



United States Department of the Interior



FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Post Office Box 1306
Albuquerque, New Mexico 87103

In Reply Refer To:
FWS/R2/ARD-ES/

Dear Middle Rio Grande Partner and Stakeholder:

On January 5, 2012, Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar visited Albuquerque and met with local community leaders to discuss strengthening existing partnership efforts in the Middle Rio Grande region (the stretch of river between Cochiti and Elephant Butte Reservoirs).

At the meeting, Secretary Salazar challenged attendees to develop a partner-driven plan for the Middle Rio Grande that would support the Department of Interior's *America's Great Outdoors* (AGO) initiative. In response to many public comments that were offered at the 2010 AGO New Mexico listening session, the Secretary proposed a plan that goes beyond water management and endangered species concerns to incorporate and strengthen conservation, education, and recreation opportunities as well. Secretary Salazar appointed an eight-member citizen committee to lead plan development in conjunction with the Fish & Wildlife Service and Bureau of Reclamation (Secretary's Committee, see attached roster) and he requested completion of the plan by July 1, 2012. The plan will address both existing and desired future projects, programs, and partnerships that can foster river conservation, facilitate connection of the State's populations to the outdoors, and support outdoor education.

The Secretary's Committee is now in the preliminary stages of work and has begun reaching out to many interested partners, stakeholders, organizations, agencies, and individuals with an interest in this Middle Rio Grande plan. There will be multiple avenues for organizations and individuals to engage in the plan's development; stakeholders will have opportunities to attend Committee/ subcommittee meetings and other public/community meetings, arrange for special meetings and discussions, provide written and verbal comments, and submit input through the project website. The Department of the Interior and the Secretary's Committee consider your participation to be vitally important. We shall be in touch again soon with more specifics on the process and we look forward to your input.

Thank you for your interest in this project. Should you have any questions, please contact either of us.

Sincerely,



Michelle Shaughnessy
Assistant Regional Director-Ecological Services
Southwest Region
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service



Mike A. Hamman,
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Albuquerque Area Office
U.S. Bureau of Reclamation