

**Arroyo Agricultural Issues Work Group Meeting
July 24, 2007, 9:00 am – 12:00 noon**

Meeting Summary

Attendance

- Ray Prewett – Texas Citrus Mutal
- Donald Thompson – Local Farmer
- Brad Cowan – TCE
- Os Longoria - NRCS
- Richard Eyster – TDA
- Laura De La Garza – TWRI
- Andy Garza – TSSWCB
- Gabrio ? - NRCS
- Jason Pinchback – Texas Watch
- Xavier Peries - TAES
- Brian Jones – Farmer
- Kevin Wagner – TSSWCB
- Aaron Wendt – TSSWCB
- Pamela Casebolt – TSSWCB
- Eduardo Mendez – TSSWCB
- Brad Lamb – EPA Region 6
- Fred Moore – EPA Region 6
- Ruben Saldana - TCE

Welcome and Introductions – Andy Garza:

Mr. Garza opened the meeting at 9:20 am, welcomed the group and introductions were made.

Arroyo Colorado Watershed Protection Plan (ACWPP) – Aaron Wendt:

Aaron review the agreed upon agricultural components of the ACWPP; that the goal is the reduction of agriculture contributions to BOD, total nitrogen, phosphorus, and sediment entering the Arroyo Colorado. Through volunteer adoption of agricultural best management practices he stated that by 2010 the goal is to have approximately 100,000 acres under water quality management plans; 150,000 acres by 2015. Aaron said to do that technical and financial assistance would be required along with additional monitoring.

Kevin asked Brad Lamb about the status of the ACWPP in regards to EPA's final approval. Brad said that the jury is still out and he was here today to see what is going on.

Watershed Protection Plan Implementation Status – Laura De La Garza

Laura reviewed ongoing activities of the Habitat Work Group and the Outreach and Education Work Group. Three pre-proposals have been drafted for Coastal Management Program grants.

One was for a feasibility/site suitability analysis for a regional wetland system to help achieve the main goal of the Habitat Work Group to develop a regional wetland system.

Two additional pre-proposals were written for educational activities. Ongoing O&E projects included the making of a 3 feet x 7 feet physical watershed model, the establishment of a volunteer monitoring program with Texas Watch, and the Texas GreenScapes compost program. Laura said that a Wastewater Infrastructure Work Group meeting will be soon scheduled and that nominees for a new work group leader are being solicited.

Best Management Practice Implementation – Andy Garza:

Andy reviewed some of the BMPs being implemented in the watershed. He said that 335 water quality management plans covering 34,000 acres have been processed using TSSWCB 319 funds. This in combination with NRCS EQIP contracts has resulted in development of a combined total 603 plans covering 61,000 acres.

The 319 project has expended \$1,795,991 for cost-share assistance. Approximately 156,288 feet of irrigation pipeline have been installed and 9,405 acres of irrigation land leveling has been completed.

Ray Prewett asked what the irrigation districts were doing in relation to what is being done. Brad Cowan said that with their irrigation distribution improvements, greater water pressure is generated making for more efficient irrigation and less runoff to the drainage ditches and Arroyo.

Kevin asked if we were going to be able to meet this year's goal. Aaron said that that meant 77,000 by the end of this fiscal year. Andy reminded the group that this is a volunteer program and that they are doing the best they can. There was a discussion about the cost share rate; that the one time rule and \$10,000 max limits program participation.

Best Management Practice Education – Cecilia Wagner and Brad Cowan

Cecilia said that they had just submitted a quarterly report and that they were on task except for the hiring of an assistant. Brad said that more than just a student is needed, that an offer was made to a qualified person and he did not accept the position. Brad said that a more competitive salary may be needed.

Brad said that the hiring goal is to multiply extension education in three counties, that that person will be housed in Cameron and Hidalgo offices part of the week. Os Longoria said that he gets a lot of calls for watershed training and that an assistant could help with this.

The following question was asked about Sub-task 2.2. What has been the turn-out for the soil testing campaigns? Enrique Perez said that they have been good. Brad said that he was not sure about funds for fertility testing and that we might need to talk to Mark McFarland about funding needs.

Brad also said that educational events were listed if they had a water quality component and that there is need to develop a PowerPoint presentation with Andy Garza. Andy said that the NRCS has a wealth of information on BMPs.

SWAT Model Simulation of the Arroyo Colorado Watershed - Kevin Wagner

Kevin said that they had just received the contract and that things were just getting rolling. Dr. Narayanan Kannan from the TAES Blackland Research and Extension Center was project lead. The goal of the model is to re-simulate nutrient loading to the Lower Laguna Madre. Aaron said that there have been many changes in the watershed since 1998 and they would use and updated SWAT model to better understand the Arroyo Colorado Watershed.

Agricultural Nonpoint Source Assessment – Kevin Wagner, Dr. Venki Uddameri, and Xavier Peries

Kevin reviewed the purpose of the ag assessment study; that it was to evaluate BMPs and the effects the drainage ditches have on agricultural runoff. The vegetation in the ditches appears to act as a filter but was not accounted for in the previous TMDL model. The assessment includes an updated GIS data base which would identify all ag plan implementation and inventory BMPs. The land use data will be updated; however, project staff is struggling to find tile drain data. Richard Eyster suggested contacting Brian Smith, TCEQ, because the tile drain are considered injection wells according to the TCEQ. Someone suggested contacting the local contractors who install the drains.

Dr. Uddameri discussed his method for monitoring the drainage ditches and that one of the goals was to measure flux during both low flow vs. high flow conditions. Brad asked how many drainage ditches contribute flow to the Arroyo Colorado. Laura said hundreds. Ray Prewett asked how do solid waste dumps contribute to the water quality problem. Illegal dumps are associated with oil, bacteria and possible homeowner unused chemicals. Brad said that there is opportunity to work with the counties on this dumping issue. However, part of the problem is existing regulations and lack of convenient dumping locations; this is a statewide problem.

Xavier Peries presented the proposed six sites for the ag BMP study for Dr. Enciso. Kevin asked for comments on site selection. Aaron asked if sites had WQMPs and Andy answered yes. With no objecting comments, Kevin said they will proceed with the six sites. Richard asked if pesticides would be sampled. Kevin answered no.

Aaron asked about future funding needs. Os said that he would like to see the soil sampling continued. Additional funding needs were also identified for education, additional monitoring, and cost-share assistance. There was additional discussion on the one-time rule and the \$10,000 maximum. Aaron asked what a reasonable amount might be and said he would discuss this with Jose Dodier. The elimination of the one-time rule could be sufficient and also increase the maximum to \$25,000 for cost-share assistance.

Brad Lamb said that special emphasis should be placed in targeted areas so that the model could be used to get better numbers. Level 1 and level 2 participation should be identified and refined for more interest.

Ray asked if this work group should send a letter to the TSSWCB. It was suggested that the letters should come from the farmers starting with the ones on the Steering Committee. It was also suggested that Jose Dodier come to the Valley to discuss this issue.

Aaron said that work on the FY08 goal should begin to increase the acres under WQMPs to 77,000.

Next meeting scheduled for the 4th Thursday in October.

Adjourn