

**Arroyo Colorado  
Watershed Steering Committee**  
DRAFT Meeting Summary – August 13, 2004

**ATTENDING: - 8-13-04 MEETING:**

Laura De La Garza – Arroyo Colorado Watershed Coordinator  
Kevin Wagner – TSSWCB  
Lisa Williams – The Nature Conservancy  
Richard Eyster – TDA  
Christine Rakestraw – C – SAC & LLMF  
John D. Wallace – U. S. Fish & Wildlife Service  
Clare Lee – USFWS  
Don Hockaday – UT – Pan American Coastal Studies  
Hudson DeYoe – UTPA  
Ricardo Chapa – Southmost Conservation Board  
Mary Jo Janovsky  
Kay Jenkins – TPWD  
Debi Warner – TPWD & Citizen  
Ken Jones – Lower Rio Grande Valley Association  
Sky Lewey – Nueces River Authority  
Cory Horan – TCEQ/Clean Rivers  
Wayne Belzer – IBWC  
Greg Bryant – TCEQ/TX Watch  
Stephen and Dorothy Early  
Neil Haman – TWDB  
Adele Cordenes Malott – US EPA  
Eric Mendelman – Texas Watch – TSU  
Amanda Ross – Texas Watch - TSU  
Jimmy Paz for Joe Krause – Sabal Palm Audubon

**CALL TO ORDER/WELCOME/INTRODUCTIONS:**

Earlene Lambeth (TCEQ) opened the meeting with self-introductions. Earlene thanked the Rio Grande Valley (RGV) Outdoor Center; Mary Jo Janovsky and Debi Warner for discounted the rate to provide the group with the facility to accommodate the meeting. An item Earlene shared with the Steering Committee was HB 2912 and sharing of personal information such as e-mail addresses. A block has been made on the sign in sheets for permission to share this information within the Steering Committee members.

**PROJECT OVERVIEW**

The meeting was then turned over to the TCEQ Project Manager, Mr. Roger Miranda who gave a brief recap 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) of the Clean Water Act. 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 tidal segment is the portion of the Arroyo Colorado that is impaired and listed for low dissolved oxygen (DO). For more information see previous information and meeting summaries located through the following web site:

[http://www.tnrcc.state.tx.us/water/quality/tmdl/arroyo\\_group.html](http://www.tnrcc.state.tx.us/water/quality/tmdl/arroyo_group.html)

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

Roger introduced the new full-time Watershed Coordinator, Laura De La Garza. Laura's position is funded for two years through Texas Sea Grant and she will be looking for funding to continue leading the effort of a homegrown watershed action group for the Arroyo Colorado. Laura's responsibilities include work previously performed by the TCEQ Project Manager, Roger Miranda and some of the duties performed by Earlene Lambeth. Laura will be coordinating all the group's activities, facilitating and documenting meetings. Laura will be glad to present any issue for you if you are unable to attend one of the meetings. All work group information should be coordinated through Laura.

Laura was born in Corpus Christi and attended the University of Texas in Austin where she received a Bachelor of Science in Geology, with an emphasis in Petroleum and Hydrogeology. She attended The University of Texas Masters Program in Community and Regional Planning. She has completed her course work and is now very close to graduating in the fall. Laura will be attending an intensive watershed course in the fall sponsored by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

Laura can be reached at this time through e-mail at: [ldlg@moment.net](mailto:ldlg@moment.net) and by phone (956) 968-2132. Laura has office space at the Citrus Center in Weslaco. The address is Citrus Research Center, 312 N. International Blvd., Weslaco, TX 78596.

Roger 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 asked the members to sign the revised Arroyo Colorado Ground Rules. If they were not one of the twenty-four identified and interested, let Laura know and she will try to accommodate.

Updates were given for each of the work groups:

Habitat Restoration – Kay Jenkins with the Texas Parks and Wildlife (TPWD), leader of the Habitat Work Group, updated the group on the progress thus far. A meeting was held in Weslaco at the Citrus Center earlier in the day. TCEQ awarded a 319 grant in the amount of \$48,000 to the TPWD to facilitate the habitat portion of the WPP for the Arroyo, allowing a half-time position (FTE) to assist in the project, etc. Ways are being explored to investigate how the Arroyo can be modified or wetlands created to help clean the Arroyo and provide habitat for wildlife. A report was given earlier in the morning meeting about a field trip taken along the Arroyo and sites that might be good for habitat restoration. A feasibility study is in the works through a 309 grant through the General Land Office (GLO) and hopefully will be funded in October. The feasibility funds are being considered for an Inter-local contract.

Wastewater Infrastructure - Roger Miranda reported that in terms of the Wastewater Infrastructure that progress had been made even though they had not formally met. TCEQ is the

regulatory agency for the permitted dischargers and a review of enforcement policies is now ongoing. Various departmental staff at TCEQ have completed 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 has combed through files to “home in” on what the problems historically have been with each facility. A plan is 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.

Education and Outreach Work Group – This work group has been meeting monthly and very active. Video conferencing for the meetings has been available through the TCEQ in Austin. The TSTC has recently agreed to partner with the group and provide meeting facilities in Harlingen as well as video conferencing. Don Hockaday has been volunteering his time to lead this work group and reported on the update.

The work group has been trying to follow the “Getting In Step” program through the EPA. They have been identifying driving forces, setting goals and objectives. They have also been trying to identify the target audience and learn their characteristics to assist in putting together an effective education and outreach plan. What is their message, who should the message be targeted to...many questions are being asked and answered. The group would like to meet with each work group and offer any assistance or incorporate objectives from the other work groups.

Funds are being looked at, grants applied for to assist with various research, demographics, etc. Lots of projects and outreach is being planned and any outreach assistance or time volunteered would be greatly appreciated. Plans are being made to partner with TX Parks and Wildlife (TPWD) for Coastal Expo’s and volunteers will be needed. Please contact the Arroyo Watershed Coordinator, Laura or Kris Shipman with the TPWD at [kris.shipman@tpwd.state.tx.us](mailto:kris.shipman@tpwd.state.tx.us).

Agricultural Work Group – On July 27 the Agricultural Work Group met and Kevin Wagner, the leader of the work group, provided copies of meeting summary. Low attendance is still being addressed. The work group is studying what can be done to reduce the nutrient loading from agriculture along the Arroyo as well as other methods. A lot of the time at the meeting was spent on drafting the Ag portion of the WPP. Goals were set for March 2005 for a grant application to implement the plan in the Arroyo. A plan of action would be of great assistance in acquiring 319 Ag grant funding from the EPA. Work group meetings are being scheduled for October 2004 and another in January 2005.

Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) Work group – The TMDL Work Group met in Corpus on July 23. TCEQ has partnered with USGS through a Joint Funding Agreement to conduct official studies in the Arroyo Colorado. They will be gathering more information on the Arroyo to help refine the original TMDL that was completed in 2002.

Glen Laird from the Harris County Flood Control District was the guest speaker for the evening. He gave a presentation on multi-objective use of flood damage reduction. He presented ways in which the Harris County Flood Control District has been able to balance human safety through flood control and environmental stewardship. Multi-objective use of the waterways is a prime endeavor throughout the district since the early 1990’s. Basically, the Harris County Flood Control District’s core approach is to plan, execute, and maintain flood damage reduction projects that will work with appropriate regard for the community and natural values. Maximum objectives are included with each project in this highly urbanized area. The projects are carefully

crafted and engineered to build multi-use areas for flood management, recreation, and environmental enhancement through the development of parks, wetlands and ecological restoration projects. Even in the wetlands being planned, areas are being developed to bring school age students to the wetlands to educate and perform school science programs such as water quality monitoring and environmental education. The Corp of Engineers has provided a large portion of the funding for the development and enhancement of the area.

A point made was that a lot of the items the District has been able to accomplish were the result of stakeholder groups made up of a balanced representation, such as the Arroyo Colorado Watershed Steering Committee, that met to achieve the flood reduction and conveyance at the same time balancing the biological issues.

The meeting adjourned with the next meeting being planned for early December.