

**Rio Grande Water Fund – Spring Meeting April 27, 2018**  
**Notes and Action Items from Topic Tables**

**1. Policy and Legislation** (*Leads: John Kelly, Jose Varela Lopez and Laura McCarthy*)

The problems raised in fall of 2017 included: lack of state funding to match federal dollars; inconsistent interpretation by state agencies of the anti-donation clause regarding watershed restoration on private land with downstream benefits; and the need to educate gubernatorial candidates about forest and watershed restoration issues. The progress made to date includes: \$1.1 million of state funding in the 2019 budget; a letter from the WNR Chair to the Attorney General requesting an opinion on forest and watershed restoration; and preparation of a high-level forest restoration platform for candidates. The changed conditions include: new legislators and new Governor; increased state capital outlay funding; and changes in Forest Service funding as the fire funding fix takes effect. This could result in up to 50% of the Forest Service budget being freed from fire suppression. Finally, no snowpack means no water.

**Action Items:**

1. Create a Rio Grande Water Fund 101 Handout that is a single page, front and back [TNC]
  - a. Audience is new legislators and new RGWF signatory organizations to build the coalition for citizen lobbying
  - b. Content should demonstrate the capacity of the RGWF and tell the jobs story
2. Follow up with the Attorney General on the status of the opinion [TNC and NMFIA]
3. All who are interested in being on the Governor's transition team should send their letters of interest soon [suggestion only]
4. Reach out to the insurance industry and begin drafting a bill based on the Insurance Fraud Prevention Fund, including following up with heads of insurance agencies and recruiting NM Business Water Task Force members to assist [TNC, NMFIA, BWTF]
5. Advocate for increased state General Fund revenue to match the Forest Service funding change. [TNC, NMFIA, all]
6. Gather information about anticipated changes in the Forest Service budget including:
  - a. Request information from the Forest Service, Southwestern Regional office [TNC]
  - b. Request information through the NM Congressional delegation [TNC]
  - c. Prepare this information to share with NM legislators at WNR interim committee meeting (summer), and to build the case for increased General Fund appropriations [TNC]
  - d. Prepare a letter from the coalition of organizations to the Forest Service Chief and USDA Undersecretary for Natural Resources and Environment requesting increased budget for restoration, fuels reduction, watersheds, and wildlife, to leverage state funding [TNC, NMFIA, delegation]

**2. Monitoring and Data** (*Leads: Steve Bassett and Dave Gori*)

Two action items were identified at the Fall Signatories Meeting and both were addressed in the intervening six months: (1) a second Roving Monitoring Team using Rocky Mountain Youth Corp interns was trained and deployed this month to monitor forest treatments,

augmenting the monitoring that the Highlands U. crew will conduct in 2018; and (2) TNC received a grant from the US Endowment for Forestry and Healthy Communities to develop new tools and alternative protocols to increase the efficiency of the Water Fund's forest restoration monitoring. These tools/protocols include: tablets for field data collection by the Roving Teams with a web-based interface that will upload field data into the RGWF Monitoring Database; use of UAVs to estimate canopy and ground fuels (thereby, reducing our reliance on plot-based measurements to evaluate forest treatment effectiveness); and development of a RGWF Monitoring Database with a web-based interface to facilitate data transfers from partner databases.

In the Fall, there was considerable discussion about using volunteers to collect monitoring data; we concluded that our plot-based monitoring protocols for forest treatments required technical training and practice before accurate and precise measurement could be made; thus, the protocol was probably not suitable for volunteer citizen scientists.

#### Action Items:

1. Evaluate appropriate RGWF metrics for monitoring by citizen scientists. [RGWF Staff]
  - a. Reach out to other states and Water Funds that have citizen science programs to establish lessons learned from other programs.
  - b. Create rules for when citizen science is an appropriate tool based on required data quality, staff capacity, and other objectives.
2. Investigate understory response to treatments. [needs volunteer]
  - a. Evaluate the suitability of using citizen scientists to monitor understory response using an app that guides users to photo points with GPS and provides instruction in the types of photos that are useful.
3. Continue development of tablet app for data collection by roving monitoring team. [RGWF Staff]
  - a. Discuss lessons learned with Philmont Scout Ranch employees that have collected forest monitoring data with tablets in the past. [Assist from Kent Reid]
  - b. Utilize network of other forest restoration projects to enable leveraged investment in app functionality.
4. Investigate the capacity of NM tech firms to produce the apps required for the RGWF monitoring program. [Carrie Freeman and Steve Bassett]
  - a. Identify application needs and required functionality.
  - b. Evaluate tech firms available for partnership in NM.
5. Evaluate opportunities for skilled birders to collect avian monitoring data. [needs volunteer]

### **3. Wildlife Connectivity** (*Leads: Anne Bradley and Teresa Seamster*)

At the Fall 2017 Signatories meeting, after a discussion of wildlife connectivity, habitat condition and habitat diversity needs, the participants recommended that RGWF partners develop a set of messages that were nuanced and could answer questions by different wildlife interest groups. The Roundtable participants took up this idea and discussed aspects of wildlife habitat management that would be important to include in practice and in messaging. We acknowledged that "wildlife habitat" was not a useful term, since each species requires different kinds of habitat. Wildlife of interest in the conversation were the large mammal species. There is

a need to get this messaging to public officials (Senator Heinrich is very interested in this issue and could help with messaging) and others who can share with different members of the public. Existing education programs are also a place to reach out to youth and children. Rocky Mountain Youth Corps is willing to assist with this message sharing. Some comments during the conversation include: we should avoid spring/fall migration times for treatment in areas identified as migration routes, otherwise timing of treatments was probably not critical. In the NM-CO border area, deer and elk conduct long distance migrations. Further south, migration is generally elevational. We've moved to ecological forestry so there are many fewer concerns about current treatments vs large scale commercial logging of the past. In particular, the pace of treatments was different then compared to today, where the group believed the pace and scale we are trying to achieve would not create major impacts to wildlife species. Loss of biodiversity is an issue, and there is a need to define terms like connectivity to clarify the conversation. We need to look at long term benefits and weigh that against potential short-term loss of habitat quality or quantity. Most of the table participants agreed to be part of a wildlife working group to work on messaging.

#### Action Items:

1. Form a working group (Anne Bradley, TNC; Teresa Seamster, Sierra Club; Jimmy Cain NMSU; Colleen Payne MDF; Chris Furr Carson NF; Jenny Lirignoli, Parametrix; Jordan Stone, Rocky Mountain Youth Corps) [Done]
2. Share the notes with the working group [TNC]
3. Report decisions in the newsletter [Teresa Seamster]
4. Explore developing a RGWF article in the Mule Deer Foundation national magazine [Anne Bradley, Colleen Payne]
5. Share calendar events of interest to all the working group [All]

#### **4. Stream, Wetland, Aquatic and Restoration Projects** (*Leads: Toner Mitchell and Rachel Meier*)

The water quality group has now become the stream, wetland, aquatic and restoration projects group. During the Fall Meeting, discussion was focused on Non-Point Source Pollution and the need to get the word out about Best Management Practices (BMPs). Three main topics were discussed at this meeting: the Programmatic NEPA for Cibola, Carson and Santa Fe National Forests, Best Management Practices and Beavers/Beaver Dam Analogs. The Programmatic NEPA helps streamline the NEPA process and creates more shovel-ready projects. However, there are currently too few NEPA ready acres near streams, and there are many opportunities to participate in scoping and comments. The group did not like the term "Beaver Dam Analog," but couldn't come up with a better term to use. Finally, there is a strong need for more beaver deceivers on the ground and in visible locations.

#### Action Items:

1. Need to coordinate with NMED on what NMED is doing for the Programmatic NEPA [needs volunteers]
  - a. Seek guidance on developing specifications/guidelines for creating and implementing BMPs.

2. More education is needed around beavers: need for an OpEd (work with the communications team on this?) [needs volunteers]
  - a. How to educate legislators vs. the public (start by educating children in schools?)
  - b. Strategy: find out who opposes the idea of beaver dam analogs (groups etc.), and find success stories that will be relevant to them (examples from within the group or that will resonate well with that group)
    - i. One example: beavers behind Santa Clara Casino---Garrett Altmann as POC
    - ii. Sherri Tippie (Wildlife 2000) another example from CO
3. Create SWARP page on the RGWF website to host links/descriptions on BMPs related to SWARP work [TNC and needs volunteers]
  - a. Should include:
    - i. New NMDGF guidelines for beaver reintroduction (now 5 linear miles)
    - ii. New USFWS Beaver Management Guide
    - iii. BMPs from NMED, Surface Water Quality Bureau, FEMA, NRCS
    - iv. Clean Water Act

## **5. Jobs and Training** (*Leads: Sarah Hurteau and Ben Thomas*)

We had two entirely different groups during our two rounds of discussions. The first group was made up of young people (CPLA interns) looking for jobs, so the focus was on how to connect with jobs openings. The second group included people in established positions that offer jobs and so that discussion was focused on finding qualified workers from the community hosting the open position. There was an obvious disconnect between these two discussions. We reviewed barriers and came up with a handful of action items that could be pursued to address some of the barriers. Barriers identified include: capacity in both equipment and trained workforce, seasonal in nature/hard to maintain a trained workforce, jack of all trades/people need to have many different skills, population is migrating from rural to urban, had to reverse and bring people out of urban centers for rural jobs, drug/alcohol dependency issues.

### Action Items:

1. Utilizing the RGWF signatories network to better advertise job openings, both public and private like a job board/calendar that could serve as a linkage between those looking for jobs with those looking for qualified workers and the timing/seasonality of the position. [needs volunteer]
2. Highlight the success of VISTA/Pathways programs during the short talks at a future RGWF meeting as a way to bring new talent into federal agencies that are facing a retiring workforce. [Current VISTA]
3. Increase private sector involvement in RGWF in order to increase overall capacity to meet the growing needs for additional restoration activities and create jobs in rural communities. [needs volunteer]
4. Connect with the National Rural Assembly for peer to peer learning opportunities. [needs volunteer]

## **6. Biomass Utilization** (*Leads: Amy Miller, Brent Racher, Will Donahoo*)

Identified problems and challenges include: lack of industry and technologies, markets do not exist for technologies, no state subsidies or incentives for biomass electricity production and/or co-generation, some environmental organizations oppose biomass electricity production based on emissions issues, forest restoration issues, etc., discussions on building a biomass industry have been stagnant for some time in New Mexico and railroad transportation challenges exist. Several actions and activities have taken place recently. Brent Racher has made biomass presentations to several electric cooperatives including Central NM Electric Cooperative. Sandoval County is working on identifying markets for biomass. TNC staff met with a former CO legislator who is interested in getting a multi-western state effort going on biomass electricity production, particularly focusing on Tri-State. Rio Puerco Watershed Committee is working on landscape scale NEPA. Harold Trujillo at EMNRD is establishing a state wood/energy team, and EMNRD is continuing to identify available boilers.

Action Items:

1. Send TNC a past report from WGA on multi-state policy related to biomass. [Kim Kostelnik]
2. There is a need to continue to refine and expand the definition of the problem as a basis for future water discussions, focusing on the tie to water. [TNC staff]
3. Explore enterprise zones as an opportunity for biomass based businesses. [Adelante]
4. Continue to explore markets for biochar, including exploration of opportunities with LANL and Sandia Labs. [Adelante]
5. Follow up with New Mexico Tech re: biochar opportunities with LANL and Sandia. [Rep. Pearce's office (Barbara)]
6. Continue to do work on exploring markets for biomass. [EMNRD]

**7. Post-fire Planning** (*Leads: Collin Haffey and Susan Rich*)

The post-fire planning group focused on answering four key questions: who is doing long-term recovery, where is that coming from, what is not getting done (especially after EWP/BAER money is exhausted), and what is the mechanism to bring in matching funds to do long-term recovery. Three needs were identified through discussion. These are: maintaining interest, involvement, and energy for long-term recovery; planning for restoration that will be sustainable under future climate conditions; and investigating how post-fire planning can be incorporated into FAC programs.

Action Items:

1. Create template with checklist to do pre-fire planning for post-fire long-term recovery actions [NMSF, Jeremy Sweat, Dee Tarr, Krys Graham Chavez]
  - a. Build on AWG focusing on more specifics for local geographies (scale)
  - b. Take census of what's been/being done elsewhere and adopt best practices (avoid reinventing the wheel)
  - c. ID who should be at the table from the start; anticipate potential impacts/involve them during/before
2. "Second Responders" - find (or create) a template for a leadership plan for continued, long-term post-fire recovery (community-led) [Alan Hook]

- a. Extend Emergency Management Planning to post-fire planning/people/communities
- 3. Identify vulnerable infrastructure that BOR could then put in funding [Dagmar Llewellyn]
  - a. Example of non-conventional funding source
- 4. ID other geographies and funding sources, including non-traditional, at actionable scales [needs volunteer]

## **8. Communications** (*Leads: Jackie Hall and David Norden*)

The group brought up many great ideas that need further discussion before becoming action items. Some of these ideas include: creating talking points for all signatories about the RGWF so they can serve as better ambassadors, going back to organizations we gave initial presentations to in order to update them on our success (i.e. Economic Forum, ABQ Chamber, ACI, etc.), setting up a “resource” Box folder for all to use to push out content like videos, press releases, success stories and other media, following-up with David Norden on ways to share the TSV/RGWF partnership with other ski resorts, creating a “what can I do” asset for individuals, and identifying possible future partners (ex: Wild Earth Guardians, Pueblo Action Network based in ABQ).

### Action Items:

- 1. Create RGWF Facebook Page [needs volunteer]
  - a. Needs minimum number of signatories to participate
  - b. Everyone needs to agree to posting at least once a month, not using the Facebook page for advertising or soliciting
- 2. RGWF coordinated “media” week with the aim of getting national attention to this project as a model for other communities [needs volunteers]
  - a. All signatories/partners/investors push out stories/media awareness for RGWF
  - b. Special hashtag: Ex. #RIO600k
  - c. Coordinate around fire season
  - d. Coordinated messages/posts/releases/ etc.
  - e. Culminate in a “forest festival” at TSV; incorporate hikes through places like Wild West; for media and general public
    - i. Ex: TSV restoring forests but residents in the valley don’t take those sorts of proactive steps
- 3. Festival participation [all working group members]
  - a. Signatories/Partners/Investors--In general, when we are participating in staffing booths at various events, provide information on RGWF

## **9. Rural Communities – Protecting Rural Water Sources and Exploring Funding Possibilities for Fire-Impacted Water Systems** (*Lead: Martha Graham*)

The two parts of this issue – the water source and the water system – traditionally have been viewed and treated as separate. They need to be connected. These conditions apply to both acequias and drinking water systems. Acequias contribute to recharging the aquifers. Watersheds

have a profound effect on rural communities – proportionally bigger than for urban communities. There is a need to get information to water systems, WFDSS, etc. Some problems with CWPPs include: most need to be updated, and they need to look at the watershed, not just around the community. There is a need to **act** on CWPPs. CWPP identified La Jara's watershed as one of its highest priority watersheds. The 2018 CFRP proposal is still a planning document, with treatment still years away. Finally, rural communities are some of the most active promoters of the environment.

Action Items:

1. We need to be proactive (to identify communities and their vulnerabilities) [needs volunteer]
2. Involve communities / Establish relationships early [needs volunteer]
3. Continue these conversations [all group members]
4. Visit/Join/Contribute to FACNM.org [needs volunteer]
5. Hold meetings on residences/communities/water systems becoming fire adapted [needs volunteer]
6. Research funding possibilities (to help drinking water/acequia systems affected by fire; these should be investigated for increasing system resiliency too) [needs volunteer]
  - a. County
  - b. FEMA
  - c. NM Homeland Security
  - d. Private sources
  - e. RGWF
  - f. NRCS
  - g. Soil & Water Conservation Districts
7. Check After Wildfire website for funding information again (mg/Vallecitos didn't find anything that applied in that particular case) [needs volunteer]
8. Provide WFDSS with locations of acequia/drinking water infrastructure [needs volunteer]
9. Revise CWPPs / modify information in them and how it is collected [needs volunteer]
10. Bring multitude of people together and address the issue systematically [needs volunteer]
11. Develop collaboratives [needs volunteer]