

**Notes from the Upper Rio Grande Basin Water Operations Review ID NEPA  
Team Meeting, February 10, 2000, 1:00 PM, Corps of Engineers Building,  
Albuquerque**

In attendance:

John D'Antonio, OSE

Brian Hanson, USFWS

William DeRagon, Corps

Conrad Keyes, Jr., EWRI

Ellen Dietrich, SAIC

Julie Maitland, NMDA

Darrel Eidson, Corps

Tracy Matthews, ISC

Richard Fike, Corps

Robert Padilla, BOR

Don Gallegos, Corps

Rolf Schmidt-Petersen, ISC

Chris Gorbach, BOR

Tod Stevenson, NMG&F

Doug Wolf, Corps

- ❖ After introductions, Chris Gorbach reminded the technical team members that new members should get Water Operations Review project notebooks from Gail Stockton.
- ❖ Updates on project activities—Chris
  - The MOA between the Joint Lead Agencies was signed on January 26, 2000. A copy was distributed and should be inserted into the project notebook.
  - The revised Work Plan was distributed and reviewed. This should also be inserted into the notebook. Some points discussed are listed below.
    - Executive Committee members include the Corps District Engineer, ISC Engineer, and Reclamation Area Manager, who have approval authority for any changes in the Work Plan.
    - The Steering Committee membership is defined in the MOA as being composed of representatives of cooperating agencies and key stakeholders. They will assist the Executive Committee in facilitation of project activities and information exchange.
    - The Public Involvement Program and its Implementation Plan will identify where and when the public scoping meetings will take place. They will be scheduled in June through September. ID Team assistance will be needed for these meetings.
    - Chris reviewed some items on the Master and Detailed Schedules related to technical team activities, such as the timeline for developing plans of study and the integration of the plans by the ID Team.
- ❖ Technical team action items
  - Technical teams must get organized as soon as possible and include new members from cooperating agencies.
    - Project Managers (PM) have been assigned to each technical team to assist them and make sure they are completing the needed work on time. **Technical team leaders should inform the PM when meetings are planned.**
      - Chris will oversee the Geomorphology and Riparian Systems Technical Teams.



- Rolf Schmidt-Peterson will oversee the Aquatic Systems, Recreation, and Water Quality Technical Teams.
- Gail will oversee the Cultural Resources, Land Use and Socioeconomics, and the three Support Technical Teams.
- The Socioeconomics and the Recreation Technical Teams might meet together because they have some overlapping interests.
- Existing environment worksheets need to be completed by each technical team.
- ➔ **An outline of the environment that would be affected by water operations should be developed by each technical team by April 30.** This outline should be adequate for development of fact sheets, handouts, and media kits that will be developed by the contractor.
- Chaloux Environmental Communications, Inc., from Herndon, Virginia, is conducting a market survey in the Rio Grande basin to help identify issues, how people get their information, and what they think of the water management agencies.
- To date, the only teams having turned in completed worksheets are the Geomorphology and Aquatic Systems Technical Teams.
- Team members should check the Detailed Schedule in the Work Plan and identify tasks that must begin immediately.
  - For the scoping meetings, technical teams should be prepared to present information, and discuss issues and concerns related to water operations. Technical teams should think about the topics and issues to present, based on the information from the existing environment worksheets.
  - The scoping meetings will use an open house format with questions and discussion from the public.
- ❖ William DeRagon gave a presentation on the process for determining existing conditions and resources, and how to describe the “future without action” conditions. He distributed a handout that summarizes the steps to be taken by the technical teams. Some of the issues raised and discussion points are summarized below.
  - The ID Team must define the planning period to be used by the technical teams. The planning period might be different for different resources.
  - The basic steps for analysis of each resource include:
    1. Determine the existing conditions.
    2. Determine future conditions for the planning period.
    3. Using a process or model specified by the technical team for determining impacts on the resource, extrapolate to determine the “future without action” condition.
    4. Repeat Step 3 for each operational alternative.
    5. Assess the difference between the “future without action” condition and the resource condition under each alternative.
    6. Determine the significance of the change in the resource under each alternative.
    7. Provide the significance determination to a decision matrix. Impacts may need to be categorized or assigned a rating to be used in the matrix.

- William stressed that in Step 5 the comparison is between the future without action conditions and the alternative, **not** between the existing conditions and the alternative. The existing condition data is used to determine the future without action conditions.
- Step 6 is the most difficult. Consideration must be given to how important the resource is to the alternative.
- Resources that are not affected by water operations should not be evaluated.
- Chris pointed out that it is important to think about what analyses should be performed and what methods should be employed. The type of analysis should be selected based on the resource and the index to be evaluated. A literature search should be completed to determine what has been done in other projects.
- Common sense is important in developing and implementing these steps.
- Conrad Keyes asked if more than one date can be established for the future conditions. Chris responded that different time periods can be used to account for different scenarios.
- Other EISs that can be referenced for information on methods and process appropriate for evaluating resources include EISs completed for the Snake River, Colorado Basin, Platte River, Missouri River Basin, and Glen Canyon. Some the information is available from the Bureau of Reclamation and Corps web sites.
- ❖ Other issues and information for technical teams
  - Technical teams will need help from resource people on support teams to get access to URGWOM data.
    - URGWOM data will eventually reside in HDB, a Bureau of Reclamation database, but now it must be physically located with the model.
    - A presentation by the URGWOM Technical Team would help the Water Operations Review technical teams understand how the model can be used in their analyses and what data are available.
  - Rolf reminded the group that it is important to understand the scope and limitations of the EIS, summarized on page 3 of the MOA.
    - Gail added that the scope described in the MOA can be considered the limit of study for the EIS. New ideas identified during scoping and other public meetings that are outside the project scope can be handled using other established agency procedures.
    - The agencies do not have control of water operations at some structures in the basin, such as El Vado, Galisteo, and the Low Flow Conveyance Channel, so changes to operations at those structures will not be included in the alternatives. Changes in other water operations could affect those structures, however, so impacts on them would be evaluated.
    - At a future meeting, there will be a presentation describing water operations and how are they carried out.
  - Tod Stevenson asked if the changes in water operations proposed by the City of Albuquerque will be considered as an alternative or in the future without action conditions in this EIS. Chris responded that the Albuquerque proposals might not be included in the “without action” alternative, but impacts with or without Albuquerque’s action might be part of other alternatives. This issue will have to be resolved eventually by the NEPA team.



- ➔ ❖ **Each technical team should hold a meeting this month.** Technical team leaders should let the PM know when their meetings are planned. Technical team leaders should also notify a PM when they are ready for presentations on GIS.
- ❖ URGWOM information is available on the URGWOM web site, <http://www.spa.usace.army.mil/urgwom/>. Sample data are available.
- ❖ The Project Managers are working on developing cooperative agreements with each of the cooperating agencies. Rolf is the contact person for the state agencies.
- ➔ ❖ **The next meeting is scheduled for March 9 at 1:00 at the Corps meeting room.** Agenda items:
  - Presentation from the URGWOM Technical Team.
  - Discussion of the existing environment worksheets.