

# Rio Puerco Management Committee Meeting

## May 17, 2006

The agenda consisted of the following items:

- Welcome and overview
- Update on TMDL issues in Cuba
- RPMC vision, goals, and strategic objectives
- Update on cleanup project
- Update on other Watershed Initiative projects
- Update on Rio Puerco Alliance
- Complete letter writing for reauthorization and personal website stories

### UPDATE ON TMDL:

Barbara Johnson, who had talked to Michael Coleman, reported in Coleman's absence that the NM Water Quality Control Commission did not approve the proposed sediment TMDL at their May 9 meeting. Cuba resident Ernest Torrez felt that the TMDL is an attempt to damage ranchers' ability to secure a livelihood and he requested a public hearing on the matter. The commission tabled the matter until the June 13 meeting when they decide whether to schedule a public hearing on the proposed TMDL.

Mr. Torrez is arguing that the 8 mile reach from Cuba south is not perennial, therefore, NMED has no jurisdiction. According to Barbara, if the TMDL is not approved, the Rio Puerco will no longer be eligible for 319 funding.

We discussed what our strategy needs to be. It is important that RPMC members attend a hearing if one is scheduled. We need to educate key people about the opportunity the TMDL presents. Those we need to talk to include the Mayor, the Superintendent of Schools, Cuba SWCD, Jeff Gurule, Louis Weise. If we see that there is community support, we could ask that the hearing be held in Cuba. Otherwise, we could help arrange transportation to Santa Fe.

### VISIONING WORK:

Facilitator Toby Herzlich introduced this as laying groundwork for what we do on the ground. We need to stop periodically to get a ridge top view of our work. She then suggested that we do a SWOT analysis which stands for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats.

#### *Strengths*

- We have lots of people trained to lead watershed restoration
- There is a potential to run 1,000 head of cattle with adjoining lands
- RPMC project funding has gained the attention of Navajo Nation and BIA
- Ojo Encino Ranchers Committee could be a model for others
- We have an Outreach Coordinator
- Fixed 3 dams and lots of other projects (Torreon)
- Ability to move fast on projects
- Monitoring efforts—will be able to demonstrate effectiveness
- Experience. Success + failures + knowledge
- Good education and training
- Congressional support
- Video

#### *Weaknesses*

- Lack of water
- Kavita's office not open to the public
- Little contact with community because of aversion to government
- People are busy—can't get involved
- Limited in technical expertise/capacity
- Project reporting is lousy—data not analyzed. No feedback loop.
- No comprehensive plan for training and education. What are we trying to accomplish?
- Project proponents are not coming back to teach others.

### *Opportunities*

- Youth could stay on land if improved
- Navajo Nation paying attention to projects
- Ojo Encino as role model
- Put exploratory wells to use. NRCS funds 75 percent.
- USFS moving—space for RPMC staff in Cuba?
- Opportunity to focus on roads, weeds
- Video as tool for Congress and education
- Seek funding from foundations interested in youth, economic development. Rio Puerco Alliance
- Grad student available to help with WRAS
- Drought is on people's minds

### *Treats*

- ✓ Red tape from Navajo Nation workforce
- ✓ People on adjoining lands don't get along
- ✓ Do we have Congressional support in the long term?

The next exercise involved two teams to flesh out goals, objectives, and strategies. One group worked on the goal of expanding on-the-ground projects and restoring the watershed to health. This group's objectives were to:

- ⊕ Create native riparian buffers for stream corridor stabilization
- ⊕ Keep sediment in the uplands
- ⊕ Create more upland vegetation for soil stability
- ⊕ Record historical projects in the watershed along with info on their effectiveness
- ⊕ Analyze the effectiveness of projects through monitoring data. Use grad student from UNM or Tech
- ⊕ Determine source of sediment (Gellis) and apply projects strategically
- ⊕ Increase training and capacity in applying techniques. Create yearlong program for land decision makers, permittees
- ⊕ Proposal to NM Water Trust Board for project involving entire watershed
- ⊕ Landscape-wide showcase project. Showcase La Ventana

Team Two worked on the combined goals of RPMC as a nationally recognized model of community involvement and building the capacity of the community to take care of itself. Their objectives were:

- ◆ Greater visibility and capacity building through the use of video, classroom training, RPMC newsletter, website, presentations, billboard on 550, Adopt-a-Highway, annual cleanup event
- ◆ Target training and projects to decision makers on the land
- ◆ Build sense of community around watershed through creating an identification with the watershed, curriculum, local governments, reaching decision-maker, and trained people training

others.

- ◆ Use strategies such as bumper sticker “Restoring the Rio Puerco One Rock Dam at a Time,” using radio and newspapers, and developing local and national presentations/conferences.

The entire committee talked about the final goals of having a secure funding base and increased economic opportunities in local communities. Specific objectives and strategies were:

- ☒ Congressional reauthorization of Committee
- ☒ TMDL/319 funding
- ☒ Rio Puerco Alliance
- ☒ State “pork barrel”
- ☒ Funding from Navajo Nation
- ☒ Run livestock in common, rotate and provide rest for the land
- ☒ Instead of spending money for earth dams, drill wells to provide reliable water source
- ☒ Identify priorities based on major threats to the watershed
- ☒ Certification of trained people—at Chapter level
- ☒ Road people trained by Zeedyk
- ☒ English version of video for TV broadcast

#### UPDATES:

Kavita Krishna reported that the River Clean-Up Subcommittee meeting did not happen because the representative from the Village Council did not show up. The meeting has been rescheduled for May 25 at 6 PM. The group recommended that the subcommittee not rely totally on the Village Council but in addition make contact with key individuals and businesses. For example, key sponsors could include the church to provide food, the hardware store for trash bags, McDonald’s for water, etc.

As far as other Watershed Initiative projects go, the roads effort, YCC, the goat demonstration, and Arroyo Arañal projects are all poised to begin in May and June. Dave Mattern has been surveying and measuring a series of cross sections for a project at Cabezon. Kavita is taking a 4<sup>th</sup> grade class to La Ventana to plant willows and water shrubs planted in April. On June 4, she will be taking the Rangeland Health Kiosk to Forestry Camp. Kavita will help teach the Stream Habitat Inventory Training on May 23-24. Slots are available for RPMC members.

Steve Fischer read a letter from Steve Lucero of Cuba Soil and Water Conservation District requesting the RPMC’s assistance with the repair of a failed gabion structure at the site of the Cuba grade stabilization project. Since the Committee expressed a willingness to help, Steve will request that BLM Engineer Ernest Chavez examine the structure to see what needs to be done.

Barbara Johnson has scheduled a Rio Puerco Alliance board meeting for June 1 so that they can make decisions that are needed in connection with the IRS filing for non-profit status. As soon as the filing is complete, RPA can begin raising money. Tree New Mexico has agreed to be RPA’s interim fiscal agent.

#### NEXT MEETINGS:

**Next meeting—Wednesday, June 28.** RPMC meeting at Albuquerque BLM District Office from 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM. Our agenda for the next meeting will include:

- Planning next steps—goals and objectives
- Reports on Watershed Initiative projects including River Clean-Up
- Tree New Mexico education project
- Rio Puerco Alliance—update and report from Board
- TMDL issue—Michael Coleman

- WRAS Subcommittee update

**August meeting—Wednesday, August 16.**

**PLEASE RESERVE THESE DATES FOR RPMC**