out that it was clear at the last meeting that the team needs a better understanding of operations and of the potential area of impact.
 - There is a significant overlap between the issues of agriculture, land use, environmental justice, and cultural resources.
- Riparian and Wetlands Technical Team—Claudia Oakes
 - The team is finishing their criteria and budget, and developing the coordination act agreement.
 - Their current GIS need is the contours of the reservoirs.
 - They would like to coordinate with the Cultural Resources Technical Team to ask for riparian and vegetation data on tribal lands.
- Geomorphology, etc., Technical Team—Darrell Eidson
 - The team is developing channel-forming discharge data and planning to field verify the data.
 - Their next meeting will be held on April 16 at the Corps.

- Water Quality Technical Team—Julie Tsatsaros
 - Their last meeting was held on April 11 at the Harold Runnels building in Santa Fe. They plan to meet the second Wednesday of every month, and alternate between Santa Fe and Albuquerque locations.
 - They finished a review of the jurisdictions and standards for water quality within each reach. They will use these standards to evaluate impacts of the alternatives.
 - They are creating a database of historic and current water quality data and will review it at their next meeting.
 - There is an overlap between their interests and those of the Aquatic Systems Technical Team, so they are meeting to coordinate.
 - They would like to coordinate with the Cultural Resources Technical Team to ask for water quality data within tribal jurisdictions.
 - Their next meeting will be held on May 10 at 8:00 or 9:00 a.m. at the USGS building.
- GIS Technical Team—Clay Mathers
 - The team last met on March 29 and focused mainly on the GIS Pilot Study. Their regular meeting days are the last Thursday of each month at 9:00 a.m. at the Corps. The notes are posted on Team Link.
 - They also saw a demonstration of DjVu, to be used for storing references for the Administrative Record.
- The Project Managers had some recommendations for the technical teams.
 - Leann Towne clarified a point from the March ID Team notes. She stressed that **if technical teams are ready to begin data collection activities and need funding, they must discuss their plans, schedule, and budget with the Project Managers first to determine availability of funds.**
 - It is recommended that some technical teams set up conference calls for those members who cannot travel to the meeting. The Project Managers are willing to assist or provide a place to do this if needed.
 - All technical team leaders should be **posting their meeting notes on team link under the date of the meeting on the calendar, with a message on the message board stating that the notes are available.**
 - Natalie Maldonado, with Weston, will be contacting technical team leaders to work on the integration of the study plans. She will be attending the technical team meetings to coordinate with each team.
- ❖ Clay told the group a little about how the software, DjVu, for storing the Administrative Record references will work. Ellen Dietrich told the group that they should look for an updated version of the Archive Forms that are posted on Team Link.
- ➡ ❖ **The next ID NEPA Team meeting will be held on May 10 at 1:00 p.m. at the Corps.**