

Notes from Upper Rio Grande Basin Water Operations Review Interdisciplinary NEPA Team Meeting; August 9, 2001; 1:00 PM; Corps of Engineers Conference Room, Albuquerque

In attendance:

Scott Anderholm, USGS

Julie Maitland, NMDA

Art Coykendall, USBR

Natalie Maldonado, R.F. Weston/Corps

Ellen Dietrich, SAIC/Corps

Clay Mathers, Corps

Susan Goodan, SAIC/Corps

Claudia Oakes, SWCA/NMISC

Rhea Graham, NMISC

Steve Piper, USBR

Brian Hanson, USFWS

Gary Rutherford, Corps

Debbie Hathaway, SSPA/NMISC

Willem Schreüder, Principia Mathematica

Conrad Keyes, Jr., EWRI/Corps

Nabil Shafike, NMISC

Steve Kolk, USBR

Gail Stockton, Corps

Bill Liebfried, SWCA/NMISC

Julie Tsatsaros, NMED/SWQB

- ❖ Rhea Graham and Gail Stockton began the meeting with introductions and asked for comments on the July ID NEPA Team notes that were distributed at the meeting and posted on Team Link. No one had comments, so they will be posted on the public URGWOPS web site.
- ❖ Steve Kolk led the discussion of the matrix of single resource emphasis goals and objectives, the building blocks from which the multi-objective alternatives will be developed. The matrix was projected onto the screen and edited as the parameters were described in these focus areas.. He asked a representative from each technical team to review and explain the criteria listed for each facility in the matrix. The discussion is summarized below. Changes to the draft matrix were made during the discussion, or were noted for further investigation.
 - Gail reminded the group that the **teams need to keep in mind the comments made during public scoping when they develop their single resource emphasis goals and objectives.**
 - River Aquatic Habitat Emphasis and Reservoir Aquatic Habitat Emphasis were explained by Bill Liebfried, Aquatic Systems Technical Team. Discussion here included that more detail for Heron and Abiquiu Reservoirs as well as additional information and clarification, respectively, for Cochiti and the Low Flow Conveyance Channel (LFCC) would be needed in developing multi-objective alternatives. Need to re-check public scoping comments for Platoro.
 - Brian Hanson stated that he hopes the EIS will address flow recommendations for river reaches and fish species. He suggested that the instream flow study between Elephant Butte and Caballo, completed by NMSU, would be useful. The study describes the flows by time of year that could enhance fish habitat. Need to note in no-action alternative some of the potential flexibilities, but recognize that later changes here may be outside of EIS authorities.

- Brian also suggested that the EIS consider the operation of the hydropower facility at Elephant Butte in addition to flood operations.
- Riparian Habitat Emphasis—Art Coykendall, Riparian and Wetlands Technical Team discussed
- ➔ **▪ The Riparian, and Water Operations Technical Teams need to finish discussion of meet to discuss water operations alternatives below Cochiti. The Aquatic Habitat team is also invited to participate.**
- ➔ **▪ To help them decide if they have any specific recommendations for riparian habitat emphasis for the Closed Basin, the team will (via conference call with USBR Closed Basin staff) find out more about that project’s operation and management.** They would also like to include or follow up with someone from BLM to discuss management of the Wild and Scenic Rivers segment and a USFWS person from the Alamosa National Wildlife Refuge. Steve Kolk will set up a joint meeting and make the contacts. Other technical team members are invited.
- ➔ **▪ Gail recommended that technical team members also see the fact sheet on the Closed Basin Project** that was distributed at the public scoping meetings. All of the fact sheets are posted on the public URGWOPS web site.
- Other discussion included modification of specific matrix language, need to minimize damage to existing riparian areas during high water storage conditions, better communication with water operators through augmenting language and developing protocol, avoiding flood damage to the Cochiti delta, and additional clarifications.
- Minimize Conveyance Losses Emphasis—Debbie Hathaway, Water Operations Team member.
- Discussion included a question on the naming of the single emphasis resource and several questions on specific objectives language to reduce evaporation and non-beneficial evapotranspiration losses. **The Water Operations Team will review the Minimize Conveyance Losses Emphasis criteria and provide comments. Gail will check on the Abiquiu “Study Space” designation.**
- Water Quality Emphasis—Julie Tsatsaros, Water Quality Technical Team leader.
- Water quality emphasis encompasses avoiding degradation and meeting all regulatory criteria. Specific objectives per reservoir were discussed in the context of the existing water quality environment. There was discussion about BMP’s for watersheds above reservoirs. Although these are not within the authorities or control of the joint lead agencies, identification in the EIS for follow on projects or studies could be recommended. Other clarifications needed regarding language were identified such as the meaning of “minimize water level fluctuations”.
- Flood Control Emphasis—Gary Rutherford, Land Use, Socioeconomics, Environmental Justice, Agriculture, and Recreation Technical Team leader.
- The No Action alternative encompasses many of the listed criteria. There was discussion regarding the ability to evacuate in times of emergency flood conditions with with the Rio Grande Compact Commissioners for Elephant Butte and with the US Section of the International Boundary Commission for Caballo. Specific descriptions for protocol would be useful for development of the multi-objective alternatives.

- Recreation Emphasis—Susan Goodan, Land Use, Socioeconomics, Environmental Justice, Agriculture, and Recreation Technical team member.
 - Discussion included to be determined blank spaces for values based upon forthcoming evaluations. Input from pueblos is needed, as well. Other recreation criteria were presented.
- Cultural Resources Emphasis, Clay Mathers, Cultural Resources Technical Team member, presented preliminary draft cultural resource emphasis goals.

❖ The No Action Alternative matrix handed out at this meeting will be posted on Team Link. Teams should upload any revisions to the Single Resource Emphasis goals and objectives onto Team Link. Steve Kolk will work on them and post by Monday. **The Project Managers asked that technical team members review the matrix and e-mail any comments to them. All updated versions of single emphasis goals and objectives should be posted to Team Link by each technical team.**



❖ **The next meeting of the ID NEPA Team will be held on September 13 at 1:00 p.m. at the Corps. Greg Thomas with the Natural Heritage Institute will present information on the proposed “Physical Assessment Project “ for the Rio Grande/Rio Bravo at this meeting.**