

Save Our Bosque Task Force
Tuesday, November 3, 2015 Minutes

Attendees: Doug Boykin, Jon Erz, Carlos Coontz, Chris Hill, Gina Dello Russo, Nick Smokovich, Fred Hollis, Connie Robnett, Willie Lucero, Dominique Otero, Bob Markwell, Kathy Markwell, Bear Albrecht, Roxann Moore, Jerry Nieto, William DeRagon, Matt Mitchell, Delilah Walsh, and Yasmeen Najmi (via conference call)

9:15 AM Save Our Bosque Task Force Meeting

1. Approve Agenda. *Motion made by Chris to approve, second by Matt, approved.*
2. Approve Minutes from July 2015. *Motion made by Chris to approve, second by Connie, approved.*
3. Treasurer's report
 - a. Balance - \$ 7,474.88 in SOBTF funds, \$0 in Saavedra Project funds, 17,187.50 in the Gonzales Project fund for a balance of \$24,662.38. On the books, there is still \$7,712.50 available for the Gonzales property and \$22,410.00 available for Perry project.
 - b. Bills – there is one bill for \$94.41 for Walmart to supply food and drinks for the Bosque Conservation Day. There is another bill for \$100 to the Chamber of Commerce for our yearly dues. *Motion made by Connie to approve these bills, second by Chris, approved.* There was a motion to award the Socorro County 4H a \$200 scholarship again this year for their assistance with Bosque Conservation Day, *Motion made by Gina to approve, second by Fred, approved.* There was a donation for \$100 from Judge Ted Kase and 2-\$2 monthly donations that came in. Next month we expect bills for lunch for the Trash Pickup day and bus scholarship bills for Bosque Conservation Day. We will wait to get word from Nyleen that the contractor for Gonzales Property work had sent in required paperwork before issuing the check for this work.
4. Levee Project Update – Jerry Nieto, Project Manager and William DeRagon, Biologist presented the following information. The first segment, the Socorro segment, is 7.3 to 7.8 miles long; was approved in 2014. Note: see other attachments in emailing for more detailed information. The first and second phases of 4.6 miles were started in 2014 and extend from the North Diversion Channel (including 1000 feet of engineered levee on the south side of that diversion channel) to one mile south of Otero Street. The contractor is done with vegetation clearing and initial reprocessing of material. The finished height of the levee is designed for the 100-year flood plus four vertical feet. An impermeable core (bentonite slurry) will be installed once the contractor has finished getting the levee to an overall height of 3 foot below finished grade. It is trenched in and there is additional spoil from this excavation. The City of Socorro is accepting all spoil at the rodeo/soccer grounds. The contractor voluntarily chose to demobilize in June of this year and was shut down for four + months. They started back up on October 26th. The main reason for demobilizing was high groundwater, which would have required the use of a dewatering system. The contractor opted to shut down for a period instead. They also had to avoid a 2,200-foot long section due to a southwestern willow flycatcher nesting site. They could have worked around the nest site but decided to shut down because of high groundwater. They now face some additional ground compaction and vegetation clearing because of weed growth. Completion date for the first phase is July 26, 2016. The next phase (2B - length 2 miles, 400 calendar days to complete), extends from one mile south of Otero Street to approximately one mile north of Brown Arroyo. It was awarded to a different contractor, Rocky Mountain Excavators with the Notice to Proceed expected in December. In the initial design, this phase has its main access through the north end of Luis Lopez. Temporary staging areas may be in Bureau of Reclamation areas along the Low Flow Conveyance Channel, but these would not be for fuels and flammable materials. The contractor will submit a traffic control plan to the Corps. Note: both contractors will most likely be working at the same time. Final design for the last phase, Phase 2C, is starting now and expected completion date is May 2016. This last phase of the Socorro segment takes the project to 1000 feet south of Brown Arroyo and it includes a

gated structure across Brown Arroyo. When all phases are complete, the Socorro segment is turned over the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District to maintain, estimated timeframe of 2017 or 2018. They are responsible for maintaining a 15-foot tree-free zone on the river side toe of the levee. Grass reseeding is a part of the project on the slopes and toe of the levee.

Questions: What are the white standpipes for? There is a French drain installed at the toe of the western side of the levee with a screened pipe running the length of the drain. Every 200 to 400 feet a standpipe is used for access and aeration to that French drain. There are also pipes going from the drain across the road to drain into the Low Flow Conveyance Channel. This is installed to capture and direct seepage during high flows when the river is up against the levee. These will not be as exposed as they are now when finish grade of the levee is achieved. The standpipes, when completed, will protrude approximately 20" above finished ground, will have a rodent guard at the end to prevent rodent entry, and be spaced at 800' intervals.. Can they be painted? They shall see what specifications call for and get back to us. Does the 15-foot tree-free cleared area on the river side of the levee increase the likelihood that the river will establish a channel in this location against the levee? The tree-free toe is designed to slope away from the levee and every approximately 200 feet there is a two-foot hump to discourage the river from taking this course. Where is mitigation for this levee segment planned? The mitigation for this segment will be approximately seven acres and be done within the segment area, local to the impacted sites. The clearing just north of Otero seemed wider than 15 feet. Why is this? This is an area where riprap will be installed on the river side toe of the levee to further reinforce the levee. For phase 1&2, the riprap starts about ½ mile north of Otero Street and extends 0.8 miles downstream from Otero. For phase 2B, the riprap starts approximately 2 miles south of Otero Street and extends 1 mile south. The levee was also left wide at Otero Street to maintain our parking area there. There are other wider sections designed and Jerry will send us those locations. Because of tiebacks at the north and south ends of the Socorro segment, it is possible to consider it a completed project (hydraulically separable element) for turn over to the local sponsor, MRGCD, and call it good. Can the vegetation cleared in the subsequent phases be placed somewhere where fuelwood harvesting can be done? The Corps and MRGCD will look into this and see if it is feasible to place cleared wood in a safe location where the public can access it. Will the North Diversion to Escondida access be closed for the duration of the project? Yes, for the first phase anyway, this finishes up in July 2016. The County is working on funding to replace the old wooden bridge (removed as part of this project) with a concrete bridge.

The Task Force will meet again with the Corps of Engineers next March or April (tentative) to discuss the access ramps and other work needed to get the riverine parks back up to par and replace fencing removed during construction. We are to get with Jacob and Jerry to schedule this meeting. Task Force members reiterated that the Task Force could assist with getting information to the public when possible. Note: be careful driving in and around the construction and hauling route, they are working again. Thanks to Jerry and William for attending and presenting this project to the Task Force.

5. Project Updates

- a. Wildland Urban Interface Mitigation Project: Fred reported that the County has sent FEMA requested information and is awaiting word. Nick, Fred, and Gina will go out in the field with the Interstate Stream Commission contractor on Monday, November 9, at 9 a.m. to look at potential sites where fuels reduction and restoration could both be accomplished. Others welcome, let Gina know.
- b. Partners for Fish & Wildlife Program: Gina is ordering plants for the Perry project. The contractor for the Gonzales project needs to turn in paperwork then we can issue him a check. He knows this but hasn't complied yet. Jon Erz, Gina and Angel Montoya will work together to develop a proposal for Task Force and FWS approval to collaborate to hire an SCA or equivalent intern to serve work to develop Partners projects. We currently have three in development phase, and it would be a good time to have an intern assist with outreach, design, and follow through to plantings. Jon will look into potential costs for an eight-month detail starting in June. This committee will get back with the Task Force in December or January.
- c. Riverine Parks/SNA: SNA – Road to Socorro Nature Area improvements and inclusion in County road system. A portion of this road is currently platted as a local easement for drainage. There is

the wish to include it in the County roads maintenance program so that it is maintained out to the SNA. This has to be approved by the County Commission Board. The following steps will try to address this issue: the BLM will check with upper management on this issue, Willie Lucero and Nick Smokovich will draft a short white paper on the topic, and the Task Force and BLM will then take it to the County Commission Board for review and hopefully approval. Gail at the County can assist with GIS as needed. Riverine Parks – State Forestry has \$6,000 for the Inmate Work Camp to treat salt cedar resprouts in the ribbon from the North Diversion to Brown Arroyo. If there is remaining funds, they will start work from the North Diversion to Escondida. MRGCD is checking to see if additional funds would be available to work north to Escondida.

- d. Other Projects: 1) Delilah Walsh, Socorro County Manager, presented on the Bosquecito Road Improvements, Socorro County project with funding from the Water Trust Board. Funding received three years ago, now done with clearances from federal agencies, ready to proceed pending some final easement agreements. Three arroyos will be addressed by improving the low water crossings and enforcing the berms with riprap for a distance upstream and downstream on the arroyos. Road repairs with new road base and chip seal and raising road elevations between arroyo crossings in some locations are planned. There is one area where the road will change alignment. Road easements are either permanent or 35-year easements. There is one permanent conservation easement within this project footprint. 2) The Sevilleta NWR is hosting a river project open house/tour for their upper management and the Task Force is invited. The date is December 3 at 1:30 pm. Details will be shared at our December 1st meeting. Jon also reported that Sevilleta NWR will be planting 18,000 to 20,000 cottonwood, Gooddings willow, and coyote willow poles and whips this coming February. The Task Force is welcome to assist with these planting projects. They are trying to establish an agreement with the Inmate Work Camp to assist with cutting the poles and whips. There is a southwestern willow flycatcher nesting in one of their restoration projects from years back, good news for our community, reach wide efforts. One note from that earlier project, may not need to plant poles so close for flycatchers (every two to three feet), maybe more like every five to ten feet? Check this with area experts. 3) BLM is releasing an Environmental Assessment for 30-day review. The EA covers the five-year lease of BLM land to the San Antonio Schools. After five years, the school would apply for a patent and the land changes hands. Good news for our local community and the San Antonio schools, one of our great partners that adopted the San Antonio Park and is good about maintaining that park. Thanks and congratulations, San Antonio Schools! 4) Rhodes Property – tour of Rhodes project with agency leads. The heads of the FWS, BLM, and Reclamation will tour the project with the family, Task Force, and Audubon NM. They will meet first for lunch and presentation. Fred and Connie are able to attend for the Task Force. Doris Rhodes will present work/partnerships to date, Gina will present the Phase II plan ideas to date.
6. Fundraising: Fundraising Plan discussion – We are scheduled to meet at 1:00 pm on December 1 with Doris Rhodes and anyone on the Task Force or in the community interested in discussing both our five-year plan of priority projects and our fundraising plan to fund these projects. We will meet at the State Forestry office after a lunch break following our morning meeting.
7. Bosque Conservation Day report (October 16, 2015): Thanks to Nick for organizing and everyone for helping in another successful BCA. There were approximately 200 students and snacks were provided. Special thanks to Jessica, the Socorro County Extension Agent, and Connie for assisting when one presenter could not make it. Bus scholarship bills are pending. Scholarship to 4H approved. Photos taken that day should be sent to Nick to gather them up for possible use on our website.
8. Trash Pickup Day (October 30, 2015): Even though it was rainy outside, we had ten people show up to pick up trash along the ribbon from the North Diversion down to Brown Arroyo. We ended up with two dump trucks full and about a half dump truck full of tires. Thanks to the local MRGCD staff and their equipment for their help. Doug had sent out a note to reschedule but that will not be necessary now. Next one is next spring.
9. Socorro Valley Trails planning presentation from contractor: Tabled until December 1st meeting.

10. Host a discussion with stakeholders on the following topics and follow this with a tour of some of the restoration areas and a public outreach event later in the season (ties in well with agenda item 8). Gina will send out doodle poll to possible participants this week. Topics could include:
 - restoration efforts planned or underway in the reach – including but not limited to Task Force, County, COE, BOR, ISC, private lands programs (SWCD, NRCS and Partners), private landowners, Refuges, others,
 - funding strategies for getting this work done,
 - coordination and partnering on projects,
 - depletions offsets for restoration work,
 - mitigation if SunZia powerline goes through,
 - Endangered species status in the reach and Biological Assessment Conservation Measures.
 - Design public outreach event to follow this roundtable/tour.
11. Other agenda items: 1) Gina is helping to organize a volunteer trash pickup along Highway 1 south of San Antonio to the North Boundary of Bosque del Apache NWR for November 15 from 10 a.m. until 1 p.m. The refuge will assist by picking up the bags we leave on the side of the road. BLM and State Forestry have trash pickup sticks and orange vests we can use for the day. Email Gina if you are interested in helping with this volunteer event before the Festival of the Cranes.
12. Website/Facebook: Connie is working on updating/revising/and potentially moving our website to a new service if that is needed. She requested we look at the home page and see what else is needed. She will send out a link to the draft website where we can provide comments but not edit the webpage (or mess it up). If interested in seeing it, let her or Gina know. She will send it out to Nick, Bear, Jon and Doug at this point. She will schedule a meeting to review it once we get some feedback, and tentatively present the website at the December meeting. Jon will look at the website draft and then try out some ideas for a Facebook page.
13. Calendar: Quivera Coalition conference is from November 11 to 13. The Mineral Museum at Tech is having an open house on November 13. Festival of the Cranes is November 18 through the 22nd this year.
14. Individual Reports: Chris headed to Montana soon for a holiday. Bear has many squirrels in his yard! He went to his wife's 50-year High School reunion in California. His grandson was a firefighter for Halloween. Nick announced that the Soil and Water Conservation District is no longer spraying weeds or salt cedar for landowners, but still offering their technical assistance and still have their cost share program for that work. Doug asked people to send their best wishes to Nyleen's mom who had recent surgery. Yasmeen reported that the MRGCD board would be coming to Socorro for one of its meetings after the New Year. She will make the request that we present to them at that meeting.
15. Adjourn: *At 11:50 AM, Matt made a motion to adjourn, second by Nick, approved.*