

Cebolla Canyon Steering Committee Meeting
July 17, 2009
BLM Office, Albuquerque

Present:

Steve Fischer, *BLM*
Dave Mattern, *BLM*
Frank Lewark, *BLM*
Andrea Chavez, *BLM*
Bill Zeedyk, *Zeedyk Ecological Consulting*
Michael Scialdone
Dale Hall, *Fish and Game*
Ken Jones, *El Malpais National Conservation Area*
Matt Schultz, *NMED*
Maryann McGraw, *NMED*
Barbara Johnson, *Rio Puerco Alliance*

Reconnaissance

Bill and Matt spent two days on Reach 0, the uppermost reach. We still need to look at the big headcut in Reach 6, which will probably involve a one-day field trip. All sites are currently GPS'd and mapped. There are no structures needed for Reach 4. We will move the structures planned for Reach 4 into Reach 2. We haven't mapped all the structures needed in Reach 6 (outside of the headcut work) as they are mostly one-rock dams. We can estimate the structures needed without flagging them. We will also need to do more induced meandering in Reach 7 than originally thought.

Reach 5 is sort of a reference reach, as it appears to be recovering on its own. There is a gap between Reach 5 and 6 on our current maps, so we will move Reach 6 upstream to about the Reach 5 boundary.

Two grazing allotments will potentially be affected by our work. But allotment management plans are done separately from this project. The El Malpais allotments are not up for renewal for another 4-5 years. We may need to incorporate into those plans new riparian pastures (see below) that are only grazed on a limited basis.

Some restoration will be done in Wilderness areas. We are likely to have significant Wilderness issues, the way things are currently constructed. Reach 8 is a Wilderness Study Area (WSA) and some requirements there may be even more stringent than those in the wilderness. But because of wilderness concerns, we must make sure that we use the minimal tool required to do the job.

Roadwork

We have identified road locations through Reach 0 with Frank and J.J. What to do around the corral and little springs sites, where there are archaeology issues, is still to be resolved. We need final location information for the EA. We will need to do one EA for

the watershed actions in this project, and one EA for the roadwork under the Stimulus funding, because of the fast approaching deadline to obligate stimulus money.

Most of the Stimulus money will go for:

- Road improvements.
- Fencing crews.
- Cattle guard.

Work will include the road on the grazing allotments. The Stimulus money is labeled for riparian restoration in the bill. We will probably concentrate on relocation of the road in Reach 4. Part of the contract will be for doing maintenance on roads to get equipment in. There is more deferred maintenance money coming.

We will also need some 6" rock for permeable fill structures along the roads.

The BLM archaeology assessment document that will be done for the road EA will also be incorporated into the watershed EA.

Fencing

The contract for the roadwork will be passed and fencing will be included, but it will be difficult to tell how much of the fencing will get done under that contract, until the roadwork is done.

Fences are down between two riparian pastures. Fences are down at the spring. We need to talk to the allottees about maintenance of fences. The BLM may need to negotiate with the allottees and compensate them. In any event, we need to delineate who is responsible for what.

We need to separate each riparian pasture to keep cattle out. We need a cattle guard instead of a gate between some pastures. We need to extend the spring pasture downstream. We need a new riparian pasture (3 total) in Reach 0—this may be a big deal with regard to the allottees' contract. Ken and his crew will fix some fence now. Wetland recovery has been compromised because of the cattle being in the riparian pastures during the winter.

We discussed removing some fence that is no longer needed. We decided that we need to map the fences and the fence history, with a layer showing where we want to have fence. We would categorize the fence: needing repair; retain; remove; construct, etc.

There is a group through Acoma, the Southwest Conservation Corps, that is chainsaw certified. They stay in the field 10 days at a time. They might be able to do some stuff for us. Matt will talk to them.

Wetlands Action Plan

The Wetlands Action Plan is an NMED requirement that is similar to the WRAS and incorporated into any existing WRAS (the Rio Puerco has WRAS that is being updated).

It will include a cultural history of the area. This WAP will be for the entire North Plains Closed Basin and therefore data gathering should possibly include wetlands along the Rio San Jose/Rio Puerco basin. We may inventory and assess other wetlands for the WAP and monitoring. We will need to determine the exact downstream boundary of the El Malpais for the WAP. Should we include existing playas on BLM and Acoma lands?

The WAP will be circulated for review and comment.

Wetlands

We plan on doing a wetland delineation now and then again in three years to see how much wetland was restored, created. There are three areas where this will be tracked: in Reach 0, to see the response to taking out the pond; downstream from the Spring in Reach 2; and in Reach 5, our reference reach.

We need to talk to a subcontractor, potentially Ellen Soles, about how many piezometers we might need and where to put them in order to get a picture of the hydrology. There may be too many indicated on the recon maps, as they are quite expensive. We might be able to use observation wells instead in some places.

QAPP

EPA may want us to update the QAPP every year. We will start monitoring probably in September, after the QAPP has been approved and a monitoring plan drafted. We want to increase the water table capacity, wetlands, wetland plants. We will use the Army Corps protocol for wetlands delineation.

Wildlife Monitoring

We would like to track changes in wildlife habitat as a result of this project, using key species as indicators of what's happening in the ecosystem. We have a bird list of species found on the El Malpais from Ken. There are a variety of survey techniques we could use: Breeding Bird survey, Winter Bird Survey. Harley Shaw, retired from Arizona Game and Fish, has expressed interest in doing bird surveys.

Small mammals are mostly missing. Jennifer Frey of NMSU has made a proposal to do that monitoring, but we don't have the money at the moment. We will make an application to Game and Fish's Share with Wildlife program. We need to track the key species in Reaches 0, 5, and 2, to match the other monitoring. We need baseline now to determine what is missing, so we know what we might want to re-introduce.

Other species we might want to monitor would be reptiles and amphibians. Andrea wondered if the Museum of SW Biology at UNM might be willing to do a survey.

What can the El Malpais staff do? Ken might be able to do the winter bird survey. BLM might be able to do the breeding bird survey next year.

Miscellaneous

AWF will be having a worday at Cebolla the third Saturday in October.

Schedule

End of July: Share with Wildlife proposal

Early August: Monitoring Plan

End of October: Design

Beginning of Nov.: Next Steering Committee Meeting

This Fall: Baseline vegetation monitoring for EA (contractor needs to talk to the range crew to get BLM veg. data.)

This Fall: Migratory Bird Survey

Next Year: EA for watershed actions