

**Notes from the Upper Rio Grande Basin Water Operations Review ID NEPA Team Meeting; August 10, 2000; 1:00 PM; Bureau of Reclamation Rio Grande Conference Room, Albuquerque**

*In attendance:*

Cynthia Abeyta, USFWS	Julie Maitland, NMDA
Scott Anderholm, USGS	Clay Mathers, Corps
Karen E. Browne, NMED/SWQB	Robert Padilla, Bureau of Reclamation
Ellen Dietrich, SAIC	Gary Rutherford, Corps
Darrell Eidson, Corps	Steve Silcox, USFWS
Hector Garcia, Bureau of Reclamation	Gail Stockton, Corps
Rhea Graham, NMISC	Leann Towne, Bureau of Reclamation
Bill Hays, NMGF	Steve Vandiver, CO Div. of Water Resources
Walter Hines, CH <sub>2</sub> M Hill	Doug Wolf, Corps
Conrad Keyes, Jr., EWRI	
Russ MacRae, USFWS	

- ❖ Gail Stockton opened the meeting and introduced the new Project Managers of the other two lead agencies, Leann Towne with the Bureau of Reclamation replacing Chris Gorbach, and Rhea Graham with the New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission replacing Rolf Schmidt-Peterson.
- ❖ Gail distributed a handout from Mark Yuska of the URGWOM Technical Team who was unable to attend. The paper proposed the purpose and use of the Planning Model of URGWOM that would be used primarily for evaluating flows under different alternatives in the EIS.



- **Mark would like to get feedback from the technical teams for developing the Planning Model. Technical team members should provide comments to one of the Project Managers.**
- The Water Operations/URGWOM Integration Technical Team plans to meet with the other technical teams to discuss their needs relative to URGWOM.
- Clay Mathers stressed that it is critical to know the types of data needed and the types of analyses planned by the teams to ensure that the data are suitable to be used for the planned analyses.
  - Clay recommended that the Project Managers track the raster and vector data needed by technical teams and their intended uses. URGWOM provides point data.
  - Data quality is also important to be recorded by all technical team members who obtain GIS data.
  - Leann suggested that a decision support system might be needed to integrate data.

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  - There should be coordination between the GIS and the Water Operations Technical Teams to support the other technical teams.
  - Conrad Keyes attended an EWRI conference in Minneapolis and heard a presentation about the proposed restoration of the river near Santa Ana Pueblo. The presentation made him think about the fact that there is an error of 20% on river flows (or local inflow) in URGWOM. Therefore, URGWOM may not be suitable for assessing impacts in this area, especially by the Geomorphology Technical Team.
    - Robert Padilla responded that the Geomorphology Technical Team plans to evaluate mainly the peak flows that would characterize the channel-forming discharges, not all flows. They intend to compare impacts using peak discharges from very different flows, such as 1000 cfs, 5000 cfs, and 10,000 cfs, not incrementally different flows. They will be able to evaluate the differences even with this margin of error referred to by Conrad because the differences would be great. They also plan to use representative cross-sections in each reach to characterize the channel.
- ❖ Technical Team Activities
  - It is possible to add people to the teams from other agencies and organizations. The City of Albuquerque has been interested in adding staff to some of the technical teams.
  - ➔➤ **Technical team leaders should tell their assigned Project Manager when meetings are scheduled** so the Manager can coordinate with other technical teams if necessary.
  - Gail reminded the group that technical teams must schedule meetings and include all team members in meetings. They may also occasionally want to include other technical teams for specific discussions and issues.
    - Technical team meetings should not be held solely by individual phone calls and e-mails because this leaves out some members and discourages discussion.
    - Rhea Graham pointed out that, at the scoping meetings, they are explaining the NEPA process to the public. They are describing it as a process of listening and coordination with the public and the cooperating agencies. If technical teams do not meet and do not include all members of the team in their discussions, the project could be open to criticism that NEPA was not followed and that the cooperating agencies were not given a chance to participate.
  - The Water Operations/URGWOM Integration Technical Team meets on the first Friday of every month at the Corps building.
  - Technical teams should discuss how they would use the Planning Model of URGWOM and pass along to the Project Managers.
    - The Geomorphology Technical Team needs the extremes of peak discharges from each reservoir.
- ❖ Gail summarized the information that was supplied in the Market Survey.
  - The survey provided some useful issues and concerns from water users and government officials that helped the Project Managers know what to expect at the scoping meetings.
  - The majority of the people interviewed said that they get most of their news from the newspaper, not from the television or radio. Based on this information, the scoping meetings were advertised primarily in the local newspapers.
  - Most water users were informed about the water management agencies and what they do. The media people interviewed did not have an understanding about water issues and the

purpose of the water management agencies. State legislators were not well informed either.

- ❖ Ellen Dietrich summarized the scoping meetings that have been held to date.
  - Attendance at the four meetings, Alamosa, Taos, Española, and Chama, ranged from one to seven people.
  - Some of those in attendance, however, were key stakeholders who were informed about water issues and provided useful input.
  - It is clear that the public would like to be involved in the selection of the alternatives to be evaluated by the technical teams in the EIS.
  - Some people made suggestions on how to get better participation by people in their communities. The Project Managers will need to attend other local meetings to make presentations about URGWOPS and to encourage input from the public.
  - Most people do not have an understanding of what the NEPA process is and how it is supposed to work.
  - The summaries of the comments from these meetings will be posted on the URGWOPS web site.
  - Leann suggested that technical team members do a presentation about their resources and their team, similar to the presentations made at some of the scoping meetings, to the ID NEPA Team.

#### ❖ Technical Team Updates

- River Geomorphology, Sedimentation, and Mechanics Technical Team—Robert Padilla
  - The team last met a few weeks ago and is working on characterizing the geomorphology of the upper basin from the Conejos River to its confluence with the Rio Grande.
  - They also plan to address sediment issues at Cochiti and Jemez Canyon, and are preparing to analyze the alternatives.
  - They will be characterizing the system using such data as channel width, channel depth, and bed material.
  - Robert stated that they have all the data they need except in the Taos area.
  - Karen Browne said that the NMED recently completed water quality sampling in the upper watershed with associated geomorphic data and will share these data with the technical team upon request.
- Aquatic Systems Technical Team—Hector Garcia
  - Two meetings have been cancelled since June so there was nothing to report.
- Hydrology and Hydraulics Technical Team—Doug Wolf
  - Doug is the only team member and is working closely with the Geomorphology Technical Team to develop a two-dimensional hydraulic routing model, which will also be used by the Cultural Resources and Riparian Technical Teams. This Flo-2D model will provide spatial and temporal nodal hydraulic data.
  - Doug has been using digital terrain model (DTM) data sets to develop the 500-foot grid system for the Flo-2D model. There is continuous mapping of the mainstem of

the river, with several coverages in the reaches from Cochiti to the upper end of Elephant Butte. The integrated DTM/Flo-2D model data sets are both raster and vector, with x- and y- coordinate geometry and a z- variable of surface water elevation, flow depth, and velocity.

- The DTM datasets meet the accuracy required for two-foot contour mapping and were obtained from 1992 to 1998.
  - Clay recommended that some analysis be done in the areas with overlapping maps to determine how much difference there is in the data from different years. This would be important to understanding and accounting for the potential error that could be introduced when using terrain data taken over a period of six years.
  - In response to a question on how these data relate to HEC-RAS, Doug said that some of these data are used for other floodplain studies using HEC. Some of the new data must be requested through the pueblos for use by other projects.
  - Doug is considering having his team become part of the Geomorphology Technical Team unless he gets more participation from other agencies. It was suggested that he could get some help from the ISC.
- Land Use, Socioeconomics, and Environmental Justice Technical Team—Gary Rutherford
- This team has not met since before the scoping meetings began in June. They have communicated through e-mail.
- Water Quality Technical Team—Karen Browne
- The team has not been active since the scoping meetings began, although they have communicated through e-mail.
  - Karen spoke with staff at IBWC who are interested in attending the El Paso and Las Cruces scoping meetings. Conrad said that the IBWC may be holding their Citizens' Forum close to the same time as the El Paso scoping meeting.
- Cultural Resources Technical Team—Clay Mathers
- The team has decided that they will identify sites and analyze impacts within a ten-mile corridor along the river.
  - They have acquired the NM SHPO data from approximately 10,000 archaeological sites. Data from Colorado and Texas are not as readily available.
  - They plan to analyze site density, type, spatial and temporal distribution, and survey extent and type. They will also review State and National Register listed sites and eligible sites to determine whether they would be threatened due to implementation of any of the alternatives in the EIS.
- Steve Silcox introduced Russ MacRae who will be on the Water Quality Technical Team and Cynthia Abeyta, USFWS Bosque Coordinator, who is willing to help where she is needed. Jude Smith, a fisheries biologist with USFWS has also been working on the Aquatic Systems Technical Team.
- The Project Managers have been discussing the selection of some new technical team leaders because they are mostly Corps personnel. The technical team leaders should be selected from one of the joint lead agencies, but should not be dominated by one agency.
- ❖ Fiscal Year 2001 funding for the federal agencies is unknown, yet..

❖ Upcoming activities and project schedule for the technical teams:



➤ **Technical teams must work on their plans of study**, which are scheduled to be finalized by the end of December. A sample plan is included in the technical team notebooks. Notebooks should be current as of April 13.

➤ The integrated project plan of study is to be developed by the ID NEPA Team by February.



➤ The Project Managers will be proposing to the Executive Committee that **two workshops** be held to help technical teams develop the plans of study.

▪ The first workshop is proposed to be one full daylong, held in **November**. It would involve all technical team members. Each team will present their draft plan of study and refine it at the workshop.

▪ The second workshop would be held in **January or February** for the members of the ID NEPA Team to help them integrate the technical team plans of study into one plan for the project.



➤ The Quality Assurance/Quality Control Plan for URGWOPS is being developed by Conrad Keyes. Technical team leaders were sent an e-mail requesting that they and their team members **send brief biographical information to Conrad** for inclusion in this plan. Conrad only received one response so Ellen will send another request.

▪ Ellen told the group that only technical team leaders receive many of the e-mails sent out. If the leaders want the rest of their team to see the e-mail, they must forward to their team.

❖ The next meeting of the ID NEPA Team will be held on **September 14** at 1:00 p.m. at the Corps, Room 119.