

# Cebolla Canyon Steering Committee Meeting

## April 20, 2009

### Cebolla Canyon

*Present:*

Ed Singleton, *BLM*

Steve Fischer, *BLM*

Dave Mattern, *BLM*

Frank Lewark, *BLM*

Bill Zeedyk, *Zeedyk Ecological Consulting*

Gene Tatum, *Albuquerque Wildlife Federation (AWF)*

Michael Scialdone

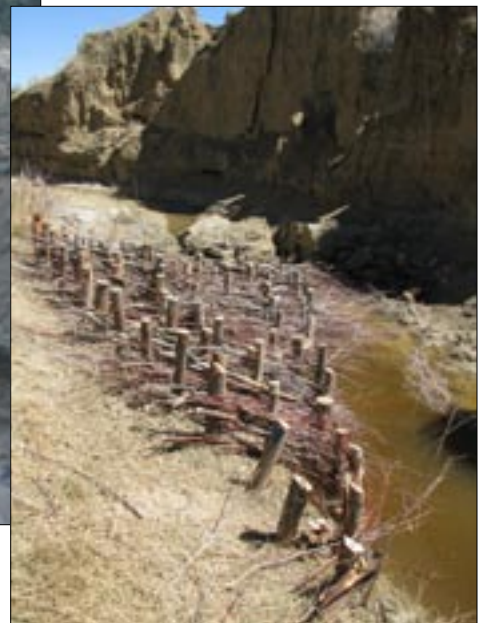
Ken Jones, *El Malpais National Conservation Area*

Matt Schultz, *NMED*

Barbara Johnson, *Rio Puerco Alliance*

We met at the AWF camping site and toured most of the Reaches we will be working on. We started at the site where AWF had been working over the previous weekend, putting in baffles and weirs.

This site is a natural “nick point” and therefore appropriate for work. AWF has been working at the site for several years and in that time has raised the bed 4 feet. This has been an additive process. They use rock after every storm, creating weirs and baffles. The weirs control the grade and the baffles redirect the water. So far this process has added 300 ft of sinuosity to the channel and expanded the floodplain.



[ Above] The area in which AWF has been working. [Right] One of the wicker weirs they put in in April. (Photos courtesy of Matt Schultz.)

Slowing down the water has created a wicking action into old and newly formed point bars. AWF has planted willows in some sites, and some have colonized on their own. Vegetation is needed to hold the clay particles (rock structures can't hold them). Even if AWF was to stop work now, they have still started the restoration process. Bill was explaining how you "can change the landscape with your bare hands if you know how." Even with minimal tools, we can improve the wilderness quality of the area with stream restoration.

### **Restoration Funds**

We discussed the three pots of money we have to improve Cebolla Canyon: \$159,111 from the State River Ecosystem Restoration Initiative (RERI), \$265,239 from the EPA through NMED's Wetlands Program, and \$360,000 that the BLM is receiving from Stimulus money for road work in the Canyon.

It was suggested that the Stimulus money could be used for:

- New riparian pastures.
- Road improvements.
- Fencing crews.
- Cattle guard.

We discussed that the BLM stimulus funds could be used to improve the roads through maintenance or construction of new routes away from the wetter sections of the valley, and the RERI money could be used to reclaim the discontinued roads.

We also discussed maintaining existing fencing, repairing the fence between the two riparian pastures (in Reach 7), and putting in new fencing near Reach 4 to form two an additional buffer. BLM will take care of grazing management and work with the permittees, who appear to be amenable to restoration work. Improving the uplands in the area will have positive consequences for the watershed. The BLM offered to map what fencing is needed.

Under the terms of the Stimulus Act, BLM must hire new employees in Term positions and target their hiring in local communities; they can't use existing BLM crews. Mixing of money is not allowed so the work must be defined by time or task. This will probably take some time to accomplish, but the crews will probably not be needed until the NEPA is completed.

### **Road Work**

We discussed improving the existing road:

- We would potentially need to allow heavy equipment into Wilderness Areas.
- No NEPA is required if it is just maintenance.
- The road is within the NCA management plan.
- Any work must make the road up to standard.
- We can use rocks from the road for restoration structures. We need to make sure these do not get buried during maintenance. If they need to be moved a distance, we can establish rock staging areas that would be helpful during the restoration.
- We need to add Wilderness boundaries to more a detailed map so we can determine if we will have Wilderness issues (Matt is doing this).

We may need to relocate the existing road in Reach 0 away from the wetter areas in the valley center to the toe slope of the valley side. One option for some areas of the road in Reach 0 instead of moving them, would be draining them using porous fill structures. The structures are built with filter fabric and cobble and water flows through them. Porous fill structures use 6" cobble, making 1/3 of the area porous. As a failsafe, we could set culverts above the porous fill structure. Many benefits from this work would be found downstream.

Another option:

- Make a two-track road at the toe of the slope with rolling dips.
- It can be self-draining with grade reversals.

At the low water crossing, we need grade control. There are lots of materials available at the site.

#### **Reach 4**

This is a pivotal section for restoration work. We need to level prominent ridges in the valley.

We may need to move the road by the springs to along the slope. We need to determine where to put the road so it won't affect the wetlands or the springs. The route between the wilderness road and the springs is critical.

There is plenty of rock along the road for restoration structures (multiple sizes).

Sand is coming from the irrigation ditch/gully. If we remove the dams, we will return water and sediment to the valley. We need to:

- Use the sand to fill erosional features in the wet meadow.
- Use sediment as a resource.



*Walking on one of berms. (Photo courtesy of Matt Schultz.)*

Or we could try to pick the ideal site to breach the ditch and design another plug to create another pond. Right now the current pond is functioning as a sediment plug in the valley.

#### **Reach 0**

The work here should be done incrementally. Among other things, we need to remove berms/diversion dams. Sediment can be a resource. We need to use it that way. We shouldn't use culverts though, as they concentrate and accelerate flow.

Is it worth removing the 1<sup>st</sup> dam at the upstream end? We will have the same channel length either way. We should

prioritize dam removal based on time, labor, and equipment required, plus potential benefit.

Lots of drainages are coming into this area. If we add water to the valley without adding wetland plants, we may create headcuts. We need to consider ways to avoid this. We need to connect elevations.

### **Consultations and Reconnaissance**

We have a number of archaeological sites in the area, including old dams and ditches from the homesteading era:

- There are 4 dams in Reach 0 alone.
- The corral in Reach 4 is part of the cultural resources in the area.
- All are more than 50 years old.
- How many are representative of a culture and time?



*Corrals in Reach 4. (Photo courtesy of Matt Schultz.)*

Before moving the existing road, we need an archaeological survey to determine where resources and potential routes are for relocation. At the same time, we could clear areas for removing rocks to be used in restoration structures.

There is currently no open water, which would provide a hemi-marsh habitat for wildlife. We might look at it from a macro level and as an ecosystem restoration project and consider doing a wildlife assessment to determine if it would be reasonable to re-introduce some wildlife, like frogs, mice, muskrat, or gophers. We decided that it would be good to have representation from State Game and Fish on the Steering Committee so we can discuss this further.

We discussed the need for:

- Parallel cross-sections or a total station to generate a contour map.
- More campsites upstream to reduce travel time.

We determined that Bill Z should do the recon first, and ID opportunities for work. We considered that other tributaries (like Sand Canyon) could be treated. We talked about getting wilderness staff on site trips to help us minimize wilderness issues. Matt said he would setup an FTP site for central distribution of material.

We agreed that the next Steering Committee meeting should be in July. We will try to get representation from Game & Fish and the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance by then.