
Meeting of the Arroyo Colorado Watershed Steering Committee and Partnership

Thursday August 4, 2005
6:00 pm – 9:00 pm

The Texas A&M Citrus Research Center – The Rio Red Classroom
312 N. International Boulevard
(FM 1015 north off Hwy 83)
Weslaco, Texas 78596

6:00 SOCIAL AND REFRESHMENTS

- Sign Up for Door Prize

6:30 OPENING (Laura De La Garza and Dr. John Jacob)

- Welcome
- General House-keeping (facilities, refreshments, breaks, meeting format)
 - Introductions
- Review of the Steering Committee Ground Rules for Membership
 - Vote to fill vacancies
 - Vote to elect a chair person for the Steering Committee

7:00 REVIEW AND DISCUSS THE BASIC FRAMEWORK OF THE WATERSHED PROTECTION PLAN (Laura De La Garza)

- Problem Statement
- Visions for the Arroyo Colorado Watershed
- Main Goal(s) for Each Work Group
- Organization for Addressing EPA's Nine Elements Required for the Plan
- List and Discuss the Most Obvious Mitigation/Action Items

8:00 BREAK

8:10 PRESENTATION BY WORK GROUP LEADERS ON THEIR COMPONENTS OF THE PLAN: STATUS, DIRECTION, AND NEEDS

- Habitat Restoration Work Group (Kay Jenkins)
- Agricultural Work Group (Andy Garza)
- Education and Outreach Work Group (Laura De La Garza)
- TMDL Work Group (Roger Miranda)
- Wastewater Infrastructure Work Group (Roger Miranda)
- Land Use Work Group (Laura De La Garza)

- Monitoring Work Group (Laura De La Garza for Rocky Freund)

8:50 CLOSURE (Laura De La Garza and Dr. John Jacob)

- Expected Outcomes for Next Meeting

8:55 DRAWING FOR DOOR PRIZE

**DRAFT Arroyo Colorado Watershed Partnership
Meeting Summary – August 4, 2005**

ATTENDING:

AARON	WENDT	TEXAS STATE SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION
AMADO E	SALINAS	MILITARY HIGHWAY WSC
ANDY	GARZA	TSSWC
BUTCH	PALMER JR	THE PORT OF HARLINGEN AUTHORITY
CHRIS	RAKESTRAW	COALITION TO SAVE THE ARROYO COLORADO
CLARE	LEE	U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
DARRELL	GUNN	CITY OF HARLINGEN
DON	MEDINA	RIO GRANDE STORMWATER TASKFORCE/PHARR
JOHN	JACOB	TEXAS SEA GRANT
JOHN	WALLACE	USFWS LAGUNA ATASCOSA NWR
JUAN	ENCISO, PHD	TEXAS COOPERATIVE EXTENSION
JUDE A.	BENAVIDES	UTBTSC
KAY	JENKINS	TEXAS PARKS AND WILDLIFE DEPARTMENT
KEVIN	WAGNER	TWRI
KIKA	DE LA GARZA	CITIZEN
LAURA	DE LA GARZA	TEXAS A & M
MADGE	DANIELSON	CITIZEN
MARY LOU	CAMPBELL	FRONTERA AUDUBON/SIERRA CLUB
MEGHAN	ROUSSEL	USGS
NEIL	HAMAN	TX WATER DEVELOPMENT BOARD
OLIVIA	GOMEZ	TX PARKS & WILDLIFE
PAUL	BERGH	CSAC LLMF CCA
RICHARD	EYSTER	TX DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
RICK	REYES	INTL BOUNDARY WATER COMMISSION
ROCKY	FREUND	NUECES RIVER AUTHORITY
TERRY	LOCKAMY	TEXAS COOPERATIVE EXTENSION
TOM	HEGER	TX PARKS & WILDLIFE
VENKATESH	UDDAMERI, PhD	TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY KINGSVILLE
JOHNNY	VILLAREAL	CITIZEN
MICHAEL	WEEKS	TX PARKS & WILDLIFE
LINDA	FERNANDEZ	FERNANDEZ GROUP
BOBBY	AGUILAR	RIO GRANDE VALLEY SUGAR GROWERS
ELMA ANNETTE	HERNANDEZ	TX A&M KINGSVILLE
SAM	PATTEN	TX PARKS & WILDLIFE
STEVE	STOCHER	CYESPO CONSULTING SERVICES, INC
PEGGY	GLASS	ALAN PLUMMER ASSOCIATES, INC
LORETTA	MOKRY	ALAN PLUMMER ASSOCIATES, INC
TIM	NOACK	ALAN PLUMMER ASSOCIATES, INC
ROGER	MIRANDA	TX COMMISSION ON ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY
EARLENE	LAMBETH	TX COMMISSION ON ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

CALL TO ORDER/WELCOME/INTRODUCTIONS:

Laura De La Garza, the Arroyo Colorado Watershed Coordinator (TX Sea Grant) opened the meeting with self-introductions. The purpose of the quarterly meeting, which was

attended by approximately 40 participants, was to update the stakeholders on the progress of the Watershed Protection Plan (WPP) that is due in December 2005.

Laura reviewed portions of the ground rules in relation to steering committee membership. She noted that the ground rules define a stakeholder as someone affected in a significant way by implementation of the recommendations of the WPP. The ground rules also state that membership in the Committee is open to any and all interested parties and that additional members may be added if (1) a Committee member vacates a position or (2) if important stakeholder interests are identified that are not represented by the existing membership.

Laura then reviewed the following member expectations:

- Identify desired water quality conditions and measurable goals,
- Make recommendations regarding water quality monitoring and modeling needs,
- Help determine the pollution reduction targets,
- Help develop the WPP to improve the quality of water in the Arroyo,
- Lead effort at the local level, and
- Communicate implications of the WPP and TMDLs to other interested parties.

Next the Committee members who had signed the ground rules were presented along with a couple who had not signed, and the list of individuals who were nominated to fill the vacancies.

Signed Members:

Andy Garza

Paul Bergh/Chris Rakestraw

Butch Palmer

Mike Weeks

Ken Jones

John Wallace/Claire Lee

Neil Haman

Rick Reyes

Rocky Freund

Ray Prewett

(Note: Tony Reisinger was inadvertently left off the list)

Unsigned Members:

Wayne Halbert

Richard Eyster

Nominees:

Darrell Gunn

Don Medina

Marco Pedraza

Dr. Uddameri/Dr. Jones
Alan Moore
Dr. Jude Benavides
Steve Bearden
Sam Simmons
Alan Johnson
Minerva Martinez
Carlos Rubinstein

Dr. Jude A. Benavides was nominated by Tony Reisinger to be Chairman of the Arroyo Colorado Watershed Partnership. Dr. Benavides holds a Ph.D. in environmental science and engineering from Rice University and is a current faculty member of the Department of Chemistry and Environmental Sciences with the University of Texas at Brownsville. He has conducted research and published in the field of hydrology and Texas coastal flood plain management. Dr. Benavides said he was very honored to be nominated to the position and hoped that he had the time, energy and support from the community to do a good job.

Paul Bergh commented that the list of Arroyo Steering Committee members that had been shown, totaled 25 and not the 24 permitted under HB 2912. Laura explained that Richard Eyster was going to partner or proxy with Steve Bearden with the Rio Grande Sugar Growers, which would bring the number to the allowed 24 members.

There was a discussion concerning whether Carlos Rubenstein could serve on the watershed committee since he was an employee of TCEQ. It was explained that since Carlos is an employee of the TCEQ, and the watershed committee is an advisory group to the TCEQ, Carlos would not be able to advise his own agency. Paul Bergh then commented that since Carlos could not serve on the committee, that Richard Eyster could fill that position. Laura acknowledged the suggestion and said they could do that, but no vote was taken and there was no more discussion on filling the remaining vacancy.

A question was asked concerning stakeholder member attendance at the stakeholder meetings and a discussion followed. A decision was made stating that if a member were unable to attend a meeting, a proxy or designated representative would be asked by the stakeholder to attend in the stakeholders' place. It was agreed that guidance on attendance would be formalized in the ground rules developed for the Watershed Steering Committee.

A motion was made and seconded to accept Jude Benavides as a steering committee member and Chair Person and the list of the 24 Watershed Steering Committee members. The vote was taken and accepted.

Laura spoke to the group on the vision for the group, long and short-term goals, and various ideas and partnering in the watershed. Paul Bergh and Chris Rakestraw commented that the vision had already been created month ago. Laura said the group may need a broader general statement of where the group wanted their efforts to go. Dr.

Benavides explained maybe this subject was being rehashed but was important. Laura explained that maybe the vision could be expanded from the problem statement that was already developed and could be used as a springboard for the future. Each work group has been working with goals in mind but a specific vision statement from each work group needs to be developed by the next steering committee meeting to be held in November. From these work group goals, a larger vision can be created.

Laura reminded the stakeholders of the nine elements required for federal funding to be used for implementing the WPP under the CWA, Section 319. The nine elements are:

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.

In regards to applying for other grants (specifically the Targeted Watershed Grant), Laura reviewed what grant reviewers look for when deciding who will get funding:

- Integrated watershed-based approach
- Innovation (low input and sustainable)
- Far-reaching
- Based on completed watershed assessments
- Strategic planning drawn from public and private partners
- Multi-faceted plans for protecting and restoring
- Developed using partnership of diverse stakeholders
- Technically sound watershed plan ready to carry-out
- Cost effective

Laura distributed and discussed the following list of feasible measures that the different work groups had been discussing to assist in reducing the oxygen demand on the Arroyo Colorado.

1. Streamline wastewater treatment plant permit limits.
2. Polishing ponds/constructed wetlands for the WWT facilities.
3. New WWT facilities for Progresso and Donna.
4. Decreased NPS from Colonias.

5. NPS management measures.
6. Targeted outreach and education.
7. Increase agriculture acres under water quality management plans.
8. Agriculture infrastructure improvements.
9. Wetland/habitat improvements.
10. Improved management of nutrient sources.

Measure number 5 is being addressed through the Lower Rio Grand Valley Storm Water Task Force. Don Medina Stormwater Taskforce chairman, spoke briefly on their plans and goals. Laura said she valued their partnership. She reported that the taskforce was developing a Best Management Practice (BMP) guide to be distributed to the cities in the Valley.

WORKGROUP UPDATES

After the break the various work groups gave a summary of what accomplishments and progress had been made. To follow is a brief report on the work group formed under the Arroyo Watershed Steering Committee and Partnership:

Habitat Workgroup - Kay Jenkins with TX Parks and Wildlife gave the Habitat Workgroup summary. The TPWD had received a grant to perform a feasibility study that will be done on the Arroyo Colorado by Alan Plummer and Associates. The study will include the habitat in the entire Arroyo. Various strategies are being studied to improve aquatic life use in the Arroyo. The group is looking at identifying all publically owned or suitable sites, funding sources and partners for implementation, documenting the economic value of the habitat to the Valley, etc. Kay reported that the three sub-groups formed under the Habitat Workgroup were busy with assignments of key elements of the goals identified in the work group. Another item being planned is a kayak/canoe trip on the Arroyo in October or at the next steering committee meeting to locate good riparian restoration areas and to document GIS locations.

Agriculture Workgroup – Andy Garza reported that the Agriculture Workgroup had been very busy with various initiatives. He reported that Kevin Wagner had left the TSSWCB and was being replaced by Aaron Wendt. Aaron was welcomed. Aaron said that Kevin would still be working on the Arroyo WPP for the time being.

Aaron reported that a lot of work had been on going then Kevin gave a brief re-cap and overall view of the plans being developed by the work group.

Kevin reported that nutrient management would be one of their primary goals in the Arroyo watershed and that included soil testing and tillage practices.

There was a question about the shrimp farms and it was noted that they are still operating and using best management practices and they need to be incorporated also in the WPP. A suggestion was made to have a presentation on the on-going work with shrimp farms by Dr. Kim Jones.

Wastewater Infrastructure Workgroup - Roger Miranda recapped the progress that was taking place in the wastewater infrastructure portion of the WPP. Individual meetings have been taking place meeting with the various treatment operators. The Water Development Board, and other agencies (USDA Rural Development, BECC & NAD BANK, etc.) that provide funding for facilities has been partnering with the TCEQ in this effort. Although not complete, the work group has a draft plan in place that will reduce the loadings to the Arroyo from each of the 17 major wastewater treatment plants in the Valley.

One of the largest portions of the plan is to install polishing pond(s) to each of the facilities. The City of La Feria was one of the pioneers in the Valley to begin this practice. Another added incentive for the City of La Feria is that they worked with their planning department to make it a nature preserve, providing habitat and quality of life.

TMDL Workgroup – Another work group that is chaired by Roger Miranda is the TMDL or “further study.” Work group. TCEQ has partnered with the USGS and Megan Roussel presented a Power Point presentation. USGS has been putting equipment in the Arroyo, testing, and collecting some initial data to see the best way to structure the project. Data can be viewed “real time” at the USGS website from the Rio Hondo station.

Education and Outreach Workgroup – Laura reported that the Workgroup is posting a RFQ for a market survey and a selection will be made as soon as possible that will be instrumental in the Education & Outreach plan for the WPP. Since time was short, Laura said she would give a more in-depth update of the work group at the next meeting.

The door prize was won by Tom Heger with TX Parks & Wildlife. Laura thanked the speakers, presenters, and stakeholders and said the next quarterly meeting would be held in November.