

Rio Puerco Management Committee Meeting

March 10, 2006

The agenda consisted of the following items:

- Welcome and introductions
- Cuba River Cleanup
- Watershed Initiative update
- Willow planting projects
- 10 year vision—next steps
- Lunch—Video sneak preview
- Rio Puerco Alliance
- Reauthorization
- Navajo Nation outreach
- Next meetings, field days

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS:

Thaddeus Kostrubala, an Environmental Engineer from the NM State Land Office, joined us for the meeting.

Steve Fischer read an email from Richard Becker expressing gratitude for cards, emails, thoughts and prayers. Richard is impressed with the visioning work we did at the last meeting and said, “At this stage of my life I want to prioritize some things.....so FISHING IN THE RIO PUERCO is # UNO.”

CUBA RIVER CLEANUP:

Jeremy Kruger initiated a discussion of the project by reporting on an organizational meeting of the subcommittee. The group sees this event as an opportunity to connect the residents of Cuba with the river. The subcommittee members checked out the reach of the Puerco that runs through town and found little trash. Looking at the Rito Leche is another possibility. Tree New Mexico has offered to provide trees that could be used as an alternative planting project. Kavita Krishna has put together a contact list of potential sponsors and volunteers and has begun making contacts.

Brian Velarde, who attended the organizational meeting, has just been elected to the Village Council. His brother Richard is the new mayor. The new Cuba Village Council will meet on March 28. This is an opportunity to plan the event with the new village government so that the community has ownership in the process. Instead of sticking to our original date of May 6 or attempting to be part of the National River Cleanup Week from May 13-21, we decided to work with the council to set the date. Pat Kutzner, Don Moore, and Kavita will make contact with the new council representatives prior to March 28 and get on the agenda for that meeting.

Pat pointed out that the schools would be eager to participate. She volunteered to meet with the school board. Ted Mace will contact Assistant School Superintendent Emily Vigil who is attending an Indian Education Committee meeting at Torreon on March 14. We also need to work with the Sandoval County solid waste folks to make it easier to legally dispose of trash and more difficult to illegally dump.

Kavita will take over leadership of the subcommittee from Jeremy who has work commitments that are interfering with his ability to participate.

WATERSHED INITIATIVE UPDATE:

Kavita pulled up our not yet live website to explain how it's organized. She navigated through the categories at the top of the home page—Who We Are, What We Do, How We Work, More Information, Rio Puerco Alliance, and Home. Each will have dropdown menus. Several people were unclear about the headings What We Do and How We Work. They could be replaced by more self-evident titles such as Projects and Restoration Methods. The home page has been updated and simplified but still includes a slide show and map. **Kavita still needs personal stories about why you're a part of the RPMC and project write-ups. Please have them to Kavita by the end of March.**

Toby Herzlich asked who is going to visit our website and what information are they after? Dave Mattern suggested we figure out why watershed restoration matters. There was some excitement around these larger questions and we decided to work on them as part of our long term vision.

Kavita also appealed for volunteers to assist with kiosk presentations. We have had several requests for the kiosk including Ranch Days in Glenwood on April 25-26, Grants Ag Day on April 29, and Jemez Fishing Day on July 22.

Members of the committee had several ideas:

- Modify the Watershed Initiative workplan to pay a stipend to cover expenses
- Appeal to those who initially received training
- Find out if students could receive credit for making kiosk presentations
- Contact David Henkle at UNM School of Planning and Architecture
- Ask Susan Rich about staffing of Rolling Rivers
- Talk to Boy Scouts for volunteer help

WILLOW PLANTING PROJECTS:

Steve Fischer passed around a sign-up sheet for the project at Meander Cut-Off on March 18. This project is in conjunction with the Albuquerque Wildlife Federation. There are around 10 RPMC members who will participate. Those in Albuquerque will leave the BLM office at 8 AM; those in the Cuba area will meet at the north boundary of the Jemez Reservation on US 550 near the metal water tank at 9 AM.

Michael Coleman reported that construction of the Channel Restoration Project at La Ventana will be finished by mid-April. The channelized segment is now closed and there is water pooling under the north bridge. The next step will be the revegetation effort to be funded by \$45,000 of 319 grant money. Tree New Mexico will have the lead with the assistance of the Plant Materials Center in Los Lunas. The project will consist of three work periods between now and October 31. There will be a major effort this fall, a seeding prior to the monsoon season, and a willow planting at the south bridge scheduled for April 1. This event will include RPMC members, BLM employees, Americorps volunteers, and the Albuquerque Starbucks Green Team. Mike reminded us that La Ventana is a group obligation for RPMC and passed around a sign-up list for the project.

RIO PUERCO ALLIANCE:

Barbara Johnson has been working on the IRS filing (Form 1023) so that the RPA can attain non-profit status. She reiterated that the purpose of this organization is not to replace the RPMC but to assist us in raising funds from foundations and serving as our fiscal agent. To complete the paperwork, she needs a complete listing of board members. So far, Michael Coleman and Steve Fischer are ex-officio members and we have four of the five others that we need including Jeremy Kruger, Merle Lefkoff, Ted Mace, and Charles Wohlenberg. Pat Kutzner volunteered as the fifth. Michael Benson, Leo Charley, and Roberto Rodriguez expressed a willingness to serve if we need additional help.

We also need several policies which could be developed and approved by the board. Barbara will ask Susan Rich to serve as our interim fiscal agent after the paperwork is filed and before we are granted non-profit status. Barbara won't have the package ready before April and the IRS could take several months to act.

VIDEO PREVIEW:

During lunch, Pat Kutzner played raw footage for the Between Sacred Mountains video. We saw our old friend Amos Johnson in front of the Window Rock and some incredible footage of a flood in Vicente Arroyo.

REAUTHORIZATION AND OUTREACH:

Michael Benson talked to Calle Gibson from Senator Domenici's office earlier at the meeting. She confirmed that the senator had tried to attach reauthorization language as a rider to a major bill. Although that attempt failed, it remains a priority for the senator's staff.

Leo Charley got a resolution passed from the Eastern Navajo Agency and Torreon Chapter supporting reauthorization. Navajo Nation President Joe Shirley was at the ENA meeting when the resolution was introduced. Both passed without opposition.

Michael and Toby proposed that we take time at our next meeting to write letters of support. Michael will distribute talking points and Steve will get addresses for the delegation. Toby asked those who can participate to bring letterhead from your organization. Michael advised writing about a personal experience with the committee that has meaning and also thanking the Congressional delegation for their support.

Ted Mace shared that there is a Crownpoint Workforce Program that employees students who could help us plant willows and do cleanup projects. Their salaries are paid by the Navajo Nation.

10-YEAR VISION—NEXT STEPS:

Toby split us into three groups. She asked each group to write a story in three sentences about what we want the Rio Puerco watershed to be, become, be known for. She reminded us that a good story has a beginning, a middle, and an end. When Toby assembled each group's sentences, the result was an amazing piece of work:

“It is 2006, and we are a group of people learning how to live on the land. As residents in the watershed, we are working together to restore the land, to complete a transition from a worn-out watershed to a healthy stream system, and to maintain a healthy way of life in harmony with the Earth.

“There is a concerted and collaborative effort underway to consider all aspects of the problem and to propose solutions. We want to build understanding of what a watershed is, how it works, and how it nourishes the community. The result will be native grasses and springs in abundance, to protect the land and to provide for its use by all living beings.

“As we progress, the physical setting is restored, and cultural and economic benefits are improved. Through education and community, we hope to achieve a self-sustaining Rio Puerco Watershed, with environmental, social, and economic vitality. By 2056, people are living sustainably on the land, and everyone—rural and urban—has a deep respect and understanding of healthy land.”

NEXT FIELD DAYS AND MEETINGS:

Willow planting at La Ventana—Saturday, April 1. Meet at BLM office in Albuquerque at 8:00 AM to catch a ride or gather at the south bridge around 9:00 AM.

Next meeting—Wednesday, April 19. RPMC meeting at Albuquerque BLM District Office from 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM. Our agenda for the next meeting will include:

- Update on cleanup project
- Letter writing session for reauthorization—bring letterhead
- Bill Zeedyk presentation on use of post vanes in streambank stabilization
- Willow planting success stories
- Video update
- Visions and goals

May meeting—Wednesday, May 17. RPMC meeting at Albuquerque BLM District Office from 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM.

PLEASE RESERVE THESE DATES FOR RPMC