

**Notes from Upper Rio Grande Basin Water Operations Review ID NEPA  
Team Meeting; April 13, 2000; 1:00 PM; Corps of Engineers, Albuquerque  
District Conference Room**

*In attendance:*

John D'Antonio, OSE	Clay Mathers, Corps
Ellen Dietrich, SAIC	Tracy Matthews, ISC
Hector Garcia, USBR	Robert Padilla, USBR
Chris Gorbach, USBR	Gary Rutherford, Corps
Jaci Gould, USBR	Steve Silcox, USFWS
Rhea Graham, Pueblo of Sandia	Tod Stevenson, NMG&F
Bill Hays, NMG&F	Gail Stockton, Corps
Conrad Keyes, Jr., EWRI	Doug Strech, MRGCD
Ron Kneebone, Corps	Leann Towne, USBR
Charles Lujan, San Juan Pueblo	Julie Tsatsaros, NMED
Julie Maitland, NMDA	Doug Wolf, Corps

- ❖ Gail Stockton opened the meeting by informing the group that a reference notebook has been set up that technical team members can borrow to make sure that their notebooks contain the most recent materials.
- ❖ After self-introductions, Chris Gorbach introduced Jaci Gould, manager of water operations with the Bureau of Reclamation, to give a presentation on the San Juan-Chama Project.
  - Key project dates:
    - June 1962: Federal legislation was passed to authorize construction.
    - June 1971: First release of San Juan-Chama water.
    - 1994: Silvery minnow listed as endangered.
  - San Juan-Chama water is stored at three Corps reservoirs in the system—Abiquiu, Cochiti, and Jemez Canyon.
  - Bureau of Reclamation reservoirs include Nambe Falls, El Vado, Heron, and Elephant Butte.
  - There are three diversion tunnels in the system.
    - Three dams divert water to tunnels that flow to Willow Creek above Heron Reservoir.
    - Minimum bypass requirements must be met in streams before water is diverted to the tunnels.
    - Tunnel capacities limit the volume of water diverted.
    - Not more than 270,000 acre-feet per year (af/yr) are permitted to be diverted. Not more than 1.35 million af can be diverted over a 10-year period.

- Jaci was asked if the objective is to keep Heron full as much as possible. Her response was that this is correct, in addition to maximizing the diversion of water through the tunnels.
- The minimum bypass limits were set by considering habitat requirements.
- Water does not belong to contractors until they take delivery from Heron.
- Institutional constraints on SJ-C water include the following.
  - No carryover from one year to the next is permitted in Heron.
  - The total contracted water cannot exceed 96,200 af/yr.
  - Water must be consumptively used in New Mexico.
  - Water must have an authorized downstream destination.
  - No native water can be legally stored in Heron.
  - SJ-C water can be used to supplement the middle Rio Grande valley's water supply, allowing conjunctive uses for such purposes as fisheries, rafting, and endangered species operations.
- Heron is the main SJ-C storage facility. Downstream reservoirs store project water as needed, or are used to exchange water.
- The Bureau of Reclamation tries to keep a minimum flow of 0.5 cfs from Nambe Falls in winter, but it is mainly a small "fill and spill" reservoir, with a maximum storage capacity of 2023 af.
- El Vado :
  - Has a power plant without a water right, similar to that at Abiquiu, which generates power when flows reach approximately 200 cfs.
  - Normally fills and spills during spring runoff.
  - To meet senior water rights, 40 to 70 cfs is bypassed through El Vado. The six middle Rio Grande pueblos have prior and paramount water rights. This water volume is calculated and stored in El Vado, but these calculations are under discussion and could change.
- Safe channel capacity has been set by average, normal releases. People place fences and buildings just above the elevation of normal flow, which then becomes the limit for safe channel capacity flows. This is one criterion that may be evaluated during the Water Operations Review.
- ❖ Scoping meetings—Chris Gorbach
  - There will be eight meetings, some of which will require little technical team participation and some will require considerable technical team involvement.
  - There will be general fact sheets and a display about the overall Water Operations Review that will be prepared by a contractor.
  - **Each technical team must prepare a paragraph about their resource to be included in the general fact sheet. This should be given to the Project Managers in electronic format by the end of April.**



- If anyone has good photographs of the river that could be used in the general fact sheet and the main project display, Chris asked that they be given to him as soon as possible.
- Each technical team must prepare a display about their resource, using the format described below.
  - The basin map will be in the middle of the approximately 4' by 4' display board. A technical team can add a GIS layer to their map. This should be requested through Tracy Matthews, Ellen Dietrich or Clay Mathers.
  - Photos, pictures, graphs, and other graphics displaying technical team information will be mounted around the central map, possibly with lines going from specific map locations to the graphics. Four to six graphics that display information about the technical team resource, concerns, or existing conditions will be needed.
  - Some of the graphics can be changed to relate to the resource issues and conditions in the vicinity of each meeting.
- ➔ **A one to two-page fact sheet on each resource must be prepared by each technical team.** This will contain more detailed information than that included in the general fact sheet. It will be reproduced in black and white.
- ➔ **A draft of each technical team fact sheet (hard copy and on disk) and the materials for each display should be brought to the May 11 ID NEPA Team meeting.**
- ➔ **A dry run of the scoping meeting, with completed displays and fact sheets, will be conducted at the June 8 meeting.**
- ❖ The Management Team met on March 28.
  - They will prepare and send letters to invite cooperating agencies and the Compact Commissioners to the first Water Operations Review Steering Committee meeting scheduled for June 13.
  - They are working on hiring a contractor through the Bureau of Reclamation to carry out the public involvement program for the project.
  - The second Executive Committee meeting is scheduled for June 27.
- ❖ Technical Team reports:
  - Cultural Resources Technical Team—Ron Kneebone
    - Team met 1½ to 2 weeks ago, identified their tasks, and agreed that they need to have tribal involvement.
      - The team would like to meet with the northern pueblos as a group but is unsure how to request this meeting.
      - They plan to conduct government-to-government consultation later, but right now are looking for tribal members of their technical team to help identify tribal concerns related to water operations.
    - They discussed the list of river reaches and identified coordinate locations for the end points.
    - Will use the state database of historic places to determine where to describe existing conditions and to help develop the fact sheet for the scoping meetings.

- Water Operations Technical Team—Leann Towne
  - The team is trying to get participation from more agencies and sent invitations to the Fish and Wildlife Service and the City of Albuquerque.
  - They are assembling documentation on the physical components and operations of dams. They plan to ask the other technical teams what they need from Water Operations as a support team.
  - They intend to work with the URGWOM Technical Team and the URGWOPS technical teams to develop water operations alternatives.
  - Their next meeting is scheduled for Monday, April 17, at 1:00 p.m.
- Water Quality—Julie Tsatsaros
  - There are currently two team members so most of their work is done by e-mail.
  - They are compiling the TMDL concerns list and the quality assurance project plan from NMED, which they plan to use to help them develop a sampling plan.
  - They are reviewing the water quality data collected before and after construction of the dams.
  - NMED is planning to conduct a study of the upper Rio Grande watershed this year and has selected sampling stations. The Water Quality Technical Team can make use of these data to describe existing conditions.
  - The technical team needs to identify parameters to study and would like to obtain other EISs from the basin to review.
  - The technical team needs more members. Charles Lujan recommended that they invite tribal water quality staff to participate, and that they include tribal water quality standards in addition to state standards.
- River Geomorphology, Sedimentation and Mechanics—Robert Padilla
  - The team has collected most of their data on the existing environment.
  - The team met with the Aquatic Systems Technical Team to discuss mutual concerns.
  - They modified the list of 17 reaches and created a list of 10 reaches.
  - A contractor conducted a data and literature review that is available for other technical teams to use.
  - The technical team is recruiting additional members.
- Land Use, Socioeconomics, Environmental Justice, and Recreation Technical Team—Gary Rutherford
  - Currently gathering existing data.
- ❖ The need for tribal participation was mentioned by several teams.
  - Rhea Graham recommended that the ID NEPA Team write to each tribal government to request staff for the technical teams and information to be used for the EIS. The initial contact must be formal.
  - Another approach recommended is to have the Project Managers send another letter inviting each tribe to participate and asking for support of the project; then follow up with

letters from individual technical teams. The letter from the Project Managers should be sent annually because tribal officials change frequently.

- Charles Lujan strongly recommended that a presentation on the Water Operations Review be made to the All Indian Pueblo Council (AIPC), the Southern Pueblos Council, and the Eight Northern Pueblos Council.
  - The Project Managers should ask to be put on the meeting agendas and request participation from each pueblo.
  - Contact Stan Pino, the Executive Director of AIPC, to request time on their agenda.
- Tod Stevenson recommended that letters be sent to all cooperating agencies to request help with staffing the technical teams. Included with the letter should be a list of the technical teams and their points of contact.
- ❖ An attempt was made to schedule GIS presentations with each technical team.
  - Ellen and Clay have developed a short slide show meant to explain how GIS could be used by each team and to review the guidelines for acquisition of GIS data by technical teams.
  - Ellen would give the presentation and follow with discussion on the types of GIS data that would be needed for technical team analysis and data presentation. This is intended to help technical teams think about what they need for their study plans, and give the GIS people an idea what data layers will be needed.
  - Technical teams will be responsible for identifying and coordinating acquisition of data they need, but should be aware of needed file formats, resolution, scale, and other limitations of the coverages, in accord with the GIS guidelines distributed previously, before they obtain them.
  - A database is being developed to keep track of GIS data layers available for all technical teams to use.
- ❖ Tod Stevenson introduced Bill Hays who will replace Tod on the ID NEPA Team. Bill supervises staff who could serve on different technical teams.
- ➔ ❖ **The next ID NEPA Team meeting will be on May 11 at 1:00 p.m.**