

Arroyo Colorado
Watershed Steering Committee
DRAFT Meeting Summary " April 27, 2004

ATTENDING: - 4-27-04 MEETING:

Rocky Freund " Nueces River Authority
Laura De La Garza " Citizen
B. Eduardo Mendez " TSSWCB
Kevin Wagner " TSSWCB
Jim Chapman " Various
Lisa Williams " The Nature Conservancy
Mary lou Campbell " Sierra Club and Frontera Audubon
Layne Budd " Citizen
Richard Eyster " TDA
Kim Jones " TAMUK
Christine Rakestraw " C " SAC & LLMF
John D. Wallace " U. S. Fish & Wildlife Service
Kevin Ayarzagoitiz " TCEQ Region 15
Clare Lee " USFWS
Randy Blankinship " TX Parks & Wildlife Dept.
Don Hockaday " UT " Pan American Coastal Studies
Michael Weeks " TPWD
Hudson DeYoe " UTPA
Ricardo Chapa " Southmost Water Conservation Board
Mary Jo Janovsky
Mary & Archie Donahue
Kay Jenkins " TPWD
Debi Warner " TPWD & Citizen

CALL TO ORDER/WELCOME/INTRODUCTIONS:

Earlene Lambeth (TCEQ) opened the meeting with self-introductions. Several new faces were welcomed as participants but the majority attending have been associated with the project for several years. Earlene gave a special thank you to the Southmost and Hidalgo Soil and Water Conservation Distiricts for providing a light dinner before the meeting through donations. A special thank you to the TX State Soil Board for making these arrangements in this joint effort of state agencies.

Also, the Rio Grande Valley (RGV) Outdoor Center, Mary Jo Janovsky, discounted the RGV Outdoor Centers" rate to provide the group with a wonderful facility to accommodate the outdoor dinner and meeting facility. Mary Jo also provided drink refreshments and an appetizer buffet for the attendees. The grounds of the Valley Outdoor Center had been prepared especially for the meeting. Various people commented on the wonderful setting for the Steering Committee to meet. Other comments made by meeting participants were that the Center inspired them to work to continue to work for the protection of the environment and habitat.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The meeting was then turned over to the TCEQ Project Manager, Mr. Roger Miranda who gave a brief history of the project and of the Arroyo Colorado Steering Committee. Mr. Miranda covered the TMDL development and an assessment of the categories of Section 303(d). He said that a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) establishes the maximum amount of a pollutant that a waterbody can assimilate and still meet Water Quality Standards it also allocates that load among pollution contributors. The upper reach of the tidal segment is the portion of the Arroyo Colorado that is impaired and listed for low dissolved oxygen (DO) and has been impaired in the past for toxicity of sediments. For more information see previous information and meeting summaries located at the following web site:

http://www.tnrcc.state.tx.us/water/quality/tmdl/arroyo_group.html

Workgroups have been developed under the Arroyo Colorado Watershed Steering Committee. The five workgroups are the Agriculture, Education & Outreach, TMDL, Habitat Restoration, and Wastewater Infrastructure. Each of these workgroups is tasked with developing their portions of the Watershed Protection Plan for the Arroyo Colorado.

Roger also reported that funds had been identified and a full-time Watershed Coordinator position for the Arroyo Colorado Watershed Protection Plan was being created and hopefully would be on board before the next steering committee meeting. The position will be through Texas Sea Grant.

Another topic discussed were the Arroyo Colorado Ground Rules that had been revised since the last meeting based upon comments that had been received from the steering committee members. Roger asked the members to take the revised copy and read over it. He explained that HB 2912 states the protocol and requirements for advisory committees with the state. He explained that the steering committee could have as many participants and members as wanted to take a part but the voting membership is limited to twenty-four (24). He reminded the group that the committee was not set up as a voting committee, but represented concerned citizens and stakeholders that were drafting a plan for a Watershed Protection Plan. He asked the members to sign the revised Arroyo Colorado Ground Rules if they were one of the twenty-four identified and if identified, alert him of their desire to be a voting member.

Roger also reported that instead of a Watershed Action Plan being developed for the Arroyo, it is now referred to as a Watershed Protection Plan. This was due to federal 319 funding and legalities such as new guidance that has been issued by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). He reported that this guidance would be followed for the development of the Watershed Protection Plan.

Updates were given from each of the workgroups:

Habitat Restoration " A contract has been put in place between TX Parks & Wildlife and TCEQ that established a half-time position for the workgroup to fund a Habitat Restoration Specialist, Kay Jenkins of Texas Parks and Wildlife will head this group. Also, a grant in the amount of \$85,000 will be funded in October from NOAA through the General Land Office (GLO) for a feasibility study for habitat restoration for the Arroyo project. Once completed, the feasibility

study will be used to apply for funding to actually perform habitat restoration. Another goal of the Habitat Workgroup is to develop their portion of the Watershed Protection Plan. The Habitat Restoration Workgroup will be meeting at the Citrus Center in Weslaco in the morning on August 13. Additional information will be forthcoming.

Wastewater Infrastructure - Roger Miranda reported that in terms of the Wastewater Infrastructure that progress had been made. TCEQ is the regulatory agency for the permitted dischargers and a review of enforcement policies is now on-going. Various departmental staff at TCEQ is in the process of performing "system reviews" for the 16-wastewater plants in the Arroyo watershed. The reviews include self-reported data graphed against permit limits, and violations through self-reported data. Staff is combing through files to "home in" on what the problems historically have been with each facility. A plan is being drafted and after the TCEQ has approved it, it will then be taken to the Water Development Board. The next step will then be to meet with each permittee and get their input. Even though the group has not met, the draft document is being created and many steps have been taken toward the goal of the workgroup. The workgroup should meet in the summer of '04.

Education and Outreach Workgroup " Don Hockaday reported the EPA has addressed outreach through a new video, guide and materials called, "Getting In Step". Copies are available and if you would like one please let Don know or order a copy directly from the EPA at the following web address: <http://www.epa.gov/watertrain/gettinginstep>
The next meeting of the workgroup is May 10 from 5:30 " 8:00 PM at South Padre Island at the Coastal Studies Laboratory.

Agricultural Workgroup " The workgroup has also been doing a lot of background work, solidifying their membership and working to gain more attendees for the next meeting that is scheduled for 3:00 PM on July 27, 2004 at the Citrus Center, located just north of Expressway 83 on FM 1015 in Weslaco. Agenda items will include reviewing and comparing some of the best management practices (BMPs) modeled by the Blacklands Research Center and the previous TMDL developed by TCEQ for the Arroyo. A scientist/professor from the Research Center will be at the meeting to make a presentation. Once the agriculture portion of the workgroup has been drafted and approved, the workgroup will pursue federal 319 funding to implement some of the BMPs.

TMDL Workgroup - Work is still on-going to complete a Total Maximum Daily Load for the Arroyo Colorado. Approximately \$500,000 has been identified and TCEQ is partnering with USGS through a 60/40 funding arrangement under a Joint Funding Agreement to conduct additional studies in the Arroyo Colorado. This will elevate the analysis of the TMDL to the point where we can "home-in" on the problems of nutrient loading and the effects of the physical modifications to the Arroyo. This will be about a two and one half year effort but in the end, the study will have a very scientifically defensible analysis that will identify the true assimilative capacity of the Arroyo Colorado. The watershed model may be a SWAT instead of a HSPF model. The joint funding agreement work will focus on more of the receiving water and in-stream processes. The TMDL Workgroup will meet on Friday, July 23rd at the Natural Resources Center, Room 1003 on the Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi campus. The meeting time is from 1:30 PM - 3:30 PM. The campus is located at 6300 Ocean Drive in Corpus Christi.

Next on the agenda was a discussion of the roles of the workgroups. As we continue with the development of the workgroups, revising the ground rules and bringing on a Watershed Coordinator, each workgroup is encouraged to develop a set of goals and timelines. The timeline is very important to scope actual progress. Without a time line it will not be possible to go beyond perceptions of what the Steering Committee can accomplish. Once the goals are developed, funding issues will become obvious.

Roger reported that he had submitted a proposal to Border 2012 and has not heard back as of yet. Another item Roger encouraged the group to submit was a pre-proposal to a EPA program called the Gulf of Mexico Program. Pre-proposals are due on June 18, 2004 (Proposal was submitted on time, however, as of this writing on 6/28/04, the proposal was declined).

Sylvia Ritzy was on the evenings" agenda to give a funding presentation on various programs that the Steering Committee and Workgroups might apply to. Sylvia was unable to come due to travel funding shortages at the EPA and also a meeting conflict and sent her apologies. Kevin Wagner of the TX State Soil and Water Conservation Board agreed to give her presentation. Various grants of the Clean Water Act were discussed, State Revolving Fund, Wetlands Assistance Program, and others. Please contact Sylvia Ritzy at ritzky.sylvia@epa.gov , 214-665-8189 if more information or assistance is needed.

Another item to look at is a one-stop shopping program is a "tool box" associated with a database developed through the University of Iowa called "Plan 2 Fund". More information can be found at: <http://sspa.boisestate.edu/efc>

Sea Grant has posted the Watershed Coordinator position and received many resumes. Hopes are that a Watershed Coordinator will be in place by the next Steering Committee meeting. One of the tasks the Watershed Coordinator will be performing is to research funding and apply for various funding for the workgroups.

The next meeting of the Arroyo Colorado Watershed Steering Committee is scheduled for August 13, 2004 at the Rio Grande Valley Outdoor Center from 7:00 " 9:00 PM.

