

**Arroyo Colorado Habitat Workgroup Meeting
October 22, 2009 2:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.**

Attendees:

Jaime Flores (TWRI)

Laura De La Garza (Comite)

Cecilia Wagner (TWRI)

Amanda Engledow (TWRI)

Ernesto Reyes (VSWFS)

Miki McCurdy (San Juan EDC)

Melisa Gonzalez (City of San Juan)

Meeting Summary

Welcome

- Went around table and did introductions

Watershed Protection Plan

- Jaime conducted several classroom presentations: Tuesday 10/20 (Stewart Place Elementary); and Thursday (10/22) (Dr. Rodriguez Elementary) and Cameron County Annex building (Cameron county teachers). Classroom presentations are still needed, but not as a heavy load on Jaime as more people are helping this year.
- Laura asked to post Jaime's presentation on the Arroyo Colorado Web site
- Teachers are looking for curriculum to supplement current one. Has to come from government approved entity. Created 5 to 6 curriculums so far.
- Outreach and Education meeting (grant workshop will be continued)
- Model on display (10/18) Pharr Out Kids Nature Day. (see bimonthly update (10/20/09) for specifics)
- Model needed repair because people have misused it, or it might have been damaged in transport. It will now have a login/logout so that people can be held liable.
- Model will be on display again at the Estero Llano Grande Spooky Science Fest, Sat 10/24.
- Cities need to submit to TxDot for a permit to go under the blanket permit to install watershed boundary signs. Hopefully by end of November there will be an additional 40 signs in place, at sites identified by TxDot.
- Ribbon cutting at wetlands in San Juan will probably happen in next 2/3 weeks. They will let us know to put in bimonthly update. Also La Feria had final walk through last week.
- Planning a "Trash Bash" in conjunction with cities and Valley Proud (James Natz); event already held annually so Arroyo Partnership will team up with it. (Laura) Eric Ellman (los cominos del rios) is willing to donate kayaks to allow a crew in the water for the trash bash. Jaime wants to get 4-H kids involved.
- Nov 21, Texas Stream Team – monitor workshop. 26 spots available. 2 types of monitoring qualifications will be taught (basic and advanced E. coli). Jaime is going to take the class. He will also talk to 4-H leaders from Cameron and Hidalgo to get 4-H kids involved and to be stream team volunteers.

- We need to try and get cities to embrace/adopt volunteer monitoring.
- Soil testing funding problems. It is currently funded by a GLO grant through CMP so GLO wants to limit funding only for samples from within the CMP zone. County extension agents and TWRI met to discuss this issue as program is typically open to all producers. Working to find additional funding for this or work with GLO for them to fund it.

Project Updates and Discussions

- 4-cities wetland
 - San Juan: All construction is complete and will be doing walk through next week. Ribbon cutting will be done tentatively mid November.
 - Spending \$50,000 on drip irrigation system and additional cost was the clay liner on 7 acres.
 - In the process of procurement of signage for education.
 - Design called for smaller trees and shrubs (5 gallon), so planted wetland does not look complete, but will once everything grows in.
 - Already talking about second phases to the project.
 - Had to omit one of the ponds due to unidentified obstacle identified when digging, so made the other 3 larger and made that area into a butterfly area.
 - Need a wetland workshop especially for maintenance (Wetland maintenance Training Program). Cities that are trying to do this need/want to know how to maintain the wetlands so that they won't be dead in a year.
 - Melissa – we need someone to put some impervious stuff at the wetlands
- Region M/4-county regional drainage study
 - Rio Grande Water Authority and Rio Grande Water Planning Group (Region M) - Regional 4 county study to identify drainage problems. Areas have already been identified that are prone to flooding; this county/city land will be put aside to divert storm/flood water. Objectives of study fit well with the goal of the WPP to identify and implement regional wetlands. Plan to work with regional drainage study personnel.
- Harlingen Aeration structures
 - Riffle Construction image from Laura
 - Originally 5 models and now identified one and have a budget worked out
 - Arroyo Partnership can provide letter of support to see this through
- Shrimp Farm
 - Shrimp farm a mute issue due to the fact that there are 2 contracts on the land however it might be possible to have some community input (real estate agent has said that he can be liaison).

Available Grants/Potential Studies

- City of Brownsville going to take lead on low impact development regional 319 grant (TCEQ)]
- Want TWRI to help facilitate/write grant

Other Business

- Low Impact Development regional Grant (TCEQ 319) (Harlingen, Brownsville, San Juan, Mission, possibly more). Brownsville would be lead (Fiscal Agent).
 - San Juan – Impervious parking lot and Boardwalk
 - Harlingen – 75 acres convert to RDF
 - Brownsville – Volleyball Complex
 - Mission – Parks (trails and rain gardens)
 - TAMUK wants to do water quality monitoring for BMP effectiveness at each site.
- New Grant (319 TSSWCB) - Target producers who don't have water quality management plans or BMPs.
 - Demos for producers so that they can see the BMP for a year and see what it can do.
 - Education/Outreach for cost-share programs to alleviate fears/misunderstandings about the programs.
- Additional discussion regarding agriculture in the Arroyo Colorado:
 - It is the cities that are responsible for the drainage ditches; if agriculture is contributing to the problem, then maybe the cities can provide assistance to the farmers.
 - Farmers might be able to give a small portion of their land to make wetlands and there is federal \$ for this and possibly tax credits.
 - Larger producers have the ability to implement more BMPs (land leveling and no till) because they have the resources, but small producers don't.
- TCEQ 319 proposal for sustainability will also likely be submitted.
- Texas Water Development Board Demonstration Grant– Solar Bee
- Coordinate visit with Loretta Mokry (APAI), Butch Palmer (Port of Harlingen) and Elizabeth Heise (UTB) for meeting to talk about the Port of Harlingen project.

Next Meeting Date/Adjourn

January 21, 2010