

Governance Document: San Juan Chama Watershed Partnership

Purpose

The San Juan -Chama Watershed Partnership was formed in January of 2014 as loose-knit organization where agencies, organizations, and individuals from federal, tribal, state, and local governments, non-governmental organizations, landowners, land managers, and other interested individuals. These partners share an interest and desire to work together where possible in the management of natural resources within the Rio Chama Watershed from the headwaters to the confluence of the Rio Grande. Interestingly, the headwaters include three tributary basins of the San Juan River that contribute water to the Rio Chama via the Oso Diversion Project.

Since the inception of SJCWP, the intent has been to acquire grant funding to hire a part-time or full-time executive director who would then continue soliciting grant funding to support the organization's activities. At least 6 grant applications have been submitted and rejected in the past five years to this end. In the meantime, the Chama Peak Land Alliance has loaned their staff to help support the organization. The purpose of this document is to set up a governance structure for partners to participate more fully and carry the responsibility for the organization in the absence of paid staff, and also to actively support staff when there is an opportunity to engage paid personnel.

This governance document has been drafted over a period of a few years to provide more structure to the Partnership. It has been adopted by a majority vote of those present at a general membership meeting on November 9, 2018.

Mission

The mission of the San Juan - Chama Watershed Partnership is to protect and enhance the watershed health and water supply conditions of the Rio Chama from headwaters to the confluence of the Rio Grande, and the tributaries (Navajo River, Little Navajo River, and Rio Blanco) that contribute to the New Mexico Bureau of Reclamation's San Juan - Chama Diversion Project.

Vision

We envision collaborative decision making and implementation partnerships to help manage a landscape prepared for water shortage and wildfire. We envision a landscape that is both protected and productive for local communities within our region, and stewardship that provides adequate natural resources for downstream users.

The Partnership works to provide collaboration between relevant local, county, state, tribal and federal agencies; non-government organizations; and local individuals to convene education and outreach initiatives on behalf of stakeholders throughout the region. The partnership provides an inclusive platform to collaborate on ecosystem-wide consideration, planning, and implementation of restoration practices and projects in the Chama (and tributary) basins.

Geography

The Rio Chama is a major branch of the Rio Grande, originating in the eastern portion of the South San Juan Mountains of Colorado, the San Juan Mountains of New Mexico, and the northern part of the Jemez Mountains in New Mexico. In addition, three tributaries of the San Juan River west of the Continental Divide, contribute almost $\frac{1}{3}$ of New Mexico's drinking water via the Oso Diversion Project which includes a 27-mile conveyance tunnel under the

Continental Divide. These San Juan River basins are the headwaters of the Navajo River, Little Navajo River, and Rio Blanco. Native waters include the Rio Chama, Wolf Creek, Rio Chamita, Rio Brazos, Rito de Tierra Amarilla, Willow Creek, Rio Nutrias, Rio Cebolla, Rio Gallina, Canjilon Creek, Rio Puerco, Canones Creek, El Rito, and Rio Ojo Caliente as well as many other arroyos and drainages.

For various political and practical reasons, the boundaries of the region of interest for the San Juan -Chama Watershed Partnership (SJCWP) do not necessarily adhere strictly to the Rio Chama Watershed. The area is bounded on the west by the Continental Divide (the geographic feature, not to be confused with the Continental Divide Trail which is aligned in this area as much as thirty miles to the east of the actual Divide. The Divide runs through the Tribal Lands of Jicarilla Apache Nation, as well as through administrative units of the Santa Fe National Forest. Therefore, although the Continental Divide represents the western border of the Rio Chama Watershed, the SJCWP may choose to be engaged in issues that cross this boundary.

The northern boundary, as mentioned earlier, includes the San Juan River basins that contribute to the Oso Diversion, yet SJCWP is also interested in lands south of the dams that are impacted by this project. In addition, the Chamita, Rio Chama, and Wolf Creek all originate in Colorado. The region is deeply integrated with drainages that feed the Rio Grande, such as the Rio Conejos and Rio de Los Pinos. Many regional issues and features span these watersheds, such as the Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad. Therefore, SJCWP interests extend beyond the Rio Chama Watershed boundaries on the north.

The east edge is perhaps even more vaguely defined for Partnership activities. Here the Taos Plateau mingles with the San Juan Mountains (in New Mexico), and opportunities for collaboration between the Bureau of Land Management and the Forest Service fall along the watershed boundary. Managers rarely utilize watershed boundaries in this area as practical project boundaries. For example, the Tusas drains to the Rio Chama, while the San Antonio drains to the Rio Grande, but the Tres Piedras Ranger District of the Carson National Forest includes them both in their Tusas-San Antonio planning unit.

The southern boundary of the region is northern edge of the Jemez and Nacimiento Mountains. Although properly and ecologically a part of the Jemez Mountains, this area has not been included in initiatives such as the East Jemez Landscape Futures or the Southwest Jemez Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program. The SJCWP holds a space for issues in this region where collaborative support is welcomed. In summary, SJCWP actively participates in collaborative efforts within and along the Rio Chama Watershed boundaries, which includes working with neighboring watershed partnerships.

Goals and Objectives:

Goal 1: Facilitate effective local cooperative and collaborative decision – making, implementation, and process around resource management issues, concerns and activities in our region

Objective 1: Inform and assist community stakeholders in understanding the relationship between headwater forests and water operations in the Rio Chama Basin

Objective 2: Provide opportunities for regional communities to learn about the impacts of wildfire and other threats to headwater forests and mitigation measures

Goal 2: Prepare for, raise awareness of, plan for, and take actions that, on a landscape level, promote sustainability of resources that honors and sustains economic, ecological and social systems.

Objective 1: Enhance water use efficiency and conservation practices throughout the basin(s)

Objective 2: Provide a forum for communication and education on traditional land and water uses and other challenges in the face of climate change – “cultural survival”

Objective 3: Provide collaborative forums (such as the Rio Chama Congreso) to allow for information sharing and communication on resource threats and protection projects

Objective 4: Encourage wildfire preparedness planning and projects via collaboration and information sharing

Goal 3: Enhance regional economic viability and use of forest products

Objective 1: Advance appropriate economic development and restoration of watershed values

Objective 2: Work with surrounding partnerships and entities on Biomass Utilization development and feasibility studies

Organizational Background

Founded in at a stakeholder meeting in Dulce, NM 2014 with a group of state and federal agencies, not-for-profit organizations, and community members, the San Juan – Chama Watershed Partnership formed as a means for collaboration between land managers in northern New Mexico and southern Colorado. With focus on forestry, land use, water quality, water management, fish and wildlife, and education and economic development, the Partnership formed as a mechanism for various entities to communicate and collaborate on shared concerns, challenges, and decision-making processes to better protect and enhance the watershed. The Partnership utilizes the forest product industry as an important partner to maintain and enhance forest health and we understand that forest product utilization goes hand-in-hand with forest health initiatives which help to bolster economic growth in the region’s communities.

At the 2016, Rio Chama Congreso, sponsored by Rio Grande Restoration via a WaterSmart grant from the Bureau of Reclamation, the boundaries of the San Juan – Chama Watershed Partnership, which the southern boundary had previously been the El Vado Dam, was extended to cover the entire Rio Chama Watershed to the confluence of the Rio Grande.

The San Juan – Chama Watershed Partnership works in the Rio Chama Basin and the three tributaries to the Bureau of Reclamation’s San Juan – Chama Project: the Navajo River, the Little Navajo River, and the Rio Blanco. Together, these rivers account for one-third of New Mexico’s water used for drinking and agricultural purposes. The cross-boundary nature of the region amplifies the need for cohesive collaboration between land managers in the area.

General principles and values

To the extent possible, the following guidance will be utilized:

- People manage the San Juan tributaries and Rio Chama ecosystem, whether intentionally or inadvertently.

- All of us are linked together by mutual dependence on the river; our individual and collective actions affect the well-being of other individuals, communities, the water, soil, plants and wildlife.
- The functioning of the Rio Chama system has great importance.
- Managing the river wisely, depends on focused observation and shared understanding of the river ecosystem's complex functions;
- Economic development and ecological health are potentially compatible.
- Everyone, individual citizens and authorities, deserves a voice in determining the appropriate management direction.
- Opinions based on divergent social, personal and cultural values will be respected and accommodated.
- Decisions can be negotiated by partners' remaining open to other views; through mutual dedication to principles of conservation and cooperation, we can discover a shared direction with partners.

Collaborative Approach

The San Juan – Chama Watershed Partnership is designed to facilitate collaboration across a spectrum of community members, business owners, and land managers. Collaboration is essential to achieving the goals of the group on a large scale within the region. The Partnership works with state and federal agencies, not-for-profit conservation organizations, water conservation districts, citizen groups, environmental groups, business interests, land managers, regional tribes, ranchers, county representatives, representatives of municipalities, fire protection services, and individuals.

Governance Structure

The San Juan – Chama Watershed Partnership consists of an informal leadership committee which will be known as the “Advisory Committee”. This committee includes broad representation from private community members, land management agencies, and non-government organizations working in the region. This committee will meet quarterly, either in-person or via phone/web. This committee will aim to have 15 consistent participants. Members will make key decisions involving the planning of the annual Rio Chama Congreso and the operations of the Partnership. Members at these meetings have voting power, however, the Partnership aims to be a consensus driven organization.

Leadership of this Committee will rotate every two (2) years between its members. This rotating role will serve as the informal chair for the group and will coordinate the scheduling of quarterly Advisory

Committee meetings. This person will also serve as Chair in meeting settings and will work to keep the group on-track and working as a cohesive team. This Chair position will be used as the “figurehead” of the organization and may be signatory to (upon discussion with and agreement from the rest of the Advisory Committee) all grant applications, partnership agreements, letters of support for other organizations and correspondence.

The Rio Chama Congreso event is to be held every late winter or early spring and will act as the annual flagship conference for the Partnership. Its primary purpose is to share information with community members and stakeholders on the ongoing operations of the Partnership and provide informative presentations on topical issues affecting the region. All stakeholders in the region will be invited and those that attend will help direct outreach efforts, and organizational goals and objectives for the Advisory Committee to conduct throughout the year.

CPLA – fiscal agreement

Inclusiveness

The San Juan – Chama Watershed Partnership works with representatives from across the region to help involve all perspectives from various communities affected by the operations of the San Juan – Chama Project and the Rio Chama flows. The group holds quarterly leadership meetings and an annual Congreso event that is open to anyone from the community that would like to be involved. Everyone is invited to be included on the e-mail list so that they can receive information on meetings, agendas, and group priorities and efforts.