

**Comanche Creek Working Group Meeting: December 6, 2007; 10:00 am – 2:45 pm**

**Location: Santa Fe National Forest Espanola Ranger District Office, Espanola, NM**

***In attendance:***

- Mike Bain, The Quivira Coalition, Santa Fe, NM
- Tamara Gadzia, The Quivira Coalition, Santa Fe, NM
- Genevieve Head, Cabezon Consulting, Santa Fe, NM
- Scott Draney, NM Dept. of Game and Fish
- Steve Carson, Rangeland Hands, Santa Fe, NM
- Craig Sponholtz, Dryland Solutions, Santa Fe, NM
- Ron Gervason, Taos SWCD, Taos, NM
- George Long, Questa Ranger District, Questa, NM
- Bill Zeedyk, Zeedyk Ecological Consulting, Sandia Park, NM

***Discussion of May 2007 willow cutting planting success and functionality of mini-exlosures assessment by Bill Zeedyk, QC staff and volunteers in July 2007:***

- Excellent survival of willows, some better than others
- Best survival if planted at the bank full mark
- Discussion of anaerobic soils and why willows on Comanche Creek grow best at bankfull; rooting zone of plants must have access to aerobic soil.
- No survival of willow cuttings planted at water level
- Marginal survival of those planted above bankfull
- Need to establish planting PROTOCOL for volunteers with better oversight and pre-mark bankfull
- The bottom wire of elk exclosures should only be 1 ½ feet above the ground and no more than 3.5 feet above the channel bed where it crosses the creek
- Tamara will update the protocol and graphic for building exclosures and include willow planting.
- Only the first 26 exclosures were assessed with each having a maintenance determination; vanes were assessed up to No. 19
- A beaver had taken up residency down by the original mini-exlosures but will need to be re-located. According to George Long, the area needs to have another 5 years of willow restoration before there will be a sustainable food source for the beavers
- A discussion ensued of where and how to re-locate the beaver

***Discussion of middle reach vane and treatment assessment by Bill Zeedyk, QC staff and volunteers in July 2007:***

- The original assessment of meander 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> terrace bank erosion identified 46 treatment sites and utilizing 96 post vanes as per the 404/401 permit
- The July 2007 survey of previously installed structures identified the need for an additional 15 post vanes and one new treatment site.
- Each post vane and vane set was assessed for treatment effectiveness and maintenance need and note on paper.
- Post vane design and set layout was refined during the July workshop. The distance between posts was lowered from ~ 18 inches to 12 inches and more fill material or posts at apex to prevent end running at high water and speed-up bank full bench development. The 12 inch spacing lends itself to the actual size of rocks that people generally can collect and carry by hand and therefore stay put between and behind the posts.
- 105 post vanes have been installed on the middle reach but there are still 8 that need to be added to current sets and 2 from the original assessment, that make their own set. 36 vanes need some form of maintenance

- Vanes are viewed in terms of “sets per erodible site”.
- Bill assessed the effectiveness of those vanes with J-hooks. J-hooks are designed to create habitat for fish. **Effectiveness dependent on location within the riffle. J-hooks work best on the steeper or run part of the riffle. At riffle top, J-hooks may actually catch sediment and even widen the stream.**
- **Need to drive last posts in “hook” section down to stream bed level.**
- **Some “hooks’ will be taken out of some ineffective J-hook structures.**
- When working with volunteers to install vanes, groups need to stay close by and leap-frog to the next vane with 4-5 crew members (up to 7 if planting willows). Installation contractors would supervise the groups only and not do the work. Provide each group with a laminated outline of how vanes are installed.
- **Discussion on using 4-wheeler with cart to move rock. Cannot use vehicles near the creek that leave tracks because others may think it is open for them. Horses with car hood or other sled-type device suggested. Need to research draft animal usage techniques.**
- There are plenty of posts at Shuree Lodge for completing the middle reach.
- **978 volunteer hours given to Comanche Creek during July and September events.**
- **Need to make sure volunteers understand the physical and caloric demands of vane installation work (especially large groups that are managed by outside organizations—like the Sierra Club group of July 07)**
- **Most of remaining grant funds will be directed toward road work, which needs to be prioritized.**
- **Make sure all understand the any archeological values of work site and material contained therein. Archeological site material may not be used in restoration work.**
- **Need to flag any archeological site within 50ft of work site.**

***Upper Comanche Creek Road work for 2008 discussion:***

- Archeological Survey is complete and on-file with the Forest Service
- Most of the remaining funds for the EPA 319 grant will go to this work and we are waiting to hear about additional funding from the Clark Family Foundation.
- Need to flag any sensitive sites before work begins...scheduled for the 1<sup>st</sup> week in July
- 2 High priority crossings on the list at Clayton Camp and in the Upper Watershed at Foreman Creek – would need to purchase and haul in boulders (Carson will prepare cost estimate) – possible source – FS needs to clear this with official ok.
- Once funding has been established a priority plan for road work will be created.

***Discussion of La Belle Creek drainage headcuts:***

- Uplands Transect #11 is located between the left and right forks of the La Belle Creek drainage and to get there one walks up La Belle Creek from Comanche Creek and takes the left fork. In 2001 UTM coordinates were taken at the top of each head cut. An updated set of coordinates were taken in September 2007 and compared. Mapping shows there were originally 6 head cuts and now there are 14. The left fork of La Belle continues to unzip. This area should be considered for a future project. The group discussed how headcuts form (in waves of 3), connect, unzip and de-water meadows.

**IN 2008 the Forest Service will review the Grazing Program for the Carson National Forest**

***2007 Rio Grande Cutthroat Trout Reintroduction Program:***

- Scott Draney provided an overview of the programs progress
- May – August ~40,000 (20,000 suckers) fish shocked/removed from Comanche Creek above the fish barrier and all the side drainages only about 350 of these were the Native RGCT....the rest were non-natives

- August – poisoning of fish successful – population was checked in October/November with none found above the barrier. There were fish below barrier which indicates no major piscicide effect on fish in the lower reach.
- Possible reintroduction of Natives RGCT, Longnose dace and Rio Grande chub in 2008. Non-native population will be checked one more time before decision is made
- No decision has been made on when angling seasons will be re-opened

***Shuree Lodge Discussion:***

- Inventory of cedar posts and fencing supplies. Need to haul out 2005 Flood fencing and have recycled. 123 long trimmed posts, 127 short trimmed posts and ~212 uncut posts. Enough to complete structures and maintenance in 2008.
- Green posts of same year work best as they tend not to splinter as much as dryer posts when driven
- The lodge has been officially condemned. Volunteer groups can still camp behind the lodge and use the porch but cannot go inside. There is a new well and water will be available on-site. Will need to have port-a-potties brought in for work events. Will we bring these in? Need to work that out well before July 08.
- Discussion on how the re-building of the lodge and its purpose. Build a functional interim group camping site for volunteers. Contact Tom Udall...funding, support from various organizations etc.

***Pasture Fencing Discussion:***

- Forest Service has GIS data on the actual pasture fences on the Valle Vidal and George Long will provide that information to The Quivira Coalition so we can incorporate that data into our project maps.
- All fences on the Valle Vidal are now considered “historic” – the wire can be removed, but the posts must remain. Bill thought removing the wire would be a really good volunteer project especially along the Vidal Creek corridor and Grass Creek.

***NEPA – Categorical Exclusion Discussion and restoration work for 2008:***

- George Long cannot find the NEPA document relating to our habitat restoration work in the Comanche Creek Watershed. He has a call into Ron Thibedeau. It may have been inadvertently discarded. The new District Ranger, Genevieve Masters, will decide if and what work can proceed. Once that decision is made, if needed Gen Head and Mike Bain will proceed in producing an Environmental Assessment using the Categorical Exclusion template. Quivira will probably do one for future projects.
- [http://www.adotenvironmental.com/EEG\\_common/documents/ceguidelines.asp](http://www.adotenvironmental.com/EEG_common/documents/ceguidelines.asp)
- RERI Grant Channel Realignment was originally part of the EPA Comanche II Plan, but was not included on the 404/401 permit for the middle reach vanes and may be included as part of the original restoration plan

***Gold Creek Restoration Discussion:***

- Gold Creek Restoration will include the removal of culvert and embankment with grade control structures. Possibly a cross-vane – would need to inhaul boulders. Possible source at the Colorado Border or Moly Corp (could donate?). Could make a log cross-vane if can cut materials on site. George thought would be ok.
- Embankment material would be put on Gold Creek Road
- Equipment would include one or more track-hoe, front end loader, dozer and /or back-hoe.
- Culvert removed from site and recycled
- Mike and Bill will write an application for the 404/401 permit to be submitted by the FS to the Corps of Engineers

- The Gold Creek Bridge and chunk-o-concrete can be removed – George can clear this but Steve Carson will not implement until there is written FS consent. The bridge is not an historic object.

**63 acre large exclosure removal and re-design:**

- The removal and re-creation of a smaller exclosure along the creek has been approved by the FS. 3 Sides of the exclosure will re-main as part of this exclosure.
- Remaining wire and posts will be salvaged for future smaller exclosures.
- Most of the wire is in good shape and would be cut and rolled in 100 ft. lengths
- Posts can remain until time and resources become available to remove
- Good project for Santa Clara Fire Crew, NM Tout and Trout-Unlimited. Best if done all at once

**Other topics discussed:**

- Developing a “Friends of Comanche Creek” Group
- FS AOI and Herding on the Valle Vidal – need for improvement; need to understand specific herding needs of the allotments
- FS Road 1950 Culverts – Bill identified specific locations for more culverts so that the out-flow is on to a buffered zone instead of right into the creek (Little Costilla and Comanche)
- FS stores some removed culverts at removal site for future use logistical purposes
- How Forest Closures may affect work schedule next year. Need to protect both TQC and contractors. Need to address this issue in contracts, some type of “force majeure” clause may be developed
- George Long and Tamara Gadzia reviewed the 404 permit application for the Channel Realignment
- Re-read of uplands monitoring transect and visual assessment in September 2006
- Road work and Gold Creek archeological clearance on-file at Questa Ranger District
- Geomorphology Surveys: Note from Abe Franklin: Abe, Art, Ryan Weiss, George Long, Greg Miller repeated all of the geomorphology work that has been done in the past. That includes two Rosen level II survey reaches conducted by my co-workers in 2000, nine cross sections established by John Pittenger in 2001, and two Rosgen level II survey reaches conducted by the Comanche Creek Working Group (me, Steve Vrooman, Debra Myrin, and Nansy Carson) in 2005. There are a total of four Rosgen level II survey reaches (with about 2500 feet of longitudinal profile data, four pebble counts, and sixteen cross sections) and six cross sections not within Rosgen level II areas. The nine cross sections established by John Pittenger also all have substrate data, and some of them (generally, the ones on cut banks) have bank erosion pin data. Data can be downloaded from:
  - [ftp://ftp.nmenv.state.nm.us/upload/Comanche\\_Creek\\_geomorphology.zip](ftp://ftp.nmenv.state.nm.us/upload/Comanche_Creek_geomorphology.zip).
  - Analysis will come later. Ryan Weiss is planning to use some of the data for his graduate work.

**2008 Requested Restoration work on Comanche for the first 3 weeks of July, 2008 for EPA 319, RERI and NM Community FND Grants:**

- Gold Creek 404/401 Permit Application and submittal to Corps of Engineers by George Long
- **EPA 319 Grant – Comanche II Roads Work – Steve Carson, Craig Sponholtz & Mike Bain**
- **RERI – Comanche**
  - Geomorphology Survey – Van Clothier, Avery & Volunteers
  - Bank Erosion Assessment – Van Clothier, Avery & Volunteers
  - Vegetation Monitoring – Steve Vrooman and Volunteers
  - Photo point monumenting – before, during and after implementation – Mike Bain and Veronica
  - Channel Realignment – Steve Carson, Bill Zeedyk, Craig Sponholtz and others as needed
- **RERI – Gold Creek**
  - Geomorphology – Van Clothier and volunteers
  - Vegetation Monitoring – Steve Vrooman, Avery & volunteers

- Photo point monumenting – before, during and after implementation – Mike Bain and Veronica
- Project implementation by Steve Carson, Bill Zeedyk, Craig Sponholtz and others as needed
- Gold Creek Bridge Removal
- **Complete Assessment of Lower Reach** – Bill, Tamara, Volunteers
- **Implementation of Enclosure Repairs** - Trout Organizations and Santa Clara Fire-Crew
- **De-construction of Large Enclosure and re-build of smaller structure** – Trout groups and Santa Clara Pueblo Fire Crew
- **Establishment of Photo point Monuments along entire length of both Middle reach and Lower Reach** – Avery and Volunteers
- **New Mexico Community Foundation - Volunteer Work Weekend for Post Vane installation and maintenance** – Steve Carson, Bill Zeedyk, Craig Sponholtz, Quivira Staff and volunteers
- **Photo documentation of La Belle drainage headcuts** – establish photo point monuments
- **Photo documentation of Springwagon Creek** – establish photo point monuments
- September 2008 1<sup>st</sup> week – Re-take Upland Monitoring Photos; follow-up vegetation survey for 319 grant
- October – Update Comanche Creek WRAS
- November – Complete Comanche II EPA 319 Final Report

END OF NOTES

Notes compiled by Tamara Gadzia and Michael Bain  
Submitted: December 14, 2007

**Comanche Creek Working Group Meeting Agenda December 6<sup>th</sup>, 2007  
Espanola Ranger District Office**

**10:00 AM: Call to Order**

**Review Work Completed in 2007**

Vane Installation

2006 work assessment on middle and part of lower reach

Vanes installed, maintenance and repaired

Volunteers: who and hrs etc.

404/401 permit report

Uplands Monitoring

Visual survey

Transect Data results

Geomorphology Survey

Review of available data

Trout Reintroduction Progress Report

Scott Draney

Inventory at Shuree

Posts

Shuree Lodge issues

Lodge availability

New water Line

Port-A-Potties

Old fencing materials

Leave it better than we found it

**Comments and Concerns**

**11:00 AM:**

**2008 Work Discussion – 1<sup>st</sup> 3 weeks of July 2008**

EPA Grant – Matching funds from NM Community Foundation

Completion with Roads Work

Short-term camping at Clayton Camp for Steve Carson and assistants

Completion of last 10 vanes and 36 for maintenance

4 wheelers for hauling rock/post to site

Certified driver

Crossing the creek etc

Volunteer Work Weekend

Repair Elk Enclosures lower reach

Vanes middle and lower reach

Complete lower reach assessment and re-assess middle reach

Completed Roads work assessment

Riparian Vegetation Monitoring

Retake Upland Photo Points

Retake of specific photos

La Belle Headcuts

Upland Erosion Control Structures

Springwagon Creek  
Selected vane treatment sites  
Establishment of monument photo points

**12:00 PM: 30 Minute Break**

**12:30 PM:**

**RERI Grant**

404/401 permit for creation of new channel and structures on Gold Creek  
Make sure all archeological clearance is complete  
Geomorphology Surveys  
Vegetation Surveys  
Implementation of project  
Establishment of monument photo points for Comanche Channel and Gold Creek

**Other Considerations for Discussion**

Removal of 62.5 acre elk enclosure on Middle Reach (who originally constructed this?)  
FS AOI for Valle Vidal – How can we help?  
Friends of Comanche Creek – volunteer group  
Future projects:  
    Middle Reach mini-exclosures  
    Restoration of La Belle headcuts  
    Above grassy bank erosion  
    Little Costilla  
    Springwagon Creek  
    Assessment of Pasture Fencing  
        Old fencing  
        Maintenance of fencing  
        Mapping of fencing  
        Funding Sources  
        – CFRP?  
        -Forest Products Lab Funding  
    FS Road 1950 consideration  
    Others?

**Comments and Concerns**

**2:00 PM: Adjourn**