

Arroyo Colorado Watershed Steering Committee

Meeting Summary - September 30, 2003

ATTENDING STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS - 9/30/03 MEETING:

Chris Rakestraw, D.J. Davis, Paul Bergh, Jim Chapman, Chris Anzaldúa, Rocky Freund, Butch Palmer, Dave Buzan, Chris Caudle, B. Eduardo Mendez, Blake Traudt, Eric Leigh, John D. Wallace, Don Hockaday, Joe Ramos, Lino Gonzalez

OTHERS ATTENDING: Elizabeth Peirson - Valley Freedom Newspapers, Dr. Kim Jones and Brian Dyson with TX A&M Kingsville

CALL TO ORDER/WELCOME/INTRODUCTIONS:

Roger Miranda (TCEQ) opened the meeting with introductions, handouts, reviewed the evenings' agenda and purpose of the meeting. A summary of the Watershed Steering Committee meeting held in Weslaco on July 30, 2003 was approved.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Mr. Roger Miranda (TCEQ) gave a brief history of the project and of the Arroyo Colorado Steering Committee and the Science and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC). A presentation was given by Mr. Miranda covering a draft outline that had been prepared for the development of an Arroyo Colorado Watershed Action Plan (WAP) that was to be used as a starting point to a final WAP plan.

The proposed outline included formation of subcommittees or workgroups to be made up of steering committee members, including a chair person for each group. The Arroyo Colorado Steering Committee is now open to anyone who is willing to participate, get involved and "roll up their sleeves". Outlines of each groups focus were handed out along with sign up sheets for each of the workgroups which included:

OUTREACH WORKGROUP

- ▶ Suggestions included ways to increase stakeholder participation, public education, state agencies roles, responsibilities and efforts and a suggestion to create micro-watershed councils

Outreach Workgroup Members Received:

Don Hockaday, Rocky Freund, Paul Bergh, Dave Buzan

Received after meeting: Tony Reisinger

TMDL WORKGROUP

- ▶ Ideas suggested included a review of historical water quality, results and conclusions of a previous TMDL analysis, estimate reductions in loadings from the measures proposed in the WAP, refinement of watershed loading estimates, refinement of the watershed modeling, and a need to develop a hydrodynamic model, perform water quality monitoring, etc.

TMDL Workgroup Members Received:

Chris Caudle (possible chairperson), Paul Bergh, Chris Rakestraw

Received after meeting: Pat Radloff

AGRICULTURE WORKGROUP

- ▶ Proposals for this workgroup included a study of nonpoint sources for the Arroyo Colorado watershed, documentation of existing water quality management plans (WQMPs) and projections of future WQMPs implementation, work to increase irrigation efficiency and projections of additional available programs that would assist in the implementation of control actions and management measures implemented under programs such as the CWA 319, Senate Bill 503, and EQIP.

Agriculture Workgroup Members Received:

Paul Bergh, Guy Fipps, Eric Leigh, Andy Garza

WASTEWATER INFRASTRUCTURE WORKGROUP

- ▶ In this infrastructure effort, points were made to enhance enforcement, a possible modification of current effluent limits and self-reporting requirements, reviewing non-point sources in wastewater infrastructure development and storm water permit requirements. The group should also review programs that implement control actions and management measures such as enforcement, permitting programs and infrastructure development programs such as the EDAP, CWSRF, CWTAP, and BECC / NADBANK programs.

Wastewater Infrastructure Workgroup Members Received:

Paul Bergh, Staff from TCEQ - Region 15 TBD, Joe Ramos, Lino Gonzales

HABITAT RESTORATION WORKGROUP

- ▶ The Habitat Restoration Workgroup should include a review of the background and current conditions of the habitat(s) on the Arroyo with a continuing goal to improve the aquatic habitat gaining more understanding of the relationship between hydrodynamics, productivity and SOD in segment 2201, improving the habitat through assessment and modifications to floodway management and dredging practices. Also included in the list of topics to be considered are a feasibility study for implementation of shallow water habitats that assesses the modification of the navigational channel hydraulics and port activities of the Port of Harlingen. Another evaluation included reareation enhancement and sediment control projects.

Habitat Restoration Workgroup Members Received:

Butch Palmer, Paul Bergh, John Wallace, Don Hockaday, Jim Chapman

Received after meeting: Tony Reisinger, Dave Buzan

USES, STANDARDS, AND CRITERIA WORKGROUP (TEMPORARILY SUSPENDED)

The establishment of this workgroup or subcommittee is dependent on resolution of problematic issues associated with this effort and currently being debated among the different agencies of the State of Texas. Formation of this group is suspended until a decision is made on whether the dissolved oxygen criteria in the tidal segment of the Arroyo Colorado should be reassessed.

Pending Uses Workgroup Members Received:

Chris Caudle, D.J. Davis, Paul Bergh, Chris Rakestraw, Dave Buzan

Received after meeting: Pat Radloff

Another item discussed during Mr. Miranda's presentation included nine elements or guidelines that are required to be in place in the WAP in order to be eligible for federal funding under the CWA, Section 319. The nine elements are briefly described below:

1. An identification of the causes and sources or groups of similar sources that will need to be controlled to achieve the load reductions estimated in the watershed-based plan (and to achieve any other watershed goals identified in the watershed-based plan).

2. An estimate of the load reductions expected for the management measures
3. A description of the NPS management measures that need to be implemented to achieve the load reductions
4. An estimate of the amounts of technical and financial assistance needed
5. An information/education component that will be used to enhance public understanding of the project and encourage their early and continued participation
6. A schedule for implementing the NPS management measures identified
7. A description of interim, measurable milestones
8. A set of criteria that can be used to determine whether loading reductions are being achieved
9. A monitoring component to evaluate the effectiveness of the implementation efforts

Given the significant expense of the Arroyo Colorado watershed project, such an approach will help expedite successful implementation of needed practices and thus will speed the restoration of water quality and give the flexibility to implement the plan in portions if need be.

Goal of Steering Committee and Workgroup Subcommittees -

To develop a consensus-based Watershed Action Plan (WAP) that would include realistically achievable load reductions in the watershed, improve aquatic habitat and plan for additional monitoring, characterization and modeling. Completion of the Arroyo WAP is targeted for the Summer of 2004.

Action was taken at the 9/30 meeting to structure the STAC and Stakeholder Committees into one steering committee to be called the Arroyo Colorado Watershed Steering Committee. The Watershed Committee now has subgroups that will meet independent of each other. By November, 2003 the subcommittees will need to meet and agree on a chairperson that would aid and facilitate the subgroup(s) in the necessary research and task(s) needed to formulate a plan of action that will be drafted and incorporated into the WAP.

Mr. Miranda also mentioned that efforts were being made by the TCEQ to acquire federal resources to fund one half (½) FTE position that would be employed through the TX Parks and Wildlife to work on the Arroyo project.

Steps are also being taken to possibly fund and post an RFP in order to hire a consultant that would be a full time watershed coordinator for the Arroyo WAP. This coordinator would be able to assist all the efforts of the workgroups, work to secure funding for tasks identified by the Steering Committee, outreach activities, facilitation as well as handling the administrative work that would be needed to take on the watershed stewardship that the project needs.

Presentation - Dr. Kim Jones, Texas A&M Kingsville -

“Sequential Treatment of Aquaculture Effluent Using Variable Water Depth in a Constructed Wetland”
Dr. Kim Jones and colleague, Brian Dyson attended the meeting and gave an informative presentation that elicited significant interest and questions. Dr. Jones is an Environmental Engineer that graduated from West Point, received his doctorate from GA Tech, worked 15 years in consulting, and is presently a college professor at TX A&M Kingsville. Brian Dyson and Dr. Jones have been studying, sampling and testing at the Loma Alta Shrimp re-circulating constructed wetlands located in the Raymondville, TX area. One conclusion that has been made from the study is that the design is important - deeper zones are better for removing ammonia and shallow zones remove more BOD. They are now entering Phase III of the constructed wetland research and it has been a very successful project so far.

Another case study also discussed was the Imperial & Brawley Wetlands constructed by the Bureau of Reclamation in California. The purpose of the project was to construct a pilot wetlands system to

implement pollution control to reduce agricultural pollutants and improve quality of water discharged from the New River into the Salton Sea. It is a water re-use wetland that consist of the Imperial Wetland of 127 acres and the Brawley at 21 acres. The wetland has had no significant maintenance needed or is not expected to for at least the next two years. More information on this project can be found on the web at <http://www.newriverwetlands.com>

Stakeholder Comments Received:

The work on the Arroyo project made by Mr. Miranda in the past five years was recognized and the question was asked, “if a consultant was hired, would Mr. Miranda still be available to work on the Arroyo project”? Mr. Miranda assured the committee members that he would continue to work on the technical aspects of the Arroyo project as a Geochemist, but that the watershed coordinator would work at a full time level and degree that he was unable to do.

CLOSURE: Action items are: ➤ TCEQ will announce followup stakeholder meeting that will finalize workgroups. TCEQ will work to have a guest speaker to present at the next meeting on possible funding sources for the Arroyo Colorado Watershed Action Plan implementation.

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