

Meeting: Pecos River 2nd Restoration Project Pecos River Restoration at Overflow Wetlands EA/BA

Conference Call

May 29, 2012, 10:00AM – 11:15 AM

Attendees:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Agency</u>	<u>Email</u>
Michael McGee	BLM - RFO	mmcgee@blm.gov
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Susan Woods	Reclamation	swoods@usbr.gov
Kelly Amy	Reclamation	koliver-amy@usbr.gov
Kevin Doyle	Tetra Tech/EMPSi	kevin.doyle@tetrattech.com
Susan Oetker	USFWS	susan_oetker@fws.gov

Handouts: Actions/Commitments Matrix (earlier version 4/19/12), Trip Report 5/7/12 -5/10/12.

Introductions

The meeting began approximately 10:00 AM. Introductions were made by each individual in attendance.

Schedule Update

Marsha updated the group on the potential changes to the project schedule. It had been assumed that there would be no funding available for implementing the project until FY 14. There may be funding available during FY13 so that the project could be initiated and split over 2 years. This has necessitated looking at the EA schedule and those deadlines for supporting milestones with the goal of preparing the EA and signing the FONSI this fiscal year. There may be some flexibility on the dates, but that is the goal right now. There is some uncertainty regarding scheduling of the Reclamation Socorro construction group that may also make this acceleration unnecessary.

Discussion of the Matrix of Actions and Commitments

Yvette led the discussion of Actions and Commitments that were outstanding or required further clarification

From 5/7/12 to 5/10/12 Juddson Sechrist of Reclamation had a series of meetings in Albuquerque and onsite with Reclamation, BLM, Bottomless Lake staff and the landowners to further review access and staging areas and provide the landowners with access agreements for signature. Follow-up research and actions are in progress regarding resolving land ownership record discrepancies, contacting other landowners and the state land office, the adequacy of two bridges for equipment access needed for access to the proposed southwestern staging area and

the availability of the Reclamation Socorro Field Office personnel during the current proposed schedule.

There was a discussion of the need for the need to prepare a water budget and to get concurrence with the NM Interstate Stream Commission (NMISC) on depletions. Emile Sawyer of the NMISC said that he had met with Mark Nemeth of Reclamation on the issue. There would likely be some short-term depletions associated with high flow events. An estimate would be completed by NMISC in August. It would include provisions for monitoring depletion amounts attributed to the project and a letter of concurrence by the state. Reclamation has excess credits and depletions are anticipated to be small.

It has been determined that chipping of the woody debris generated by the project onsite would be the preferred method of disposal rather than burning. In the EA/BA both methods should be included in the analysis with the preference for chipping. The chipped material needs to be dispersed onsite no deeper than three inches. If burning is done, a burn plan would need to be prepared. Mike McGee noted that old piles from previous salt cedar removal projects inhibit current site access.

The project design and footprint are mostly determined for the bank lowering and the Pecos sunflower swales. A portion on the upper end of the state trust land might be cut off. Since it has been determined that the bridges are inadequate, alternative southwestern access may need to be worked out.

The Section 404-401 process has been initiated by Reclamation with the Army Corps. A nationwide permit covering habitat restoration would probably be applicable to this project and no problems are anticipated.

Reclamation needs to meet with Melvin to determine if the work schedule for this project is compatible with other projects that the Reclamation Socorro Field Office has committed to. If not, the EA/BA may not be needed on a fast track. When known, the project schedule and matrix of supporting actions can be updated.

Revegetation

The project will include some bankline work designed as an experiment to create Pecos sunflower habitat. This needs to be included and described as part of the EA/BA. It was clarified that this action would probably not require a formal BO from the US Fish and Wildlife Service and that they would determine the effects as “wholly beneficial.” Seed would need to be obtained.

There are no plans at this point to plant cottonwood, but plantings may include baccharis and coyote willow. In previously restored areas native grasses have come back, but reseeding is preferred to slow down invasives. Mike McGee cautioned that there have been some weed seed found in the seed mixes and the BLM follows a seed testing protocol.

Monitoring

There will be a monitoring plan and program developed covering, vegetation, components of fish habitat, hydro-geomorphic form and depletions. Kelly Amy (Reclamation) is working on drafting the plan. This will not be a formal adaptive management plan, but the plan will meld together general monitoring conducted in the project area.

The plan will likely include proper function condition (PFC) assessment during the June/July growing season to assess the physical functioning of the riparian-wetland area. Fish monitoring will continue with the Service with their protocol and on their schedule.

There have been cross sections established by a previous USGS study. The primary method for assessing lateral changes to the channel will probably be aerial photography, although some minimal cross sections may be used as well. There are gages at both ends of the project, so monitoring depletions should be relatively easy.

Landowner/agency follow-up

Additional landowners need to be contacted with project information including Jonette Hill in Section 17 and Ernie Lopez who was not available during the last field visit. Mike McGee will make sure that the BLM Realty and NEPA staff are up-to-date on the project. They are cooperators and will need to sign off on the project.

Action Items

- EMPSi/Tetra Tech to draft meeting notes. Marsha to finalize and distribute.
- Reclamation to update Action/Commitments matrix and revise schedule.
- Kelly Amy to discuss PFC requirements for the monitoring program with Mike McGee.
- ISC to collaborate with Reclamation staff on the water budget for the project and an agreement regarding monitoring and addressing depletions by August.
- Susan Oetker to check with Pat Zenone on the Pecos sunflower impacts, informal consultation and whether surveys are necessary.
- Mike McGee to provide information on seed mixes and an example revegetation plan.
- Reclamation to contact other landowners and state land office regarding access and agreements.
- Reclamation and BLM archaeologists to determine needs for Section 106 compliance.
- EMPSi/Tetra Tech to continue preparing sections of the EA using available information on the accelerated schedule.
- Reclamation, BLM and EMPSi/Tetra Tech to work on defining and acquiring data for supporting the EA.
- Reclamation, the USFWS, BLM and other agencies to collaborate on the post project monitoring plan and agreement.

Reclamation needs to coordinate with the Socorro Field Office on the work schedule and how soon this work could be started

- Reclamation staff needs to coordinate/notify land owner Lisa Relnecke Wulf in Parcel #17 of project

The meeting adjourned at approximately 11:15 AM.