Arroyo Colorado Steering Committee/Partnership Meeting

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

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

MEETING SUMMARY

Attendees

Gus Gavel, Aqua Streamer Technology Brian Boudreaux, Aqua Streamer Technology Kim Jones, TAMUK Dr. Jose Martinez, (Revnosa)

Dr. Jose Martinez, (Reynosa Dr. Jaime Efran (Reynosa) Amy Rangel, TWRI Roger Miranda, TCEQ

Enrique Perez, Extension – Cameron County Monty Dozier, Extension – South Region Brad Cowan, Extension – Hidalgo County

Laura De La Garza, TWRI

Wayne Bartholomew, Frontier Audubon

Jim Tabak, Valley Land Fund

Fritz Janke, Harlingen Shrimp Farms

Ronnie Ramirez, TSSWCB

B. Edwardo Mendez TSSWCB

Rocky Freund, NRA Wayne Belzer, IBWC

Elizabeth Verdecchia IBWC

Mark Lingo, TPWD Cecilia Wagner Rick Reyes, IBWC

Patrick J. Daize, IBWC (replacing Rick)

Marci Oviedo, LRGVDC Ludy Saenz, LRGVDC

Chris Rakestraw, CSAC and LLM

Megan Meier, TWRI

Ruben Saldana, Extension – District 12

Laurie Curra, TCEQ Jennifer Buratti, TCEQ

4:30 Social – Snacks and Refreshments Provided Complements of the Valley Land Fund

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

- Dr. Benavides was unable to attend. Also Steering Committee members Neil Haman, Mary Lou Campbell, Paul Bergh, Amado Salinas, Darrell Gunn, Ken Jones, and Butch Palmer notified watershed coordinator that they would not be able to make meeting.
- Laura De La Garza, watershed coordinator chaired meeting
- An agenda change was announced due to a SC members need to leave the meeting early.
 - Agenda item "Long-term Sustainability of the Partnership was discussed first.

Long-Term Partnership Sustainability (Action Item). Laura for Dr. Jude Benavides, Chairman

- Because of the absence of the chairman and other Steering Committee members, Laura suggested that any formal actions on this issue be tabled for the next meeting. No objections to suggestion.
- Since last SC meeting, Laura presented the concept of the LRGVDC being the umbrella organization to the LRGVDC Board of Directors, at which the Board voted in support of continued investigation by our group in regards to their organization being the administrative/fiscal agent for the ACWP. This leaves 2 options:
 - 1. The Partnership function as a new 501(c)3 like the Region Planning Group and RGR Water Authority and the LRGVDC remain the administrative/fiscal support or
 - 2. The Partnership use the LRGVDC as a 501(c)3 and a new water department should form in support of all the water groups currently administered by the LRGVDC.

- Jim asked, "What kind of support could we get from the ACW Partnership to be 501(c)3? Can we provide membership?"
 - o It was agreed membership is a good place to start for support.
 - o Roger asked, "What could we offer in terms of services for this membership?"
 - It was mentioned that the Storm water Task Force offered services in helping with Phase II permits and we could have a service like this.
 - o Roger asked. "Membership benefits are good water quality. Who benefits from that?"
 - South Padre Island and recreationalist were identified.
 - o A member of the shrimp farmer community was asked if they would contribute to this organization. He said it would depend on what membership entails and costs.
 - o Membership can be volunteer time for individuals that cannot afford it and there would be different prices depending on the type of group.
 - o Laura is starting to ask around for support from groups to sustain organization
 - o Rocky suggested finding end-users and sending out letters letting them know about the impact of the water quality and the Partnership's efforts and ask for voluntary support because people are more willing than you'd expect.
- Another potential funding source could be: education courses, fishing tournaments, services.
- Any thoughts or suggestions on how to support group, please let Laura know.
- Estimated annual budget we are looking to support for sustainability of ACWP (current positions) is \$160,000.
- The special task group will continue work on this issue.

5:10 Work Group Updates:

Rocky Freund, NRA

- Is water quality in the Arroyo Colorado getting better or worse?
- Provided TCEQ graphed data (see attached) showing screening criteria. Anything above the line is in violation of standards except for DO where anything below the line is in violation of standards.
- Found no significant downward trends.
- Starting FY09 all sites listed on pg. 122 of WPP will be monitored.
- Nueces River Authority will be funded to collect E. coli, enterococcus, and fecal coliform at 6 stations to identify if E. coli an adequate indicator for the tidal segment of the Arroyo.

Roger Miranda, TCEQ

- Bacteria indicator standard changed from fecal coliform to E. coli 8 years ago and the data gathered since doesn't jive with fecal and E. coli data
- Presented Arroyo Colorado bacteria data as related to potential bacteria TMDL. Pointed out a TMDL will be delayed while NRA studies the question of E. coli as the correct indicator. If there wasn't a question on indicator, a TMDL study would have gone into adoption.
- Only E. coli data is taken from the above tidal segment and NRA study will determine if fecal and E. coli data should be taken.
- They will have the minimum number of samples by 2010 for the 2012 data assessment.
- Presented the 4-B classification option (a category of listing a water body). Issue will be resolved because there's enough effort already being done to address impairment not sure if WPP fits the bill. 4-B option could be sent to EPA, but EPA may not accept this.

• Rocky asked if we should do water quality monitoring at the northern ditch-Hidalgo Floodway. Laura said there is already a group looking at that area.

- Four cities polishing ponds are progressing, but not as quickly as we'd like.
- Regional wetland site suitability project: Kim Jones' PhD student is looking as preparing sub-basin model. They are looking into doing 4 sites—San Benito wastewater treatment plant site, La Feria sandpit site, Alan Johnson's land, and Port of Harlingen site. Modeling will be done to see it can be done hydrologically.
- TCEQ and Dr. Jones are working on proposal with May 19 deadline to EPA for City of McAllen to study the effectives of their regional storm water detention facilities and will address non-point source runoff. They will monitor quality of water going in and coming out. This can be used to translate to other areas to address urban runoff.
- The Habitat workgroup is partnering more heavily with the Valley Land Fund for open space conservation and green space planning. They are inventorying all conservation efforts (USFWS (wildlife corridor); VLF easement sites (Google map); TXDOT map; TPWD wants to partner; GIS Specialist from City of McAllen) to put together maps identifying where priorities ought to be.

Ag Issues......Cecilia Wagner, TWRI

- (Handout see attached) Quarterly Updates of Arroyo Colorado AG Projects
- Soil testing campaign update was provided.
 - O The four-county soil testing program has been conducted in the fall-winter of 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006 and 2007 in the Rio Grande Valley (Cameron, Hidalgo, Starr and Willacy Counties). Projected fertilizer savings based on soil test were an estimated 3.3 million lbs of nitrogen and 3.8 million lbs of phosphorus compared to rates planned before testing. These reductions in nutrient loading represent a reduced threat for potential impacts to surface and ground water resources. In addition, results indicate that producers could potentially save from \$7.50 to \$27.20/acre by utilizing soil test results, depending on their crop and management history. The total economic impact from the project was estimated at \$1.9 million based on average per pound costs for nitrogen and phosphorus.

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

- Model has been going around to different events targeting different people.
- More people are getting trained to use it. The script is available on the website.
- Stormdrain marking presentation will be shown to the Stormwater Task Force. We will try to promote metal markers due to their longevity. We will also ask for cities to pitch in to buy more since we are limited on the amount we can buy. Currently, there is money in the budget through TCEQ 319 money.
- Ten sites were identified for road signs saying, "Entering Arroyo Colorado Watershed." A company from Edinburg has been found that will make the signs and deal with the permitting through TXDOT.
- Also identified 5 possible areas to put "Arroyo Colorado" signs at the crossings. The question came up if the same sign can be used to identify the Arroyo in areas where the Arroyo has a different name such as the Mission Inlet or Llano Grande Lake. Roger suggested not placing signs in those areas.

• USFWS doing Bio-Assay and found that temperature is rising in the Arroyo and their data confirms summer is the time for the lowest amounts of DO in the AC.

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

- The field trip to Victoria to see a constructed wetland was cancelled due to tour guide scheduling conflict. The trip will now be rescheduled for some time in mid-June.
- There is a trend in cities toward reuse of water. City of Harlingen goal is 100% reuse. There is more pollution reduction than expected through this method.
- Three cities remaining to convert lagoon systems (30/19 plants) to mechanical (10/15) plants—La Feria, Military Highway Progresso, and Alamo. Current status of each: La Feria has funding for construction, just put out a RFP; Military Highway waiting on funding; Alamo discussed Military Highway taking their water, but do not want to wait. So now they are working with consultants looking at the option of creating a treatment wetland (~200 acres available). The system could be designed as a no discharge facility. They need a plant to handle at least 2 MGD. Quote for a mechanical plant is \$12 million, a wetland system quoted to cost \$2 to \$3 million. Next step is a TCEQ pre-permit meeting.
- The question came up if all the cities go to increased reuse of their treated wastewater, will that create problems of decreasing instream flows. This is something that needs to be looked into more.

- Jet Streamer Flyer handed out
- Technology been in Japan for 15 years and has been very successful. It is new to the U.S.
- Boat with flow generator on it. Attractively designed. Runs by diesel or electric.
- Pump tube mounted on a frame. Water pumps thru a hose to a central nozzle and a negative pressure is created on other end that causes water to flare out creating a" pump amplifier", which allows you to get 20 times the water volume than you actually pump.
- Also generates 'bubbles'. Ozone allows anaerobic to turn to aerobic.
- The demo will first be in California then tested in Texas.
- Full PowerPoint presentation on their website. www.aquastreamer.com
- Free demo on Arroyo because helps them do testing required before being sold.
- Test unit could treat 25 million gallons per day
- 20 kW electricity used daily; cost to run it electricity wise would be \$10 to \$20/day
- Can be on Arroyo in July or August for 30-60 days.
- Where would the demonstration be located?
 - o Initial site selected is just upstream from the turning basin at the port of Harlingen
 - o Roger suggested having it at the Rio Hondo bridge site but the barge traffic could impose problems. .
- Who will monitor and how?
 - o A TCEQ continuous monitoring system is installed at Rio Hondo bridge, but currently not working due to the harsh water quality environment.
 - o Roger suggested monitoring water before machine deploys (gather baseline data) and after to determine effects.
 - o Roger also suggested we gage it by monitoring upstream of Rio Hondo bridge to determine how far downstream the system impacts water quality
 - o Who will monitor???
- Need to involve Port of Harlingen on this project.

- US EPA Region 6 Strategic Ag Initiative Program was funded and begins September 2008.
- NOAA B-WET proposal was submitted April 18th through UTPA Coastal Studies Lab.
- GLO CMP Program requested the Pesticide Education Proposal to be resubmitted. TCE submitted revised version with additional education products / activities for producers.
- Region 6 Wetland Program Development Grant not submitted no interest / response from academic community
- Kodak American Greenways Grant—will work with Eric Ellman on bike trails
- CMP pre-proposals coming up---we will resubmit Rio Hondo Nature Center proposal and Adolph Thomae proposal
- CIAP—Draft ready and waiting for RFP to come out
- We will help develop grants for any Partners. We have trouble getting interested parties to lead efforts. Let us know if you would like us to help with grants.

6:45 Other Business Laura for Dr. Jude Benavides, UTB

- Arroyo City Ponds—Potential for growing algae for biofuels in shrimp ponds.
- Next Meeting July 24, 2008

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