

Reflections on Collaboration in the Middle Rio Grande

New Mexico Water Dialogue
28th Annual Meeting:
An Unprecedented Water Crisis

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New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission

What is a resilient community?

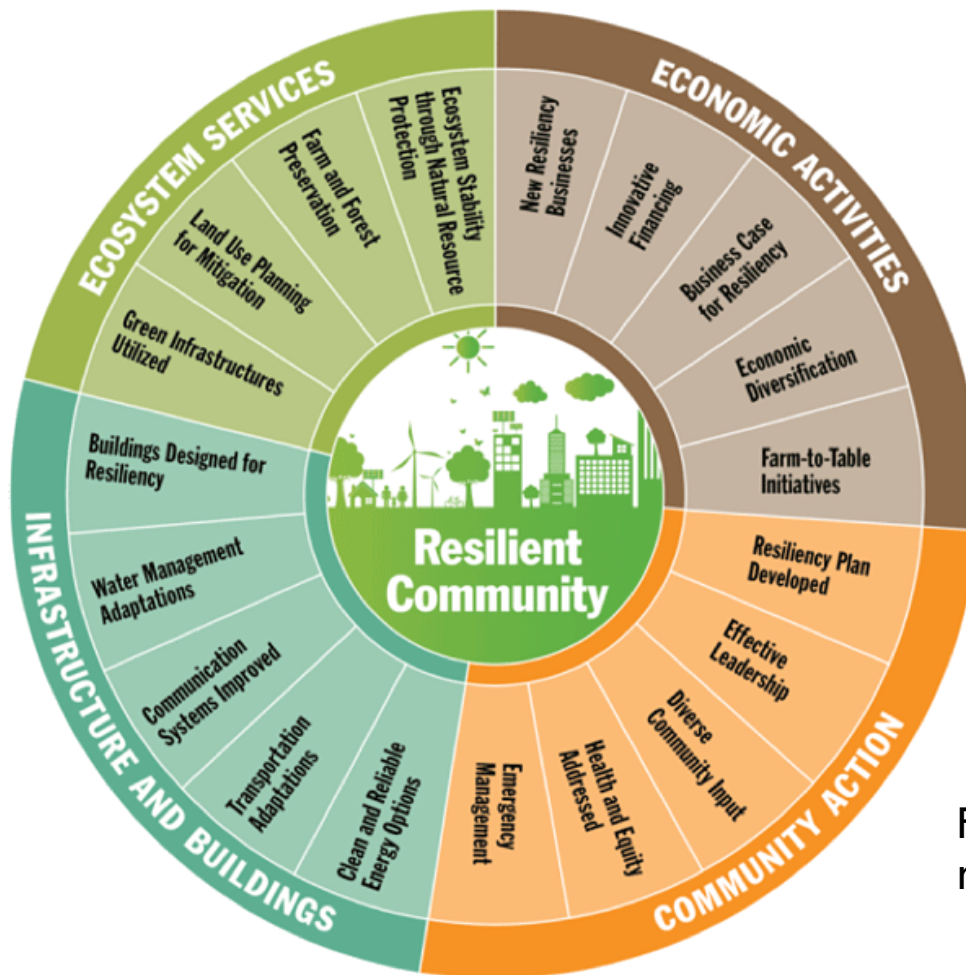


Figure from
resilientvirginia.org

The core elements of resiliency primarily are local knowledge, community networks and relationships, communication, health, governance and leadership, resources, economic investment, preparedness, and mental outlook.

Climate Resiliency in the West

Senator Bennet of Colorado (website): The Bennet Western Climate Resilience Roundtable framework emphasizes three primary priorities for Western climate resilience in 2021:

- Our resilience is dependent on strong local economies in the West. Our climate resilience strategy must include tools for local economies in the West to adapt to changing climate and economic conditions and build long-term prosperity in a future powered by a clean economy.
- Supporting healthy soils, forests, rangeland, rivers, and watersheds will make our communities more resilient and help maximize the climate mitigation potential of western landscapes.
- Our climate resilience is dependent on a thorough and science-based understanding of actions needed to sustainably adapt to and mitigate climate change.

Senator Heinrich: New Mexico 2021 Climate Summit, Makes Case For Major Climate Action Investments

Middle Rio Grande Change and Crisis



The 1990's shocked the Rio Grande water management world into a stark new reality full of controversy and conflict with the collision of federal listing of the Rio Grande silvery minnow and Southwestern willow flycatcher under the Endangered Species Act and persistent drought.

- ▶ Conflicts over water: farmers or minnow
- ▶ Litigation over federal discretion of water and ESA responsibilities (Feds operate storage and flood control reservoirs on Chama and RG mainstem)
- ▶ Public's increased interest in the Rio Grande - recreation and environmental
- ▶ ABQ groundwater - not an infinite resource!! - San Juan Chama Project
- ▶ Bosque fires threatened homes and infrastructure
- ▶ Die-off of native vegetation - Bosque and uplands
- ▶ Lots of politics - Money came in to 'solve' problem



Collaboration as a Solution?

- ▶ March 2003 BO for Bureau of Reclamation and US Army Corps of Engineers Middle Rio Grande operations
- ▶ Middle Rio Grande Endangered Species Collaborative Program

But Success is allusive:

- **Authorization** - The Collaborative never received full Congressional authorization, sustained funding, or independence.
- **Science vs Politics** - Lack of trust
- **Inflexibility and Complexity** - of Environmental Regulations and Agency Contracting
- **Peer Reviews** - Insanely important and been difficult to establish - often results ignored
- **Uncertainties** - Hydrology and species aren't cooperating with the 'Plan'



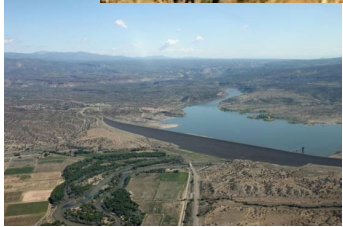
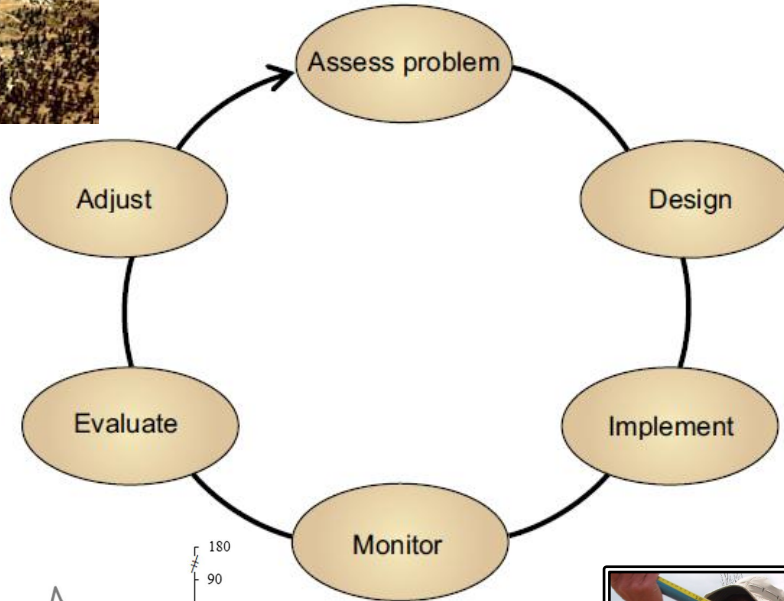
Collaboration - Take 2

- 2016 Biological Opinion - minnow still endangered - 4 ESA listed species - but emphasis is on adaptive management to better address complex issues.
- Collaborative Program is now moving towards becoming primarily an information resource with stakeholders for TE species and their habitats.

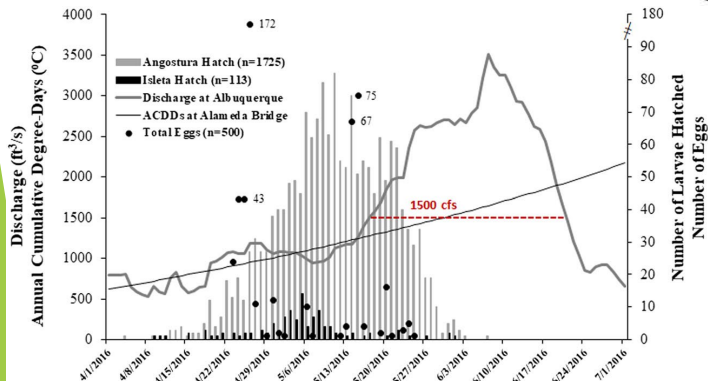
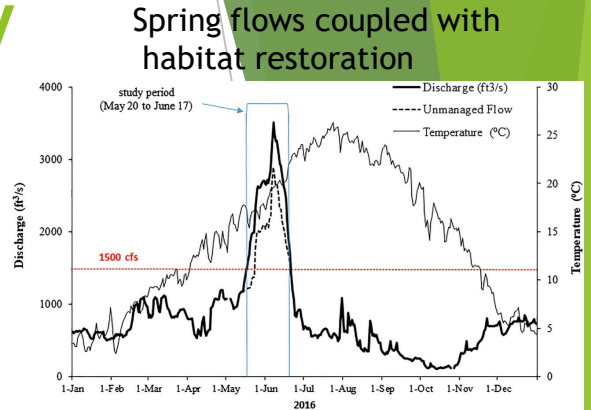
Managing Adaptively



Population declines and habitat loss



Store and release water for spawning flows thru Reservoir modifications



Sample and analyze adult and larval fish on restored floodplains



From: Managed spring runoff to improve nursery floodplain habitat for endangered Rio Grande silvery minnow
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Environmental and community actions

- ▶ Isleta Reach Stewardship Association
- ▶ Save Our Bosque Task Force - San Acacia
- ▶ The Rio Grande Agricultural Land Trust
- ▶ Friends of the Rio Rancho Open Space - Rio Rancho
- ▶ Albuquerque Open Space volunteers
- ▶ City of Albuquerque Biopark Society
- ▶ NMED Wetlands Roundtable
- ▶ MRGCD - Conservation Action Plan/Water Leasing
- ▶ Bosque Ecologic Monitoring Program - UNM
- ▶ New Mexico Water Dialogue

So many other efforts are occurring to bring communities to the table on water, environment, and climate change issues.



<http://welcome2artclass.blogspot.com/>

Community Resiliency

- ▶ Communities in New Mexico are extremely tied to the environment and resiliency is key to their survival
- ▶ Rivers and wetlands are most at risk and likely need new laws or approaches to protect them
- ▶ Commit to Long Term Monitoring/Adaptive Management
- ▶ Honor the scientific process- establish Peer Review Panel for Climate Change Initiatives in New Mexico

Keep the communication flowing!

Thanks

