

Notes from Upper Rio Grande Basin Water Operations Review ID NEPA Team Meeting; December 14, 2000; 1:00 PM; Corps of Engineers Conference Room, Albuquerque

In attendance:

Scott Anderholm, USGS
Roberta Ball, Corps
Olga Boberg, USBR
Karen E. Browne, NMED
William DeRagon, Corps
Ellen Dietrich, SAIC
Darrell Eidson, Corps
Richard Fike, Corps
Don Gallegos, Corps
Hector Garcia, USBR
Susan Goodan, SAIC
Rhea Graham, NMISC
Brian Hanson, USFWS

Walter Hines, CH2M Hill/City of Albuquerque
Conrad Keyes, Jr., EWRI of ASCE
Charles Lujan, San Juan Pueblo
Clay Mathers, Corps
Nic Medley, NMGF
William J. Miller, WJM Engineering
Claudia Oakes, SWCA/NMISC
Gary Rutherford, Corps
Gail Stockton, Corps
Leann Towne, USBR
Julie Tsatsaros, NMED

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- ❖ After introductions, Rhea Graham led the meeting. She reminded the technical team leaders that the Project Managers must get electronic copies of the full plans of study. Only the Water Quality, Aquatic Systems, and Land Use technical teams have submitted their plans. She asked **that all technical team leaders submit or resubmit their plans of study, and make sure that a date is on it so the latest one is reviewed by the managers.**
 - ❖ Issues from the Water Operations Review Steering Committee meeting on December 6, 2000.
 - Groundwater must be included in the water budgets developed to evaluate the impacts on agriculture. URGWOM has a limited groundwater component. The model estimates leakage from the river and gains to the river from groundwater.
 - The Riparian and Wetland Ecosystems Technical Team should discuss groundwater information with Dave Wilkins of the URGWOM Technical Team.
 - A technical team member asked whether the Steering Committee would make recommendations to the Executive Committee on study plan integration.
 - The Steering Committee is encouraged to make recommendations to the Project Managers any time, but it is not an advisory body. They may comment, however, on the study plans and other issues without having a meeting.
 - Cooperating agencies are participants on the Steering Committee but they can meet and comment outside the Steering Committee.
 - Conrad Keyes reminded the group that the draft Quality Control Plan states that an independent technical group will review all Water Operations Review documents.
 - Four cooperating agencies of 11 possible are close to having signed MOAs.

- ❖ Gail Stockton distributed copies of the basin map. She said that there should be no travel on tribal lands without prior permission from the governor or president. A letter granting permission should be taken along on the day of the visit, and people must check in at the tribal headquarters first.
 - Tribal cooperation is critical to the success of the Water Operations Review.
 - Permission should be requested from all landowners, not just on tribal lands.
- ❖ Comments from Project Managers on technical team plans of study.



- **Issues that must be included by all of the technical teams in their plans of study.**
 - Staffing—relate to the staffing listed in the Work Plan.
 - Method of ensuring that the issues of other states in the project area are addressed.
 - State methods of analysis to be used and why they were selected.
 - Technical teams should let the GIS Support Team know their budgeted hours for GIS analysis, so that can feed into the GIS Team budget.
 - All technical teams should include a paragraph in their study plans on how they will work with tribes.
 - The deadline for completion of the integrated plan of study is February 28, 2001. This will consider crossover and duplication of tasks and data between technical teams and other projects within the project area.
- Land Use, Socioeconomics, and Environmental Justice Technical Team:
 - May need to address potential impacts in land use values related to changes in point of use for water that is transferred from agricultural to municipal and industrial land.
 - When considering land values, use different valuation systems for Indian and non-Indian land. The team must work with the tribes to determine valuation system on Indian lands.
 - This team will incorporate subgroups for addressing recreation and agriculture.
- Aquatic Systems Technical Team:
 - No major problems.
 - Is there a connection with fishing, especially sport fishing? Coordinate with recreation group.
- Water Quality Technical Team:
 - Rhea expressed a concern with the reaches identified in the study plan. Are those reaches really the ones that would be affected by water operations? The reaches used by the team should be subsets of the 17 reaches agreed upon by the ID NEPA Team.
 - The lack of data from Texas and Colorado must be addressed.
 - Data from Bureau of Reclamation and Corps reservoirs should be used.
- Leann Towne commented on the study plans she reviewed.
 - River Morphology, Sedimentation, and Mechanics Technical Team:

- The evaluation and characterization of sediment transport listed as optional in the study plan may not be optional after all. It will be needed by other technical teams.
- Riparian and Wetland Ecosystems Technical Team:
 - Some indicators may be combined with those identified by the Aquatic Systems Technical Team.
- Gail Stockton commented on the study plans she reviewed.
 - Cultural Resources Technical Team:
 - There will be co-team leaders with a contractor and a representative from San Juan Pueblo. They will seek additional tribal involvement.
- ❖ Additional discussion centered on when technical teams can begin data collection and how they would coordinate their efforts between technical teams.
 - Some teams have already started. If specific tasks are identified, then collection of existing data should begin. This should be discussed with the Project Manager assigned to assist the team first. Project Managers can help technical teams determine what activities can get funding and get support from the Executive Committee to fund data collection efforts if they are informed.
 - Clay Mathers cautioned that teams should realize that data that sounds similar might not be the same, or even be compatible. Leann added that it might be necessary to ask teams to coordinate data collection and agree on the type of data to be collected.
 - This coordination would be facilitated by having **each technical team attach a list of known existing data and format to their plans of study**. It would also help if each team first determines what they will accomplish with their plan of study, and outline the location of data needs on a map of the basin. The details of their plans for data collection and analysis should be communicated between teams.
 - The Project Managers encouraged the technical teams to meet with other teams when they have overlapping issues.
 - Completion of the archive forms distributed electronically is necessary and will be used to keep track of data that has been acquired. Lists can then be shared with all technical teams. **Comments on the needed changes to the forms should be submitted to Ellen.**
- ❖ **Summary of tasks to be done to prepare for integration of plans of study. Technical teams should**
 - **Begin collecting existing data.**
 - **Identify data gaps and how to fill them.**
 - **Share information on other EISs and projects in the basin that would affect the Water Operations Review.**
 - The technical team members agreed that it would be useful to have presentations at ID NEPA Team meetings from other agencies conducting related projects in the basin, such as the El Paso-Las Cruces Regional Sustainable Water Project and the Channelization Project EIS.
- ❖ The technical teams should review the comments from the public scoping meetings to identify comments relevant to their resources and analysis. One important point made at the

meetings was that agriculture was not well represented in the technical teams. As a result, agriculture will be addressed by a subgroup of the Land Use, Socioeconomics, and Environmental Justice Technical Team. **Technical team members should submit any feedback on the scoping comments to Ellen Dietrich within a week (by December 21).**

- ❖ Technical team leaders attended the last URGWOM Integration/Water Operations Technical Team to discuss baseline flows (safe channel capacity) that will be used as guidelines for analysis. See the notes from the team meeting for details. Also See ID Team meeting notes of March 9, 2000 and the Water Operations Fact Sheets that were sent out e-mail to the tech team members.
 - Technical teams can request that members of the Water Operations Technical Team attend their meetings if help is needed.
 - The next team meeting to continue the discussion of baseline flows will be held on January 4, 2001 at 1:00 p.m. at the Corps. Technical team members should bring questions that would affect their resources to this Water Operations Technical Team meeting for discussion.
 - A question asked was whether there is any reason to study the reaches below Elephant Butte. The response from the Project Managers was that IBWC requested that the Review consider the impacts of any changes in water operations on flood control below Caballo, so impacts in these reaches will be analyzed.
 - It is likely that there will be few or no changes in water operations above the confluence of the Rio Grande with the Rio Chama based on scoping comments received to date.
 - The technical teams requested that a map be created to show the area of inundation during the highest flows to be considered. The Hydrology and Hydraulics and the GIS Technical Teams will work together to generate a preliminary map.
- ❖ Updates on regular meetings of each technical team:
 - River Geomorphology, Sedimentation, and Mechanics—last Monday of the month at 9:00 a.m. at Reclamation.
 - Land Use, Socioeconomics, and Environmental Justice—2nd Thursday of the month at 9:30 a.m. at the Corps.
 - Water Quality—Usually the 1st Wednesday, but next month will be January 10, at 9:00 a.m. at the Harold Runnels Building in Santa Fe.
 - Riparian and Wetland Ecosystems—next meeting set for next week; no regularly scheduled meeting date.
 - Aquatic Systems—next meeting January 9 at 9:00 a.m. at the Corps.
 - GIS—last Thursday of the month at 9:00 a.m. at the Corps.
 - Cultural Resources—TBD
 - URGWOM Integration/Water Operations—1st Thursday of the month at 1:00 p.m. at the Corps.

➤ ❖ The next Interdisciplinary NEPA Team meeting will be held on January 11 at 1:00 p.m. at the Corps.