

Secretary Salazar's Middle Rio Grande Conservation Initiative Secretary's Committee meeting notes, 4-18-12

In attendance: Mike Hamman (BOR), Janet Bair (FWS), Kelly Gossett (NM Outdoors Coalition), Oscar Simpson (NM Hunters & Anglers), Adrian Ogelsby (MRGCD), Jennifer Faler (BOR), Ali Saenz (BOR), Andrew Hautzinger (FWS), Joaquin Baca (FWS), Loretta Arviso (guest of Andrew Hautzinger), Dave Simon (Eco Think)

Participating by teleconference: Tanya Trujillo (USDOJ), Julie Alcon (Army Corps of Engineers), Amalia Kenward (NM Archaeological Council)

Agenda

1. Introductions
2. Review/corrections of meeting notes from previous meeting
3. Outreach update
4. Subcommittee updates
5. Plan development
6. Plan Roll-out Strategy
7. Next steps, assignments, next Committee meeting date

Self introductions were made.

Notes from the meeting of April 4 were approved.

Outreach Update

Dave Simon reported that the following additional meetings to targeted constituencies are scheduled:

- Camino Real National Historical Trail meeting, 4/24 in Socorro/BLM Office
- Sandoval County government organizations meeting, 4/26 in Bernalillo/Coronado State Monument

A letter from FWS to the Governors of the six MRG pueblos has been prepared. The letter offers each pueblo and individual listening session to get input. The letter was supposed to go out April 17, but Andrew Hautzinger has to verify this. The letter will be copied to the natural resource division program managers at each pueblo and efforts will be made to outreach to other pueblo staff in the areas of recreation and education as well.

Mike Hamman suggested that staff make follow-up calls to the pueblos—first agency staff to natural resource leads, then agency leadership to pueblo governors. Hamman also noted that there is a May 11 meeting of Coalition of Six MRG Pueblos; he will request that the Plan be

added to that agenda. The meeting is apparently at Isleta (?), but that is not confirmed. Any handouts need to be to the Coalition secretary (Jessica Tracy) one week before hand.

Dave Simon reported that about one dozen Public Comment forms have been submitted. Simon has distributed all Forms that have been received to all SecComm members and will continue to do so as others come in. Simon will synthesize comments from these submissions.

Subcommittee Updates

Conservation

The Subcommittee has held two meetings. The main issue categories include:

- River/bosque habitat and restoration
- Agricultural lands/open space
- Water—quality and quantity
- Cultural issues—Camino Real, pueblos, acequia heritage
- Fire

There are still questions re: the status and accomplishments of recommendations made in the Bosque Biological Management Plan. A targeted meeting of experts might help to focus on this and how to cover this in the report. The three main agencies (FWS, BOR, ACE) have been asked to provide summaries of projects, accomplishments, milestones by 4/25.

NM Dept. of Game & Fish is revising the waterfowl and crane plan for MRG. Gina DelloRusso would know point people and is cooperating with the revision. Some follow-up would be useful on this.

Recreation

The Subcommittee has held two meetings. A summary of vision and recommendations is nearly complete. The two main recommendations/requests from the public input have been for (1) a “Rio Grande Trail” and/or simply more trail connections in the river corridor, and (2) more established/developed bosque and river access. Any discussion of trails needs a caveat to recognize pueblo sovereignty.

Kelly Gossett reported that on 4/7, 45 kayakers paddled an Albuquerque section of the river. Mayor Berry participated. There was TV news coverage, but the focus wound up being about the drought. Mayor Berry will address MRGCD Board on April 23 about his ABQ-The Plan concept for river recreation-related developments at some river crossings.

Mayor Berry asked Gossett about whether Gov. Martinez was on board with the MRG Plan. There was some discussion on this point; the State stands to benefit a good deal from successful initiatives in the MRG. The Office of the Governor was initially informed of the process, but the main involvement has been through several state agencies, including EMNRD, DGF, and DCA. Several other key state agencies have not been as closely involved (OSE, ISC, Tourism). The Tourism Dept. just issued its new branding campaign for New Mexico (“True”), the theme of which links to the recreation issue. There should be an effort to re-engage with Gov’s office directly at the appropriate time (draft report).

Oscar Simpson inquired about the status of state fish stocking programs in the ditches, since the ditches receive a lot of local angling activity. Simon will follow up with DGF to get more information on this, and Janet Bair will ask DGF about this at a meeting tomorrow.

Education

The Subcommittee has held three meetings. A two-page summary of a vision statement and key recommendations has been prepared and is under review by the subcommittee chairs.

Plan Development and Roll-Out Strategy

All subcommittee recommendations by first week in May; full report by around mid-May?

Mike Hamman raised the question of how the Committee should do public input on draft. The basic question is whether to put it out for general public review or stay “within the circle” that we’ve built of interested parties? May will be very busy. We need two levels of review...internal and agency review in June.

Simpson recommended that the draft be put out for general public review. He stated that it has been a pretty select, limited outreach so far, despite our efforts. We need to make the effort and we need to seek public ownership of the issue.

Andrew Hautzinger stated that there was no particular requirement for a public review period; perhaps two weeks. He stated that Secretary Salazar will certainly want to know what outreach has been done.

Tanya Trujillo suggested that the Committee continue to work on state agency staff involvement and emphasize their participation.

There was further discussion about communications surrounding the release of the draft and other various elements needed for the report. A suggestion was made to ask Tourism Dept. and the public to provide photos. FWS has a general agency release form for use of photos. There was a suggestion/question about including video (e.g. of kayaking on river) in the plan (on disc with document?) and about whether to have Secretary Salazar perhaps tape an intro.

Hamman suggested that a subcommittee of agency staff get started planning some PR. Mary Carlson of BOR will convene agency PIOs (BOR, ACE/Kris Scopeck, 342-3171, FWS/Tom Buckley) before the next SecComm meeting.

Next Meeting

- Secretary’s Committee, May 3, 1:30 p.m.
- Secretary’s Committee work session on draft, May 11, 1:00 p.m.