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**A MEETING OF  
THE HABITAT RESTORATION WORKGROUP  
OF THE ARROYO COLORADO WATERSHED PARTNERSHIP**

Agenda

April 14, 2005 2:00 pm – 4:00 pm

Texas A&M University Kingsville – Citrus Center: Rio Red Classroom  
Weslaco, Texas

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- 2:00 pm      WORKGROUP DISCUSSION AND APPROVALS (Kay Jenkins)  
Approval of Meeting 4 Summary  
Update on funding  
Presentation for approval: Revised Habitat Workgroup Goals and Timeline  
Presentation for approval: Revised Scope of Work for Feasibility Study
- 2:30 pm      PRESENTATION  
Kay Jenkins and TPWD staff will present lessons learned from a constructed wetlands project located at the Richland Chambers Wildlife Management Area and the potential for improving water quality in the Arroyo Colorado with a similar constructed wetlands project.
- 2:45 pm      BREAK
- 3:00 pm      HABITAT RESTORATION PLAN DEVELOPMENT  
Brainstorm initial list of strategies for addressing habitat restoration  
Determine steps needed to further develop the strategies
- 4:00 pm      ADJOURN

## **DRAFT**

### **Meeting Summary of the Arroyo Colorado Habitat Restoration Workgroup of the Arroyo Colorado Watershed Steering Committee Texas A&M University Kingsville – Citrus Center April 14, 2005**

#### **ATTENDING WORKGROUP COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

Laura De La Garza – Arroyo Colorado Watershed Coordinator  
Kay Jenkins – TPWD Coastal Fisheries  
Olivia Gomez – TPWD Coastal Fisheries  
Earlene Lambeth – TCEQ  
Randy Blankinship – TPWD Coastal Fisheries  
Steve Benn – TPWD Wildlife  
Tony Reisinger – Texas Sea Grant/Cameron County Marine Agent  
Mary Lou Campbell – Sierra Club  
Randy Rush – EPA  
Ernesto Reyes – USFWS Ecological Services  
Chris Anzaldua – USIBWC  
Sylvia Waggoner – USIBWC  
Gene Lester – USDA  
Lisa Williams – The Nature Conservancy  
Tom Heger – TPWD Inland Fisheries  
Ni-Bin Chang – Texas A&M – Kingsville  
Sam Patten – TPWD Wildlife  
Chris Watenpool – TPWD Wildlife  
Chris Hathcock – TPWD State Parks/World Birding Center  
Steve Whisenant – Texas A&M University-College Station  
John Reilley – Natural Resource Conservation Service/Plant Material Center  
Ginette Garcia – International Museum for Art and Science

#### **CALL TO ORDER/WELCOME/INTRODUCTIONS**

Kay Jenkins (TPWD) opened the fifth meeting of the Habitat Restoration Workgroup meeting held in Weslaco on April 14, 2005. The workgroup members in attendance introduced themselves. Kay Jenkins and Olivia Gomez passed out copies of the Draft Meeting Summary for the December 2, 2004 Habitat Restoration Workgroup meeting, the scope of work for the feasibility study, and an update on the GIS data sets that Olivia has been compiling for the Arroyo Colorado Watershed Partnership.

To update the workgroup on funding, Kay Jenkins reported that TCEQ had approved an increase in the budget for the Workgroup to purchase 1930s aerial photographs of the Arroyo Colorado watershed. She explained that the workgroup would still have to acknowledge that the current owners of the photographs would have the copyright to them. She also announced that the grant agreement between Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and the Texas General Land Office had been signed and that this grant for \$85,400 would be used to

pay for the feasibility study to help the workgroup with development of the habitat restoration component of the Arroyo Colorado Watershed Protection Plan.

## **AGENDA ITEMS**

### Presentation

Kay Jenkins spoke to the workgroup using a powerpoint presentation that she had developed for the International Water Symposium recently held at the International Museum for Art and Science on the role that constructed wetlands play in water quality improvement. The presentation featured the Richland Chambers Wetland Project, a joint project between Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and the Tarrant Regional Water District, located on the Richland Chambers Wildlife Management Area in northeast Texas. While the Richland Chambers Wetlands project was designed to clean water from the Trinity River for reuse, the lessons learned from this project are applicable to the Arroyo Colorado project. Results of the monitoring program of both the pilot project (six acres) and the field scale project (250 acres) at Richland Chambers were presented to the group. Due to the success of the pilot and field scale projects, the Tarrant Regional Water District and Texas Parks and Wildlife Department plan to build an additional 2000 acres of wetlands that would clean water pumped from the Trinity River. The clean water from the wetlands would then be stored for reuse in the Richland Chambers Reservoir and the Cedar Creek Lake Reservoir in east Texas.

Kay Jenkins reported that the project managers attributed the project's success to several factors. They created a sediment basin which allows much of the water's sediment to fall out before the water enters the wetland. The wetland is designed with four cells and retains water for the required length of time needed to achieve the desired reduction in nutrient and BOD load. The project managers can control the flow of water through the project and the water level in the wetlands, and therefore they can manage the vegetation. The wetlands are set up so that each cell in the wetland can be bypassed so that a specific cell can be maintained while the rest of the wetland cells still perform the job of cleaning the water. Because the wetlands are off channel constructed wetlands the project managers are able to protect the wetlands from being buried by sediment or from scouring during flood events. Therefore they get consistent, dependable water quality improvement results from the wetlands. Wetland vegetation is managed to support the establishment of emergent and submerged aquatic vegetation that is desirable to wildlife species. Cattails are not allowed to establish in the wetland cells.

### Habitat Restoration Plan Development

Kay Jenkins asked the workgroup members to brainstorm ideas for potential habitat restoration projects that should be investigated in the development of the habitat restoration component of the Watershed Protection Plan. Suggestions included a large, regional off channel constructed wetland similar to the Richland Chambers project, polishing ponds for wastewater treatment plants, surface runoff treatment, highway projects, and enhanced agricultural buffer strips. The members suggested that all projects developed by the workgroup should include features that benefit fish or wildlife. The members agreed that the first order of business was to develop projects that would result in water quality improvement. During discussion of possible project ideas, two public sites were mentioned that might serve as potential areas for project implementation. The Chapote Wildlife

Management Area, a Texas Parks and Wildlife Department site on the Arroyo Colorado south of Donna and the Llano Grande State Park and World Birding Center also located near the Arroyo Colorado near Weslaco were mentioned. The old Rio Hondo Park area which features a cutoff river bend was also suggested as a potential project site. In addition, it was suggested that the weir project near Harlingen that has been proposed for many years should be investigated for inclusion in the plan.

To facilitate the development of project ideas and to help guide the upcoming feasibility study, the workgroup members decided to divide into three working committees. The Inland Committee would investigate smaller project ideas that could be later implemented by municipalities or other interested organizations. These included wetland projects that could treat wastewater treatment plant discharges, nonpoint source pollution from surface runoff and highway projects, and irrigation return flow. It was also suggested that the Inland Committee could investigate appropriate opportunities for enhancing agriculture buffer strips with native plants for wildlife use. Tom Heger, Ernesto Reyes, Mary Lou Campbell, Chris Hathcock, Lisa Williams and Gene Lester agreed to serve on the Inland Committee.

The workgroup members suggested that a Habitat Status Committee was needed to document the historic and current status of the habitats along the Arroyo Colorado for the Watershed Protection Plan. Olivia Gomez, Sylvia Waggoner, Chris Anzaldua and Kay Jenkins agreed to serve on this committee.

A third committee, the Coastal Committee, was formed to concentrate on working with the firm/organization selected for the feasibility study to guide them in providing the project designs and specifications for the typical projects that the Inland Committee is investigating. In addition, the Coastal Committee would also work with the firm/organization to investigate the potential for developing a large, regional, constructed wetland project. Randy Blankinship, Tony Reisinger, Kay Jenkins and Gene Lester volunteered to serve on the committee. In his absence, Sam Patten was nominated to the committee by the rest of the committee members.

Members of the working committees were eager to begin their work and the three committees agreed to meet the next day since so many of their members were in town for the Workgroup meeting. Tom Heger agreed to host the Inland Committee meeting at the Santa Ana Wildlife Refuge. Olivia Gomez and Kay Jenkins agreed to meet with Sylvia Waggoner and other IBWC staff at the IBWC office in Mercedes. Randy Blankinship agreed to host the Coastal Committee meeting at the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department Coastal Fisheries Brownsville Field Office.

## **CLOSURE**

Expectations for the next meeting are to have the firm/organization on board for the feasibility study and to have reports from each of the working committees. The next meeting is expected to be held in July or August 2005.