

Arroyo Colorado Education and Outreach Workgroup Formed Under The Arroyo Colorado Watershed Steering Committee

DRAFT Meeting Summary – February 15, 2005

ATTENDING WORK GROUP COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

Ginette Garcia
Suzanne K. Conway
Don Hockaday
Laura De La Garza

Unable to establish video-conferencing with the TCEQ in Austin.

CALL TO ORDER/WELCOME/INTRODUCTIONS

Laura De La Garza called to order the ninth meeting of the Education and Outreach work group at 5:45 pm. The meeting was held in the Board Room of the Learning Resource Center on the Texas State Technical College (TSTC) campus in Harlingen, Texas. TSTC had rectified their video conferencing difficulties however we were unable to establish a connection with the TCEQ.

Introductions were made and Ms. De La Garza welcomed two new members. Ms. Suzanne K. Conway introduced herself as a 6th grade teacher of biology and aquatics with 10 years experience. She expressed an interest in getting students involved in water quality monitoring on the Arroyo. She stated that her past experience with water quality monitoring on the Arroyo was not successful. Dissolved oxygen titrations did not work because of salinity. The water quality monitoring conducted by Chris Rakeshaw was brought up. Ms. Rakeshaw collected water quality samples off her dock near the mouth of the Arroyo for a number of years however her sampling site, along with the sampling results, were never posted. When Ms. Rakeshaw ran out of chemicals no more were available.

Also new to the work group was Ginette Garcia of the International Museum of Arts and Science in McAllen. Ms. Garcia is new to the Valley, has work in Pennsylvania, and has watershed experience from working with the Chesapeake Bay and the Great Lakes organizations. Ms. Garcia will be working in the Valley for the next 6 months with the main purpose of integrating watershed training into schools.

The meeting notes of January 18, 2005 were not reviewed or approved because of the small number of meeting participants.

Ms. De La Garza discussed work group membership and the posting of that membership on the TCEQ and Arroyo Colorado websites. All attending participants gave their approval for their names to be listed on those websites.

Overview and Progress of Outreach Efforts

Ms. De La Garza briefly discussed her participation in the following events:

- Arroyo Field Tour with EPA, Region 6 guests on January 26, 2005.
- The Coastal Expo at the Santa Ann Wildlife Refuge February 4 and 5, 2005.
- The Coastal Expo at Ocelot Days in Harlingen, Texas on February 12, 2005.

Ms. Garcia requested our participation in a teacher workshop that IMAS was sponsoring on March 22, 2005. Ms. De La Garza agreed to participate and to develop a new PowerPoint presentation that would be geared for teachers.

General Meeting Discussions

Ms. Garcia gave an overview of IMAS' education programs and about her efforts to develop a watershed education guide that could be integrated into school curriculums. The guide would include materials specific to the Arroyo Colorado watershed. Ms. De La Garza pledged her support of the project and would provide Arroyo Colorado watershed information. Currently, Ms. Garcia is working with a pilot group that involves four (4) schools in McAllen. She expressed a goal of being more action oriented in line with world events in order for local events to get more exposure.

There was a discussion on how to integrate the watershed curriculum into schools. Ms. Conway suggested that we refer to the TEA website and the possibility of getting watershed education in after-school programs such as PEAKS. Ms. Conway expressed the desire to write-up a lesson plan. Ms. Garcia and Ms. Conway agreed to work together in developing a general watershed curriculum for 5th grade using the Arroyo Colorado watershed and the associated issues as an example. This work group would serve as facilitators and be part of the teacher workshops. Ms. Garcia stated that she had funds for educational materials and for integrating watershed education into schools.

Don Hockaday recommended getting project WET and WOW into school libraries. He also provided another resource, Dr. Abraham with UT Pan American, who has been teaching environmental science in high schools. The idea of creating an educational "trunk" for the Arroyo Colorado was discussed. The idea is to have a collection of educational materials available for educators.

A GIS database for the Arroyo was brought up. Dr. Gene Paul, UTB, Dr. Roger, UT Pan American, and Dr. Sunny, USDA were identified as regional resources. Don Hockaday requested that the TMDL watershed map be broken into layers. Ms. De La Garza explained that an Arroyo Colorado watershed GIS database was being created through the Arroyo Habitat work group with TPWD resources. Alan Jones, TWI, and Jose Almador, TCE, were identified as knowledgeable individuals working with Valley GIS databases.

The additional grant money for the market survey and assistance for outreach and education was briefly discussed. Ms. De La Garza said that the TCEQ had approved the tasks and deliverables for the grant proposal and the additional monies would be transferred into the existing 319 contract that provided for the watershed coordinator position. An RFP will be distributed as soon as the new contract is signed.

Next discussed was the creation of a “white paper”. Ms. De La Garza distributed the beginnings of a white paper (attached) which consist of a series of questions. Don Hockaday suggested that we begin the white paper with an annotated bibliography. Ms. De La Garza stated that a TAMUK graduate student had been working on an Arroyo bibliography for his graduate studies and that she would put him in contact with Don Hockaday.

The need for a research and development work group was discussed. A group is needed to provide update information for the watershed. Someone needs to integrate the data for the general public to understand and that should not be the role of the outreach and education work group. The proposed work group would oversee water quality sampling and testing and be responsible for the GIS development. Ms. De La Garza will bring this issue up at a Steering Committee meeting and discuss this with the other work group leaders.

On a final note, Ms. Conway identified Mandy Key of Harlingen Proud as an important stakeholder in our Arroyo Project. Ms. De La Garza will contact her. Irene Pickard, TEAC, was also identified as a person to contact for our project.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:40 pm.