

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

Draft Meeting Summary – June 22, 2006

ATTENDING WORK GROUP COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

Paul Bergh
Laura De La Garza

Video-conference Attendees from the TCEQ in Austin
Loanne Jones
Dave Buzan
Karen Ford
Sky Lewy
Roger Miranda

Laura De La Garza called the thirteenth meeting of the Education and Outreach work group to order at 5:15 pm. The meeting was held in Classroom 157 of the Texas A&M Agricultural Research and Extension Center in Weslaco, Texas. Video conferencing was established with the TCEQ offices in Austin, Texas.

Introductions were made and the first order of business was the solicitation of comments on the meeting summary notes of January 5, 2006. No comments and the notes will be considered final.

Laura next distributed copies of comments received on the watershed curriculum produced by McAllen IMAS. Comments included:

- Mainstream classroom teachers at elementary level probably cannot implement any new curriculum elements into their lesson plans. Elementary science and enrichment-level teachers might be able to implement well-constructed units of instruction, activities, or “labs” into their curriculum if certain criteria are met (i.e. TAKS, TEKS, and other mandates).
- A large printed document is probably the least desirable format for the desired curriculum. A web-based product would be the vehicle most easily accessible to local teachers and most likely used. It should be in .pdf format to facilitate searchability.
- In order to create a curriculum worthy of classroom implementation, numerous individuals thoroughly knowledgeable about the many biomes which exist in the Arroyo Colorado should be contacted and enlisted to help.

- It would take the better part of one year to produce a “test” curriculum in publishable form and another year testing and evaluating that curriculum before it would be appropriate for distribution to a group of highly-interested teachers.
- Success of producing a watershed curriculum would require a keen awareness of the complexities of teaching students at various levels and learning capacities in the special setting of today’s classroom.
- The curriculum produced takes exercises from well-respected curricula for wetlands, however more thought and effort is necessary to develop a locally-relevant educational tool.
- Teach about a specific environment/habitat, such as an irrigation canal: 1) Show the students how to carefully observe and begin to understand one small piece of the overall puzzle. 2) Teach them to collect meaningful and accurate data. 3) Teach them to submit that data to other people who are studying that ecosystem. 4) Identify some animal they can see, temporarily capture to investigate, or photograph. If they can observe the animal for quite a while, all the better. If you show them how and where to learn more about that animal, better yet. If you admit that there are many things which are unknown about that animal and every other animal on earth, your students will learn that you were one truthful teacher.
- A coordinator is needed to focus on the curriculum project.
- One of our most difficult tasks is to raise awareness of how precious water is here and elsewhere.
- There are lots of good activities out there and great teachers developing more of them. We have digital cameras and color printers and internet access, which give us access to a kind of shift this curriculum doesn’t yet make use of.

Dave asked about the history of the curriculum. Laura explained that it was initiated by Ginette Garcia as part of her contract work as science education coordinator for IMAS. Karen said that it was hard to get curriculums adopted however that this would be great for after school activities. Sky said that based on her experience, it could take up to 3 years to get ancillary activities added.

Roger asked if the reviewers had taken UTB/El Cielo student as teacher program under the TCEQ small business grant. Teachers get CPSs. Next class starts August 2, 2006 and is taught by Dr. Ray Ramirez. Laura suggests that we revisit the issue of developing an Arroyo curriculum with Christine Mild and area teachers.

Next Karen Ford gave an update on contract activities. She said Task 1 (Research: Synthesis of background information, interviews, focus groups, and market survey) and Task 2 (Short term promotion to publicize the ACWPP planning effort) have been completed. Laura distributed copies of the new PowerPoint presentation developed by Linda Fernandez and White Hat Creative. Karen agreed to provide Roger with an electronic version.

The branding of the campaign, logo and tagline development was discussed along with the new brochure. Laura informed the group that the TCEQ planned to print additional copies of “The Little Waterway with a Big Job” and now was the opportunity for any

revisions. Some needed revisions were discussed and individuals were asked to submit any comments/improvements to Laura. Karen and Laura agreed to produce the next final draft. Paul asked that the Kingfisher bird be better developed with additional colors so that the design could be show up better if embroidered on promotional items such as, shirts and baseball caps.

In regards to the final report, Cathy Poag was available via telephone conference. Karen asked if there questions for her. No questions. Karen proceeded to discuss the planned promotional event; tentative schedule date early August 2006.

Next the E&O component of the plan was discussed. Laura distributed the draft chapter and suggested that the strategies listed in the report be prioritize.

Strategy 1 - Brand the Initiative

Strategy 2 - Deliver Basic Facts about the Arroyo Colorado

Strategy 3 - Raise Awareness and Increase Communal Involvement in the ACW Partnership

Strategy 4 - Develop Partnership Agreements for Message Distribution

Strategy 5 - Create Micro-campaigns for Specific Target Audiences

Strategy 6 - Institutionalize a Practice of Ongoing Campaign Evaluation

The delivery of basic facts through television public service announcements (PSAs) was identified as priority along with the development of micro-campaigns. Ongoing campaign evaluation was also identified as priority.

In regards to PSAs, Karen asked if any local groups would consider tagging on 5-8 seconds to their commercials; that we ask our Steering Committee and targeted audiences for assistance is getting extra air time and that we ask for free professional services and enlist cities to help.

The meeting ended promptly at 7pm with the automatic video conference disconnect.