

## **Arroyo Colorado Agricultural Issues Work Group Meeting**

Meeting Summary – October 5, 2005, 1:00 – 4:00pm

Attending Work Group Committee Members – 10/5 Meeting

- Steve Bearden – RGV Sugar Growers
- Brad Cowan – TCE
- Juan Enciso – TCE
- Richard Eyster – TDA
- Laura De La Garza – Texas Sea Grant
- Andy Garza – TSSWCB
- Wayne Halbert – Southmost SWCD
- Arturo Ibarra – NRCS
- Eddie Jaimes – TDA
- John Jifon – TAES
- Brian Jones – Farmer
- Terry Lockamy – TCE
- Roger Miranda – TCEQ
- John Monzingo – Hidalgo SWCD
- Luis A. Ribera – TCE
- Wes Rosenthal – TAES-Temple
- Frank Ruiz Jr. – TDA
- Sam Simmons – Farmer
- Barbara C. Storz – TCE
- Kevin Wagner – TSSWCB
- Jeff Walker – TWDB
- Aaron Wendt – TSSWCB

### **Welcome and Introductions – Andy Garza:**

Mr. Garza welcomed the group and introductions were made.

### **Best Management Practice Implementation Project Update– Andy Garza:**

Since 1999, 230 Water Quality Management Plans have been developed and certified by the TSSWCB in the Arroyo Colorado Watershed through CWA §319 projects. Through these projects, the TSSWCB has provided \$1.5 million in Cost Share Assistance to producers. In addition, 40 Environmental Quality Incentives Program contracts have been implemented. The FY05 EQIP sign-up has been completed and additional practices are already being implemented.

### **Best Management Practice Education Project Update– Terry Lockamy:**

Texas Cooperative Extension has received a CWA §319 Grant to provide Best Management Practice Education throughout the Arroyo Colorado watershed. Through this project, TCE will:

- develop an integrated team to identify education needs and develop educational programs,
- host educational programs on nutrient management utilizing existing programs and framework,
- better advertise BMP cost-share programs to encourage producer participation,
- provide a soil testing campaign,
- work to better link researchers to producers, and
- identify changes in producer knowledge and management as a result of this project.

### **Ag Monitoring Project Proposal Update– Kevin Wagner**

A proposal is being developed by a team of researchers from the Texas Water Resources Institute, Texas Cooperative Extension, Texas Agricultural Experiment Station, and Texas A&M University in Kingsville to be submitted to the Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board for FY06 CWA §319 Grant funds. The goals of the project are to:

- Perform a complete historical data review and analysis related to water quality and agricultural best management practices implemented in the watershed;
- Investigate site-specific differences and temporal variation of water quality in drainage from agricultural production areas; and
- Estimate total base flow from the watershed to the Arroyo Colorado and determine the extent to which surface water contamination is due to base flows;
- Collect data for future recalibration of SWAT model to better estimate the total nonpoint source loading into the river.

In order to accomplish the goals of the project, the following tasks will be completed:

- Project Coordination,
- Compilation and Evaluation of Prior Studies and Data,
- Inventory Conservation Practice Implementation,
- Update Land Use / Land Cover Data,
- Develop Quality Assurance Project Plan,
- Perform Sub-Watershed Monitoring,
- Measure Pollutant Attenuation in Drainage Ditches,
- Evaluate BMPs to Reduce NPS Pollution at the Farm Level,
- Assess Groundwater Contributions, and
- Develop Final Report.

### **Watershed Action Plan Status and Timeline – Laura De La Garza**

Laura De La Garza reported on the Draft Action Plan progress of the Habitat Workgroup, Land Use Workgroup, Education and Outreach Workgroup, and the Wastewater and Infrastructure Workgroup. The Draft Watershed Action Plan will be completed by the end of January, 2006.

### **Committee Input on Ag Portion of Watershed Action Plan – Kevin Wagner**

Finally, the committee discussed the major points of the 9/28/05 draft of the Arroyo Colorado Watershed Protection Plan - Agricultural Issues. Major topics that were discussed are as follows:

- The committee recommended that the number of acres to be treated be converted to percent. This is needed because of rapid loss of farmland as a result of urbanization. It was recommended that a discussion on the loss of farmland be included and that a good source of such information was available in the Region M Water Plan. It was also suggested that a discussion of programs available to curb farmland loss, such as Farmland Trust, be discussed despite limited producer interest in such programs. The group estimated that there are at the most, 600 producers left in the Valley and that number is more likely 450.
- A short discussion on the limitations of the TCEQ estimates then ensued. Laura De La Garza offered to provide language for the plan discussing these limitations.
- In Section III, it was recommended that Pest Management (Code 595) be added to the list of recommended practices. TCEQ expressed some concern regarding the inclusion of the practice, Subsurface Drain (Code 606). The committee stressed that the goals would be achieved with voluntary programs and were contingent on the availability of funding. The committee again encouraged that the number of acres to be treated be converted to a percentage.
- In Section IV, it was stressed that the funding needs for Technical Assistance and Educational Programs were in addition to the existing programs provided. It was recommended that a short discussion of the existing programs be provided to aid in this discussion. The availability of Texas Water Development Board funding in the Valley was also briefly discussed and the components of the program clarified.
- In Section VI, it was stressed yet again the need for converting acreage goals to a percentage to account for the rapidly decreasing amount of farmland in the Valley.
- In Section VII, the committee discussed milestones for educational and monitoring efforts. However, no consensus was reached.

Additional minor edits were also provided during the discussion. It was the consensus of the committee, however, that the proposed plan was achievable if things stay status quo.

### **Other Business**

The only Other Business that was discussed was the November 10, 2006 Arroyo Partnership Meeting where the Ag Issues Plan would be presented. The meeting will be held from 3:30-6:30 at the Citrus Center in Weslaco and all were invited to attend.

### **Adjourn**