

Arroyo Colorado Steering Committee/Partnership Meeting

Texas A&M Kingsville, Citrus Center
Rio Red Classroom
312 N. International Blvd, Weslaco, Texas 78596

January 24, 2008 4:30 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.

MEETING SUMMARY

ATTENDEES

Andy Garza, TSSWCB
Richard Eyster, TDA
Venki Uddemeri, TAMUK
Cory Horan, TCEQ
Amado Salinas, MHWSC
Alex Nunez, TPWD
Jim Tabak, VLF
Clare Lee, USFWS
Rocky Freund, Nueces RA
Amy Rangel, TWRI
John Wallace, USFWS

Aaron Wendt, TSSWCB
Pamela Casebolt, TSSWCB
Laura De La Garza, TWRI
Cecilia Wagner, TWRI
Tony Reisinger, Tx Sea Grant
Kim Jones, TAMUK
Narayana Kannan, TAMUK
Jude Benavides, UTB
Megan Meier, TWRI
Xavier Peries, AgriLife Extension

5:00 Welcome and Introductions.....Dr. Jude Benavides, Chairman

5:10 Long-Term Sustainability of Partnership (Action Item) ...Dr. Jude Benavides, Chairman

- Special task group formed at last meeting investigated options for long-term sustainability of Partnership
- Task group proposed to take further action including looking at budget details, the needs of the Partnership and financial sustainability options
- There were no objections to taking further action;
- Jim Tabak asked what the relationship with the LRGVDC would be; would the Partnership still file as a 501(c)3? Agreed this is something that would be investigated. Jim also stated the Partnership should consider expanding area of focus.
- Cecilia and Cory stressed importance of focusing on the Arroyo Colorado watershed rather than jump to a larger scale basin focus because current funding is specific to Arroyo. Suggested once Partnership stands alone, focus can then be expanded.
- No objections to umbrella under the LRGVDC; it was agreed that their reputation and involvement in the community can benefit the ACWP
- The group was asked if there were objections to Ken Jones presenting concept of LRGVDC being the umbrella organization for ACWP to his board on Feb 28, 2008.
- No objections; Ken Jones will be notified to take concept to his board.
- Group will be contacted via e-mail if any new info comes before next meeting

5:30 Work Group Updates:

Agricultural Issues Andy Garza, TSSWCB
--WQMP Implementation Assistance in the Arroyo Colorado:

- In third year of project; Certified 96 WQMPs covering 4700 acres; \$556,000 obligated and \$447,000 paid out to producers for the following practices: 49 % for land leveling, 24% irrigation pipeline, 17% pasture planning and 10% other (cross fencing, etc.).
- Total funds expended per county is 70% Cameron and 30% Hidalgo
- Project terminates August 2008, but asking to extend to February 2009

--SWAT Model Simulation of the Arroyo.....Narayanan Kannan, TAES-Blackland

- Need for project: Low DO and high bacteria; Goal: Identify BMPs
- Model is physically based, continuous simulation, daily time step
- Components include flow, soil erosion, transport of sediment, nutrient, pesticides, and bacteria; and processes include crop growth, evaporation, infiltration, and soil types.
- Model reflects slight change in watershed boundaries, divided the Arroyo Colorado watershed into 17 sub-basins.
- Soil map greatly improved; using more detailed classification of soils
- 475 hydrologic response units used in entire watershed; average of 28 HRU per sub-watershed
- Weather data from stations in McAllen and Harlingen; flow data at water monitoring stations in Mercedes and Harlingen
- Cory recommended that model include Rio Hondo continuous monitoring site
- Jude asked if additional rainfall data would be of assistance; Kannan said yes and that he needs to do that.
- Future model needs include flow calibration, calibrate sediment and nutrients loading values, water temperature and dissolved oxygen.
- Data requirements: fertilizer and irrigation application rates, tentative application dates and frequency for different crops.
- Need to continue research to resolve inaccuracies
- For more info contact: Narayanan Kannan at nkannan@brc.tamus.edu
- Current draft Arroyo Colorado Watershed land use data available on TAMU Spatial Science Lab website.
- Aaron said that the SWAT modeling is part of a bigger picture and information gained will be fed into the TMDL tidal study the TCEQ will be conducting.

Habitat IssuesDr. Kim Jones, TAMUK
Tony Reisinger, Texas Sea Grant

- Habitat work group met earlier today.
- Laura, Dr. Heise and Cecilia will be traveling to Austin to get more information on improving CIAP proposal application.
- Future funding will also be sought from TPWD through their Kills and Spills program
- Group will begin looking into mitigation bank possibility as potential way to fund regional wetland.
- Regional Wetland Study ongoing. Dr. Kim Jones and students working site assessment. 6 total sites but narrowed down to 3 primary sites (San Benito, La Feria sandpit, and bank north of Port of Harlingen). Additional funding needed for study.

- Cory met with the LRGV TPDES Storm Water Task Force representative in regards to CWA 319 funding of a Regional Detention Facility Study
- TPWD is withdrawing grant application to fund drainage ditch study due to lack of matching funds, and the potential for the study to be interrupted/disturbed pending a flood event.
- Eric Ellman with Los Caminos del Rio would like to work with group on vegetated hike/bike trails.

Monitoring Work Group.....Rocky Freund, Nueces River Authority

- 2008 Water Quality Assessment keeps the Arroyo Colorado Non-tidal segment on the 303(d) list for high bacteria; Data (fecal-high and E.coli-low) shows that should come off 303(d) list, but it was left on based on assessor's judgment.
- Nueces River Authority proposes to submit a TSSWCB 319 grant application; proposing to pick 6 sites in non-tidal portion to study fecal bacteria, enterococcus, and E.coli data to determine appropriate indicator organism for segment. Data will be collected once per month. (Background: In water with greater than 1,000 conductivity, it has been shown E coli does not survive. Therefore the question remains if the low levels of E. coli is due to low survival rates or an actual drop in bacteria contamination. Study will determine if enterococcus or E coli should be the indicator.
- A Monitoring work group meeting will be called sometime in March/April to discuss overall monitoring in the Arroyo Colorado and the Texas Watch volunteers monitors will be invited to get them more involved.

Education and Outreach.....Laura De La Garza, TWRI

- Group met January 15, 2008
- McAllen recycling manager, Ouina Rutledge, presented McAllen's green program, recycling, composting, and O&E efforts. Becoming important partner to group.
- Birdie, O&E coordinator for McAllen Recycling, has coordinated a review of the curriculum by UTPA professors and students.
- Arroyo physical model script almost finalized. Model being used at various events and has received good feedback. Will be demoed Feb. 2 at SPI and Feb. 9 in Harlingen at Ocelot Festival
- Working with TAMU on drafting evaluation form to use at O&E events.
- Texas Watch continues to support volunteer monitors. They will host volunteer monitor training Feb. 2. Half of their monitors are sampling on a regular basis.
- Two grants submitted to EPA; Improving Arroyo Watershed Curriculum and the Developing PSAs. If approved, project(s) will begin in July.
- Coordination for the storm drain marking could begin in March in coordination with the Storm Water Task Force. Looking to have all the cities work together and have a Valley-wide event.

Wastewater Infrastructure.....Laura De La Garza, TWRI

- TWDB Planning grant: working with City of Alamo and MHWSC. Will evaluate potential for MHWSC to better treat Alamo's wastewater.

- Amado Salinas said that he had nothing to report on issue.
- Four Cities Wetland project: City of San Juan hopes to begin construction mid-spring; La Feria and San Benito working of preliminary designs; Mercedes waiting on permit amendment for facility expansion.
- Laura and Heather Harris are planning for a field trip to a wetland in Victoria. There has not been a date scheduled, but looking to do it in the spring.

6:20 Presentation.....Dr. Venki Uddemeri, TAMUK
 “Risk Based Methodologies for Evaluating Point and Non-Point Sources of Loading into the Arroyo Colorado” – Annette Hernandez

- PowerPoint presentation will be posted on Arroyo website.

6:35 Discuss/Prioritize Future Funding Needs and Sources..... Cecilia Wagner, TWRI

- Two proposals submitted to EPA (Arroyo Curriculum updates and PSA)
- All 3 CMP proposals were rejected
- NOAA grant not applicable at this time due to various reasons. (Has to apply gulf wide education K-12). Enrique Perez has interest and will follow up with him.
- CARE grant not eligible at this time due to ACWP falling under funding associated with a targeted watersheds program. Will continue to look at it to be sure.
- Private grants will now be sought after.
- Cecilia said that TWRI would be happy for other Partners to take the lead in grants.
- The available grants list will be posted on the Arroyo website.

6:45 Other Business Dr. Jude Benavides, UTB

- It was decided by the group to invite Aqua Streamer Technology, LLC to the next meeting to discuss possibility to demo their system in Arroyo Colorado. Need to look further into environmental implications from them demonstrating in the Arroyo and ensure there will be no financial responsibilities on the Partnership.

7:00 Adjourn..... Dr. Jude Benavides, UTB

- Next meeting scheduled for April 24, 2008.