

**Notes from the Interdisciplinary NEPA Team Meeting, Upper Rio Grande
Basin Water Operations Review, January 13, 2000, 1:00 PM, Corps of
Engineers Building, Albuquerque**

In attendance:

Scott Anderholm, USGS

Conrad Keyes, Jr., Consultant

Theresa Davidson, FWS

Ron Kneebone, Corps

William DeRagon, Corps

Robert Padilla, Bureau of Reclamation

Ellen Dietrich, SAIC

Cynthia Piirto, Corps

Robert Dudley, UNM

Rolf Schmidt-Petersen, ISC

Darrel Eidson, Corps

Bill Spurgeon, Corps

Richard Fike, Corps

Gail Stockton, Corps

LeAnn Towne, Bureau of Reclamation

❖ Gail Stockton updated the group on the coordination among the Joint Lead Agencies (JLA) and their recent activities.

- The JLA will sign the Memorandum of Agreement on January 26, 2000.
- The Project Managers have been revising the Work Plan, which fleshes out holes in the draft Work Plan that was included in the notebook distributed to the technical team members. Technical teams will get a detailed project schedule after the MOA has been signed.
- Public scoping meetings are planned to begin in June.
- There are currently six cooperating agencies that have committed to participating in the Water Operations Review. Theresa Davidson announced that the Fish and Wildlife Service intends to become a cooperating agency.

❖ Status of technical team organization.

- Technical team leaders can obtain names of people representing the ISC on their teams from Rolf Schmidt-Petersen. Rolf reported that the ISC and the State Engineer recently developed a Request for Proposals to obtain services of technical experts who can participate on technical teams for the ISC. He should have the names of these people by April.
- Ron Kneebone, Cultural Resources Technical Team, asked who would pay for Tim Seaman's time on his technical team and how coordination with Tim should be handled. The point of contact for the Office of Cultural Affairs has been designated as the Assistant for Cultural Affairs, although Tim has been working with the technical team. Ron did not know whether the designation of this contact person would affect that relationship.
- Gail pointed out that more formal contacts with the participating state agencies are needed.

- It would help the Project Managers if the technical teams would recommend state agencies that are needed to participate on their teams. Each state agency will choose their level of participation in the Water Operations Review independently. The ISC is one of the Joint Lead Agencies. Others may choose to be a cooperating agency, just to participate in the process, or not to participate.
- Rolf will coordinate with the other state agencies.
- ❖ Technical teams were assigned to complete the Resource Assessment Worksheets that were distributed at the last meeting, for each reach. The intent is to use these completed forms to exchange information among the technical teams so they know what data will be evaluated by the other teams.
- **The technical team members agreed that it would be helpful to determine the coordinates for the endpoints of each reach so this can be used in GIS. Clay Mathers agreed to work on this task.**
- The Geomorphology Technical Team completed their worksheets for three indicators and Robert Padilla distributed copies to the group.
 - The resources considered for each reach are riparian and aquatic habitats, public and private properties, riverside, infrastructure, and recreation.
 - The indicators the team plans to assess are discharge, channel geometry, and sediment.
 - Robert reviewed the worksheets developed for some of the reaches for each indicator and group discussed the types of assessments and resource indicators the technical team plans to use.
 - When characterizing existing conditions, the team will describe the width of each reach. This would be useful information for other technical teams.
 - Robert pointed out that there are significant gaps in the existing data for the reaches below Caballo. According to Conrad Keyes, the New Mexico-Texas Water Commission EIS, being conducted by the IBWC, will result in the collection of data in those reaches that can be used by the Water Operations Review.
 - Gail reminded the group that **the project requires permission from Mexico before any data collection or analyses can be conducted below American Dam.** She will be working with IBWC to obtain this permission.
- Ron Kneebone reported on the Cultural Resources Technical Team worksheet development.
 - They plan to use indicators such as surveyed area and surveyed space.
 - Existing data are spotty in the SHPO's records and they would like to access the Bureau of Reclamation records that have not yet been submitted to the SHPO to supplement data from the state.
 - Tribal input will be very important for this team.
 - Impacts on cultural resources will most likely result from lateral erosion. Information from other technical teams will help determine the effects on historic properties and other cultural resources.
 - The Cultural Resources Technical Team should group their data in a way that would be compatible with data from other teams. For example, the team will consider the presence of cultural resources near the river and evaluate the potential for erosion in each location under differing water operations alternatives. Critical interaction is

required between this team and the Geomorphology Technical Team, which could tell them the expected erosion rate at specific locations.

- **How measurements are conducted and impacts are assessed by one team affects the work of other teams.**

- Bill Spurgeon reported that the Water Quality Technical Team has been trying to determine what is most important to be evaluated for this project.
 - They are working on narrowing down the list of parameters to a manageable number by limiting it to those parameters that will change with changing water operations. They are also considering grouping water quality parameters according to what indicators are required to meet designated uses and state standards.
 - They are trying to organize the data. STORET has 8000 samples that could be used, and the team must determine what types of samples would be useful and compatible with other project data.
- William DeRagon of the Riparian Technical Team stressed that his team will need significant input from other technical teams to conduct their analyses.
 - For example, lowering of the groundwater table in overbank areas would affect the health of vegetation in riparian areas.
 - The Geomorphology Technical Team can provide important data for the Riparian Technical Team's use.
- Richard Fike distributed worksheets developed by the Aquatic Habitat Team.
 - Resources listed are riverine and reservoir aquatic habitats, sensitive fish species, native and nonnative riverine fish, reservoir fish, and aquatic ecosystem interactive processes.
 - Indicators include macrohabitat surface area by discharge and by reservoir elevation, and fish abundance, distribution, and reproduction.
 - The team grouped the reaches by similar conditions and trends instead of creating a separate worksheet for each reach.
- The group agreed that the worksheet development process could be streamlined if reaches are grouped where possible.
- **Gail reminded the technical team leaders that the ID NEPA Team members must agree on how to coordinate between technical teams. They must also complete the worksheets and identify data needs for incorporation in the technical team plans of study.**
- ❖ William DeRagon recommended that **a glossary be developed soon and be shared among the technical teams.** Even seemingly simple terms that are commonly used should be included because they might have different meanings in different disciplines.
 - **Each technical team should develop a list of terms and definitions while working on their assessment worksheets and plans of study.**
 - As technical teams continue doing work throughout the project, they should add to the list. Other technical team members should ask for definitions if they don't know the meaning of a term.
 - This glossary will be helpful to use for the public meetings, other public outreach activities, and the EIS document.

- ❖ Clay Mathers and Ellen Dietrich distributed a draft list of guidelines for acquisition of GIS data by technical team members. The guidelines are intended to standardize GIS data and ensure compatibility with other data collected by technical teams.
 - Technical teams will have the responsibility of identifying GIS data for their use and coordinating acquisition.
 - By considering issues such as resolution, projection, and the other items listed, before acquiring data, error can be reduced and a great deal of processing time can be saved.
 - Clay and Ellen will be meeting with each technical team soon to further discuss the use of GIS, and to help them determine what data are needed and how data will be used for analysis.



- ❖ **The next meeting of the ID NEPA Team will be February 10, 2000 at 1:00 PM.**