

# MIDDLE RIO GRANDE CONSERVANCY DISTRICT

## BELEN WATERSHED PLANNING DOCUMENTS & EA/EIS

### PREPROPOSAL MEETING

MARCH 11, 2021

9:00 – 10:30 am

### Teleconference/Video Conference

The following are names of individuals and their organizations that were participants in the meeting:

Richard Deloia, MRGCD	Judy McSweeney, MRGCD
Alejandro Riano, AECOM	Katie Mittmann, Weston Solutions, Inc
Alicia Lopez, MRGCD	Kent Delph, Delph Engineering
Brian Wahlin, West Consultants	Lisa Howard, SWCA Environ. Consultants
Chris Rodriguez, HDR, Inc.	Mike Bellitto, Golder Associates
Cobin Olin, WHPacific Inc	Pamela Fanelli, MRGCD
Cody Stropki, SWCA Environ. Consultants	Philip Bredfeldt, Weston Solutions, Inc
Craig Hoover, Bohannon Huston, Inc	Reynold Kraft, Holistic Eng. & Land Mgmt., Inc
David "Sonny" Cooper, Weston Solutions, Inc	Robert Scrivo, CONSOR Engineers
Eric Johnson, NV5	Roger Pihl, Golder Associates
Gundar Peterson, Daniel B Stephens & Assoc Inc	Sandra West, Daniel B. Stephens & Assoc Inc
James Lopez, Wilson & Company, Inc	Sarah Beck, Tetra Tech
Jason Casuga, MRGCD	Shelley Freedman, HDR, Inc
Jason Kline, SWCA Environ. Consultants	Tracy Chiado, Wilson & Company, Inc
Jean Kugel, Golder Associates	Tyler Ashton, Wilson & Company, Inc
Jenifer Andrews, MRGCD	Walt Kuhn, Tetra Tech
Jordan Chavez, HDR Engineering	Ayona Brown, NRCS

### **AGENDA ITEM NO. 1 – Good Morning/Introductions (9:00 am)**

9:00 - MRGCD Chief Operating Officer, Jason Casuga opened the meeting and allowed a few minutes for more participants to join.

9:05 – Jason Casuga began the meeting by explaining that the MRGCD is recording and having an MRGCD team member take notes in order to capture all that is discussed in today's meeting. Jason assumes that there will be questions from contractors that will need to be answered which is also a reason for recording of the meeting.

Jason opened the meeting up to the participants to introduce themselves starting from the top of the attendee list which are identified above.

9:12 – Jason shared his screen to show the Meeting Agenda and proceeded to give a general overview of the items on the Agenda and who would be speaking to each item. He mentioned that Ayona Brown from the NRCS who was not in the meeting yet would be going over Agenda Item No. 2 as soon as she joined.

MRGCD Chief Procurement Officer, Richard Deloia would be going over the Agenda Item no. 3. Jason mentioned that as they would be going through the procurement process, they will be dealing with Richard exclusively and he will pass on questions to the rest of the team.

Jason would be going over the Agenda item no. 4. He mentioned that it would be a little different as to the Phases and noted that the Technical Scope outlines what we can do, not all the things we have to do.

Jason decided to elevate Agenda item no. 5 in effort to give Ayona Brown more time to join the meeting. He is hoping to be done with the meeting in the allotted amount of time ending at 10:30 and mentions that we may not be able to get through all the material in 1 1/2 hours.

#### **AGENDA ITEM NO. 5 –Site Visit Discussion (9:14)**

Jason Casuga continues with the discussion on the site visit that is tentatively scheduled for next Friday, March 19<sup>th</sup>. He mentioned that everything that is gone over today will be available to the participants. Jason wanted to gauge on the participants feelings on the site visit. He explained that they are going to show them some of the major features making sure they understand the area allowing the participants to explore the area as much as possible for their proposals.

Jason opened the meeting up for participants to comment on if Fridays are a good day to schedule and if a 9:00 am or 10:00 am meeting time would be preferred.

Chat Comments from Participants are below:

Eric Johnson - either  
Craig Hoover - 9:00 am  
Jordan Chavez – 9:00 am  
David Cooper - either

After waiting some time for comments Jason announced that the site visit meeting time would be scheduled at 9:00 am. He informed the participants that the MRGCD team would give the general lay of the land but then allow them to drive around. Any follow-up questions that come from the visit the MRGCD can answer. Jason said for them to expect a meeting invite for 9:00 am and that they will meet at the Belen Yard. The location will be included in invite.

9:18 - Jason mentions that this grant is a Watershed Planning Grant from the NRCS that falls under the public law 566. He notes that the NRCS will be in lock step with the

MRGCD as we go through this process. The people who will be reviewing the proposals will be staff from both the NRCS and the MRGCD. This procurement is following the federal procurement procedure for technical engineering and surveying services. Jason points hopes that the participants will notice that in the schedule in the RFP. The dates up to the submittal are pretty much concrete. Everything following is more about the coordination of MRGCD and NRCS staff to meet and do the review together which will prove to be a challenge with circumstances due to COVID. Jason opens to turns over to Richard Deloia to discuss the proposal timeline and requirements.

### **AGENDA ITEM NO. 3 – Proposal Timeline & Requirements (9:21)**

MRGCD Chief Procurement Officer, Richard Deloia starts by referring participants to page 36 of the RFP to see the timeline. Richard goes over the timeline starting today with the site visit for Friday March 19<sup>th</sup>, the deadline to submit questions is April 2<sup>nd</sup>, and states are responses will be no later than April 9<sup>th</sup>. The submissions for the proposals, without pricing and sealed, must be delivered to the MRGCD office by April 30<sup>th</sup> before 10:00 am. Any late proposals cannot be accepted.

Jason stresses that is a proposal is submitted with pricing included, the proposal will be considered non-responsive. Do not submit a proposal with pricing.

Richard continues that needed is one original and five copies. Dropping sealed proposals off to the MRGCD is probably more economical, or they can mail them. Either is acceptable as long as they are received by 10:00 am on April 30<sup>th</sup>. After this date, the proposal evaluation will begin. They are hoping to be flexible with the evaluation scheduled. If needed they will evaluate all the way to May 21<sup>st</sup> and the notification to the finalist by May 27<sup>th</sup>. Oral presentations will start the week of June 14<sup>th</sup>, final rankings on June 22<sup>nd</sup>, at that point they will ask for pricing. Price negotiations will begin June 28<sup>th</sup>, these will go to the MRGCD Board of Directors on July 12<sup>th</sup>, and Notice of Award will be on July 13<sup>th</sup>. Protest period will be July 25<sup>th</sup>.

Jason addresses a question in the chat box from Shelley Freedman who asks,

“The proposal is limited to 50 pages, with the over letter being limited to 2 pages. Is there a limited number of pages for each of the other proposal sections?”

Jason answers that the page count is 50. Richard confirms it has not officially been posted yet but will be posted with answers to questions. Jason addresses another question in the chat box from Jason Kline who asks,

“Does the page count include resumes?”

Jason answers yes, it includes resumes. Richard adds required documents which are ten pages in total including – Campaign Contribution Disclosure Form, Suspension and Debarment Requirement, New Mexico Employees Health Coverage Form, Conflict of Interest Certification, Bidder Statement of Non-Inclusion.

Jason asks for any other questions. With no other questions, he moves forward to Agenda item no. 4.

#### **AGENDA ITEM NO. 4 – Technical Scope of Work (9:24)**

Jason begins with directing participants to page 15 of the RFP.

Phase I – Identify Problem and Determine Directives, by following the NRCS process, the first phase is to identify a problem. The general history of the area is that it has seen some very large storm events causing both private and public damage to infrastructure and closure of I-25. Through the process of going through Phase I other issues may be identified such as landowner conflicts and infrastructure. One of the reasons the MRGCD reached out to the NRCS and looked at this Watershed Study are because of unchecked storm events that has caused massive damage to both MRGCD facilities, public facilities as well as private land.

Jason points out that every phase has some form of public outreach. Asks participants to pay attention to sections that talk about public outreach. This will be one of the first challenges to tackle by means of reaching out to get information from the public given the limitations of typical public meetings.

Phase II - Information Gathering – Jason believes Phase I and II are likely to happen at the same time. The information that the MRGCD can provide and will be available to the contractor that is awarded this contract is: MRGCD drawings for the facilities that are on the study area, Plan and Profile Sheets; Rehab Drawings that Reclamation produced when they operated the system; anything the MRGCD has done that there is a record of such as modification of structures; GIS data of facilities including all center line stationing of all ditches within the study area. There is limited infrastructure at this point in time, will not have all that catalog yet. There is also a Storm Water Management Plan used as basis to apply for the grant will also be provided as information. District structure records cards and some standard drawings for those will be available as well. MRGCD Engineer Division Manager, Alicia Lopez added that gage data: irrigation flow for some of the larger facilities will also be provided.

Jason opened for any questions about data that will be turned over to the awarded contractor. No questions, but Ayona Brown from NRCS stated that she was in the meeting and ready to speak on Agenda no. 2. Jason briefly went over what all had been discussed so far. Jason stresses that the amount of information and types of things that can be looked at encompasses all of the things that can be looked at but not prescriptive that all things apply to the study. What applies will need to be looked at. Jason asks participants to use expertise and knowledge of the area as they evaluate for the proposal preparation.

Phase III – Evaluating and Formulating Alternatives – Jason states that once the problem has been identified this will go into evaluating, formulating, and then also ranking the alternatives ultimately resulting in a recommendation. This recommendation will be balanced with cost, mission, ect. The MRGCD and NRCS will play a key roll in reviewing those alternatives and working on how decision is made with the contractor. Public participation is a theme throughout the process, allowing them to give comments, ideas and concerns, making sure they are documented and included in the process. Many times, ideas are given from the public are helpful in that they are often things that missed or not seen by the technical team.

Jason says an important thing to point out that there will be a formulation of alternatives that will be talked about, he is not sure about how many alternatives they will try to do but to note because this will become a NEPA document, the no-action alternative will be a part of that.

Jason asks participants to pay attention to number 7: Formulate project based on the participants outlined in the NRCS NWPM Parts 501.11 A; 501.12, 505.35. It is very important that during the process to recognize outlines of the NRCS process. These are key.

Phase V – Preparation of Plan-Environmental Document – Jason feels at the end of the day what is needed is a NEPA, environmental document to be determined. Part of the process will help key into the direction needed with NEPA. It will need to be a document that the NRCS can sign off on. Jason opens the discussion about the environmental document to Ayona Brown with the NRCS.

## **AGENDA ITEM NO. 2 – NRCS Roles & Responsibilities (9:35)**

Ayona Brown begins with the overall purpose of the project being to develop a Watershed Plan – Environmental Document so it will either be an environmental assessment or an environmental impact statement which will be determined through the process. Most do end up being an environmental assessment, but they do not require if it is limited, it depends on what concerns are discovered in the watershed. A big part of NEPA for NRCS in this program is public participation, this includes people who live within this watershed and also federal, state and local agencies, and members of government. The successful bidder will be working on a public participation plan that will define interaction with the public. This is important to the NRCS NEPA process since they traditionally work with landowners. Now under this program they are also working with a sponsor that is a government entity with some authority in the watershed at large. Must make sure that the resident agrees and wants. The biggest concern in this watershed is flood protection. Not only looking at flooding and how it affects the MRGCD, but how it affects the surrounding landscape.

Ayona also states that this project is not looking for a single fix in one area, but something more holistic and can be managed over a long period of time. Also, they are not interested in increasing the risks for the people who live within the community. They are hoping to come up with a solution, a preferred alternative that addresses a resource concern without increasing a risk. In the development of alternatives, what will be seen are some that rise to the top as being more feasible over others, the ones most environmentally feasible and economically sensible is going to most likely be the preferred alternative unless there is a reason for an exception. Whether it is an environmental assessment or an environmental impact statement that affects the scope of analysis in Phase II, the NRCS is looking for the participants to use environmental planners, biologists, etc. to go out to collect data to truly see what the resources are and what species need to survive even after this project is completed.

Ayona continues that in the process of developing a Watershed Plan – Environmental Document with the result of Phase V will be a Draft Watershed Plan – Environmental

Document that will be reviewed by a national NRCS team twice, the first in a public meeting and then one following. This has been the NRCS process before NEPA was a law. Ayona proceeded to ask if anyone had any questions. No questions were asked.

Jason states that it is important to describe the long game for the NRCS and MRGCD in that this is the first step in three major steps for the District. The desire is that the program will fund the improvements which is one of the benefits of this program. This step starts with the Watershed Planning Study and NEPA document. The next step would be a Design Phase taking the identified alternative as a separate contracted action to have that alternative designed. The third step would be taking the design, working through the NRCS, and have it funded for construction. Jason asks to note that the level of detail is truly a planning study that is an alternative and that there is a next step that would then invest the resources needed to design. And then the next step would be seeking the resources to construct the design.

Ayona agrees, that currently we are in Phase I planning, Phase II design, Phase II is construction. There is no obligation on either party's part to move into the next phase until the first phase is satisfactorily complete. Do need an approved Watershed Plan – Environmental Document that is approved by the chief of NRCS. The full design will be developed in the Design Phase, Phase II, but they are expecting to see a concept design in this first phase, about 10%. There will need to be a cost estimate associated with each alternative. Some will be studied in detail with tighter cost estimate, and some will be limited and with broader cost estimates. NRCS are accustomed to seeing 30% plus or minus. They will need to be costs associated with what is proposed to add to the cost ratio for the project which needs to be above 1, that's the federal requirement in order to move to the next phase. They do not want to put in a great project that is going to cost the community or the people doing the operation and maintenance more money which is a local concern.

Jason reiterates for the participants to take note of the Phase V - National Watershed Program Manual (NWPM) sections 501.11 A; 501.12, 505.35 and the opening statement of that phase letter a.

Jason asks Alicia to share her screen showing the areal map of the area locating it the southernmost exit from Belen, South to the MRGCD's Feeder 3 facility, from the top of the mesa (this line is not exact, there is a high point where water moves back toward the east), and eastern boundary ending at the river. This does not include anything on the westside of the river. The Watershed studies have a square mile limit and made sense by the infrastructure. This will be provided and will go over the features at the site meeting.

9:46 - Jason opens the meeting for any questions:

Question: Lisa Howard asked about the forms. A couple of the forms has a lot of lead in information before the signature pages. Can they just keep it to the signature pages? Or do they need to include all the information pages?

Answer: Richard – that only the signature pages are needed.

Question: Walt Kuhn asked on page 17 under F where it says conduct a sediment survey of the reservoir including submerged and aerated sediment. Is there a specific reservoir referred to there?

Answer: Jason replied no at this point and time no reservoir exists. Good example of things that could be done versus what needs to be done.

Question: Mike Bellitto asked on the requirements for the Geotech and geologic surveys. In a couple of places it says all work must be performed by a professional geologist. In other places it says a PE must sign off. He was wondering if it would be acceptable to have a PE who specializes in Geotech engineering replace the geologist for that requirement.

Answer: Jason answered that from his standpoint as an engineer, yes. If that is a Professional Engineer with a specialization in Geotech work, he didn't believe that the NRCS would have a problem with that but referred to Ayona.

Ayona replied that would be okay, but the NRCS likes to see interdisciplinary teams for these projects just so everything is not being accessed purely from an engineering standpoint. If there is not a geologist available, then using a geotechnical engineer would be fine. Does have to be signed by a PE in New Mexico because NM does not have a licensing path for geologists. They would be flexible but would like to see a geologist involved.

Question: Shelley Freedman: asked about the page limits. The proposal itself is limited to 50 pages and the cover letter is limited to two pages. Wondering if there is a specific page limit for each of the other proposal sections?

Answer: Jason said that there is not a limit.

Jason encouraged the participants to ask questions now as opposed to out on the field since questions answered out on the field cannot be documented as well. Jason requests that all questions after the field visit be sent to Richard DeBoia and he will answer those questions in that matter to insure everything is transparent providing all questions and answers to everyone. Jason gave a few minutes of silence for any remaining questions. No questions were asked. Jason stated that all questions from this meeting with their answers would be posted on the website as well as any new questions. Jason asked Richard, Ayona, and any MRGCD staff if there was anything else to add, with nothing more to add, Jason thanked the participants for time and interest.

#### **AGENDA ITEM NO 6 – End Meeting (9:54)**

Meeting adjourned