

Endangered Species on the Rio Grande – What can be done?

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Happy Halloween !



Albuquerque Bernalillo County
Water Utility Authority

A river is more than an amenity, it is a treasure.
~ Oliver Wendell Holmes

“The Water Authority worked in partnership with Wild Earth Guardians to establish this agreement because we believe in promoting a healthy river and Bosque, and in supporting endangered species recovery, the environmental pool is the right thing to do.”

-Art De La Cruz, Chairman of the Water Utility Board





Albuquerque Bernalillo County Water Utility Authority

- The ABCWUA has a separate Biological Opinion for the Drinking Water Project
- We complete our own monitoring and habitat restoration projects for compliance with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- This will continue regardless of Collaborative Program status or changes
- We participate in the Middle Rio Grande Endangered Species Collaborative Program





Rio Grande silvery minnow collected September 30, 2011 at ABCWUA fishway



Egg monitoring at diversion.



Middle Rio Grande Endangered Species Collaborative Program

16 Signatories

3 Federal Agencies

4 State Agencies

4 Pueblos

Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District

Albuquerque Bernalillo County Water Utility Authority

City of Albuquerque

University of New Mexico

Rate Payers Association (Agriculture)

Middle Rio Grande Endangered Species Collaborative Program

- Formed in 2003, in response to Biological Opinion
- Funded as high as \$12.8 million in 2009
- Recent years, funding very reduced
- Managed by Executive Committee (Signatories)
- Uses work groups, for example Habitat Restoration, Data Base Management
- Cost share participation by non-federal entities
- Administered by Bureau of Reclamation



Albuquerque Bernalillo County
Water Utility Authority

Middle Rio Grande Endangered Species Program Accomplishments

- Physical Habitat Restoration and Management
- Water Management
- Population Augmentation (minnow only)
- Water Quality Management (minnow only)
- Research, Monitoring and Adaptive Management
- Public Outreach
- Program Management





Backwater features provide shallow, warm water low velocity habitat

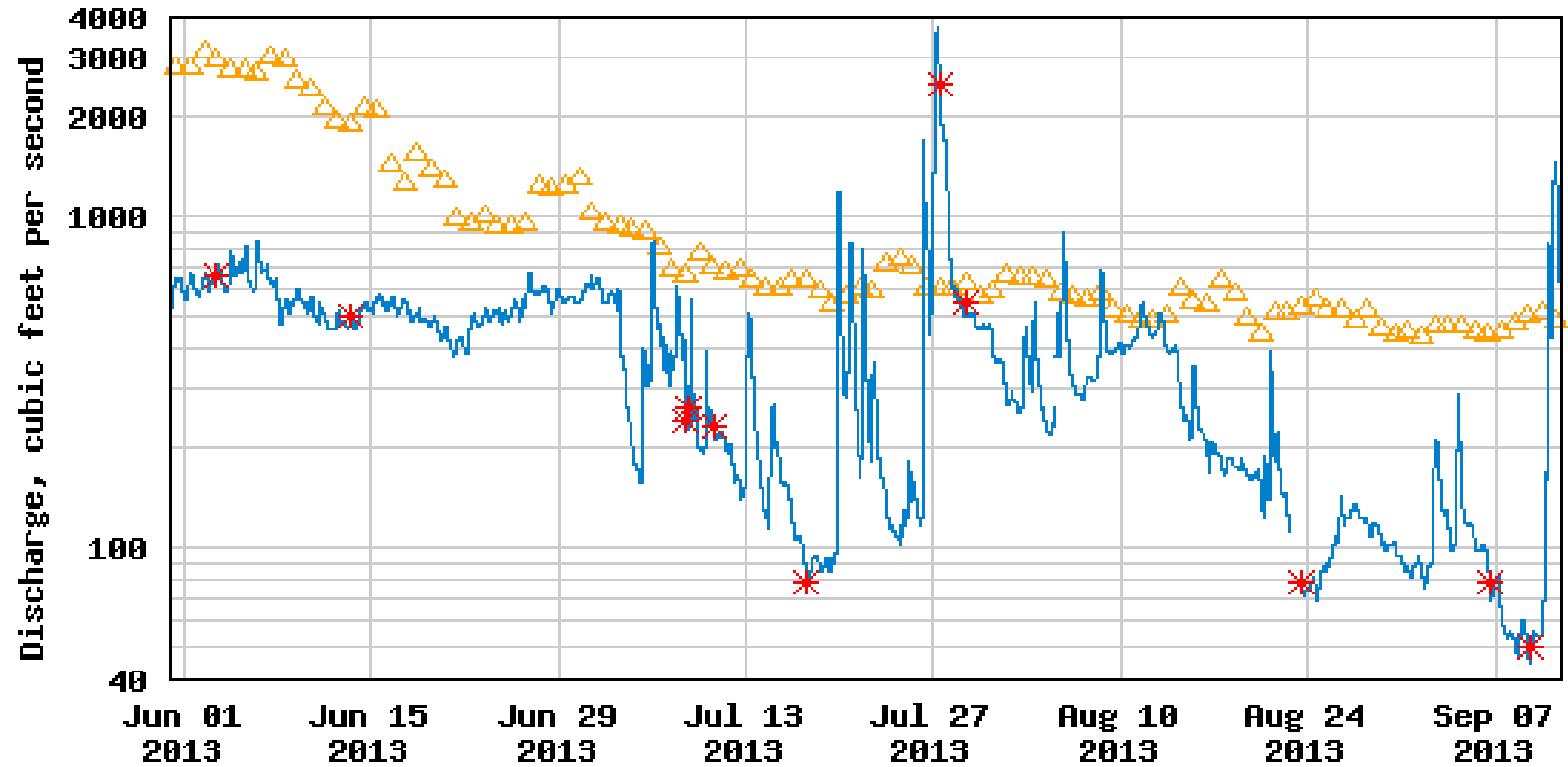
Middle Rio Grande Endangered Species Collaborative Program Difficulties

- CPUE/Fish Monitoring Dispute
- Long Term Planning
- Management change to third party
- Moving to strong adaptive management needed
- Hydrologic reality
- Federal funding decreasing over time
- Additional endangered species and exotic species





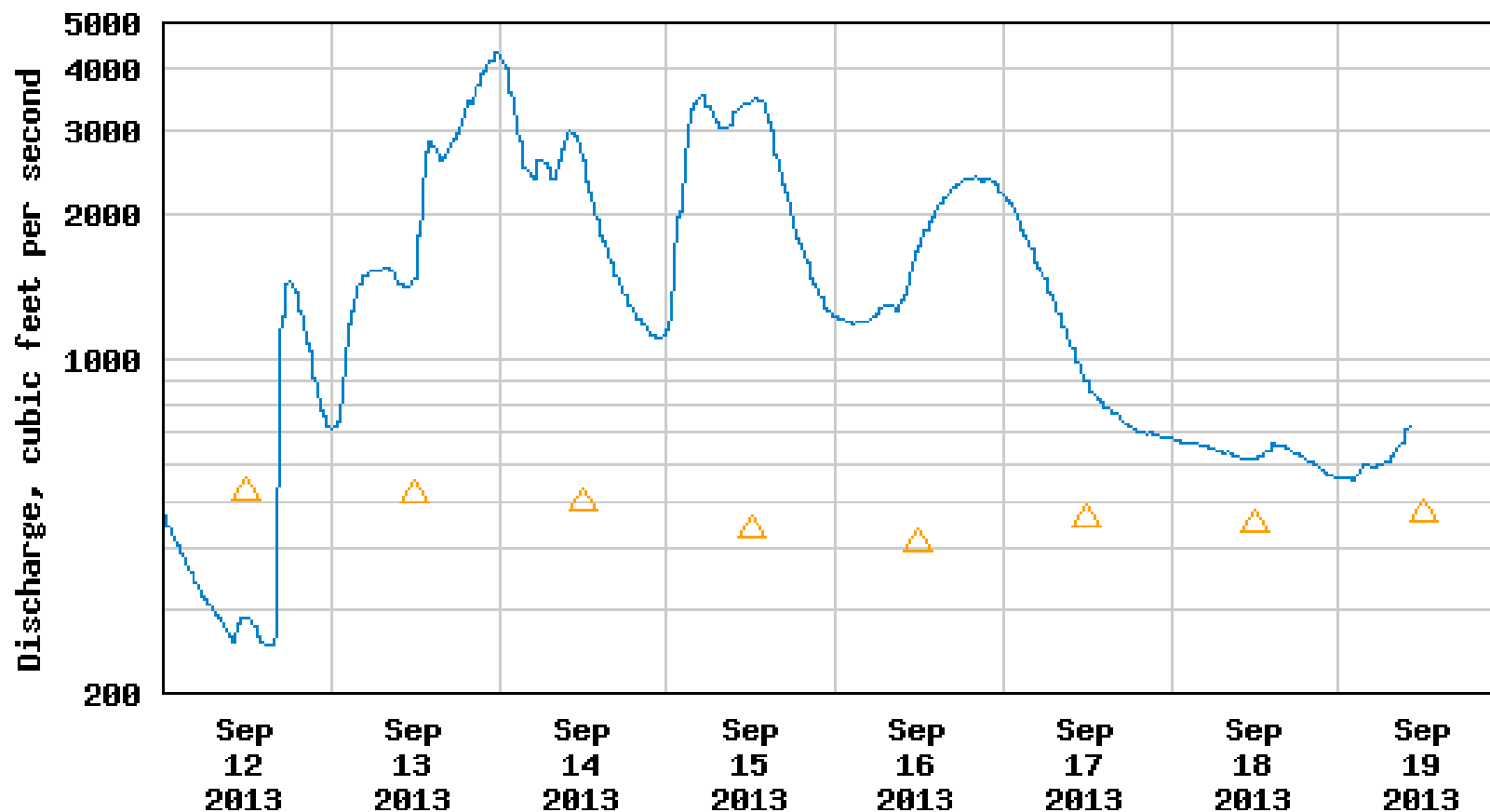
USGS 08330000 RIO GRANDE AT ALBUQUERQUE, NM



----- Provisional Data Subject to Revision -----

- △ Median daily statistic (39 years)
- * Measured discharge
- Discharge

USGS 08330000 RIO GRANDE AT ALBUQUERQUE, NM



---- Provisional Data Subject to Revision ----

△ Median daily statistic (39 years) — Discharge

ABCWUA Water Management History

- Leased San Juan-Chama water for many years to BOR before Drinking Water Project
- Peak runoff assistance to improve fish spawn in some years
- Support recreational and fisheries use on the Rio Chama and Rio Grande
- Adjust water diversion rates and times, even to cessation of diversion if curtailment flows occur in the river
- Cease diversion for a period of time during spawning periods if requested by Fish and Wildlife Service
- Support BOR Supplemental water program with leased water in some years



Agreement Between Plaintiffs and ABCWUA

- Agreement for reservoir storage in Abiquiu Reservoir
- ABCWUA has storage rights for SJC water up to 170,900 acre-feet
- Settlement Agreement provides for ABCWUA to suballot up to 30,000 acre-feet of SJC water for use as an Environmental Pool
- Water for this storage (“Conservation Water”) to be acquired by plaintiffs through lease, purchase or donation
- Purpose of the Environmental Pool is to benefit endangered species consistent with the goals of the Middle Rio Grande Endangered Species Collaborative Program



Agreement Between Plaintiffs and ABCWUA- The Process

- Ten years unless agreement to renew
- Plaintiffs provide written notification when Conservation Water is delivered
- Provision of space is subject to regulatory permits
- ABCWUA retains title authority regarding its property and flowage easement interests
- ABCWUA is not obligated to provide space if unavailable nor operations to adversely impact storage and release of water for ABCWUA purposes



Agreement Between Plaintiffs and ABCWUA – The Process Continued

- Conservation Water to be released for endangered species, the USACE notified, and release made in accordance with Plaintiff instructions
- ABCWUA will use any space available in the pool not used by the Plaintiffs but will not impair such storage (30,000) in subsequent years
- Plaintiffs Environmental Pool suffers evaporative losses in proportion to amount stored



Water Uses By Environmental Groups

- Increase flows during dry years to maintain fish refugial areas
- Increase overbanking and run off for spawning or cottonwood regeneration
- Increase the BOR Supplemental Water Program
- Allows environmental groups to work with water managers



Potential Difficulties For The Agreement

- Hydrologic reality
- Water leasing or purchase will be required, often times difficult in the Middle Rio Grande
- An exact system for these transfers is currently not in place
- Overcoming the history of conflict between river needs, irrigation and fish
- Financing the lease and purchase of water

