

# Arroyo Colorado Wastewater Infrastructure Workgroup

Rio Red Classroom  
Texas A&M Kingsville Citrus Center  
312 N. International Blvd, Weslaco, Texas 78596  
December 16, 2008 1:30 pm to 3:30 pm

## Meeting Summary

### Welcome and Introductions ..... Lee Clapp, TAMUK

Jaime Flores, new watershed coordinator  
Laura de la Garza, Comite Resources  
Megan Meier, TWRI (by phone)  
Darrell Gunn, Harlingen Waterworks  
Roger Miranda, TCEQ  
Kristina D. Hernandez-HALFF Associates, Inc.  
David Salinas, City of Weslaco

### Arroyo Colorado Watershed Protection Plan:

#### Review ACWPP Implementation Status ..... Jaime Flores, TWRI

- Semi-annual newsletter mailed out mid-November.
- Storm drain markers (2760) – half in English and half in Spanish – have been delivered to Javier Guerrero at TAMUK, who will deliver them to the Weslaco Public Works building. This will serve as a central distribution point for the participating cities, as the TPDES Storm Water Task Force meetings will be held there. The participating cities have agreed to have a Valley-wide installation on Earth Day.
- Road signs marking the Arroyo Colorado Watershed were installed in November.
- Upcoming meetings are planned for January (Steering, Ag, Habitat, O&E).
- Completion of milestone chart (need to complete wastewater component at this meeting; everyone received a copy of the spreadsheet in the email Laura sent out last month).
- Towards meeting the new MS4 public education requirements, the “Dirty Dozen” PSA was published in Texas COOP Power Magazine. 90,000 copies were mailed out at the end of November. In addition, the Task Force is working on 300,000 utility bill inserts.
- Santa Rosa is the first Storm Water Task Force city to receive its MS4 permit. All of the other cities (13) in the Task Force will be receiving theirs shortly.
- Megan Meier is working on an Environmental Education grant for EPA.
- The Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority (GBRA) has developed a postcard and website ([www.gbra.org](http://www.gbra.org)) (partially funded by TCEQ).

#### Review of Wastewater Components of the ACWPP ..... Laura De La Garza

- Existing or planned colonia hookups:
  - Jaime will ask cities for their most recent colonia hookup counts stating from Jan. 1, 2007 to Dec. 31, 2008, as well as additional hookups planned for the near future.
- Current and proposed re-use volumes:
  - Jaime will also ask cities for up-to-date reuse rates.
  - McAllen currently reuses more than 1 MGD.
  - Weslaco also reuses 1 MGD and plans to increase this to 1.5 MGD.

- Voluntary nutrient and *E. coli* sampling conducted by the cities:
  - Nutrient and bacteria sampling requirements are described on p. 45 of the Pollutant Reduction Plan (October 2006 version).
  - Nutrient and *E. coli* sampling conducted will kick in when cities reapply for permits in 2010.
  - Roger reported that bacteria counts in the Arroyo are going down (although they are going up in the Rio Grande) and consequently nutrients may be a larger concern.
  - TCEQ is leaning towards third party to conduct monitoring. Dr. Clapp (TAMUK) and Dr. Heise (UTB) will move forward on providing the monitoring.
  - Labs will need to be NELAC-certified; labs are developing in the LRGV.
  - Roger indicated that the cities would probably be exempted from having to develop a QAPP
- Enhanced treatment systems:
  - Three-cities wetland project – see update below.
  - 106 money may be available along with other grants.
  - Chances of 319 funding is slim.
  - Weslaco North plant to upgrade to 5.5 MGD, South Plant still at 1.5 MGD. Weslaco plans to partner with TPWD on developing a 25 acres wetland on the Las Palomas WMA and is looking to create a wetland/habitat incrementally as treated wastewater becomes available. They would begin by flooding 5 acres and increase as necessary.
  - Weslaco is creating a stormwater utility and will fund it through \$1 connection fees.
- Status of Implementation measures of the Pollutant Reduction Plan and WPP (see spreadsheet).
  - Need to update table.
- Proposed amendments/revisions to the Pollutant Reduction Plan
  - ACWPP “considered a ‘living’ document subject to revisions and modifications every 5 years in coordination with the Rio Grande (Region M) Regional Water Plan.”
  - Plan revisions based on knowledge gained – adaptive management.
  - Many cities have already exceeded their original plans and are looking ahead.

**Project Discussion/Updates** .....Laura De La Garza

- Inflow and Infiltration Study Findings from the City of Weslaco.. David Salinas, City of Weslaco
  - Presentation will be loaded onto ACWPP website.
  - CDM closed-circuit TV study found collapsed line (clay) under canal.
  - Also found gutters connected directly to clean-outs to the sanitary sewer.
- Three-Cities Wetland Project Update ..... San Benito, San Juan, La Feria
  - San Juan has solicited bids for wetland Project and is planning to break ground in spring.
  - La Feria has resubmitted their design to TCEQ. Roger said it is close to being approved.
  - San Benito has also submitted wetland design to the TCEQ. Delays due to problems associated with existing sludge at bottom of lagoons to be converted to wetlands.
- Mercedes is interested in picking up a project, but encountered higher than anticipated land costs for the original 10-acre site. Considering wastewater and stormwater wetland design.
- Weslaco still interested in wetland development on 25 acres owned by TPWD.

**New Wastewater Treatment Facility Proposals** .....Laura De La Garza

- City of Combes is interested in coming up with a way to alleviate the flooding and major I&I problems that resulted from Hurricane Dolly. Flood waters are believed to have infiltrated their collection system causing the city of Harlingen to handle greater flow than anticipated, that resulted in them being charged with increased wastewater treatment fees. Situation overwhelmed Harlingen’s lift stations. Combes need storm water infrastructure and drainage – potential funding through Community Development Block Grants. This is a pertinent issue for ACWP – could serve as a non-partisan mediator. Combes should be invited to the next meeting

– share Weslaco’s experience? What drainage district is Combes in? It was suggested that the city of Combes consider LID (low-impact development) BMPs for stormwater management. Dr. John Jacob identified as a good source of information.

- Hidalgo Co. MUD#1 (near Peñitas) - Applying for 1 MGD plant permit. They are currently at 0.5 MGD. The new plant is listed as 100% reuse and overflow will drain into North Floodway and not the AC as originally thought. Kristina, HALFF Associates, provided update.

Harlingen Wastewater Treatment Plants .....Daryl Gunn

- Harlingen closed its WWTP #1 in January 2008 and expanded its WWTP #2, which is currently operating under a 10/15/3 permit. Both permits will expire in 2010, at which point Harlingen will apply for a major modification.

Future Growth ..... Roger Miranda

- Although the Pollution Reduction Plan (PRP) is active for another 8 years, it does not address future growth.
- Future growth should be incorporated into new PRP.
- Need to plan for reuse; document existing reuse plans.
- New discharge permits should be tracked on Nueces River Authority website. Go to [www.nueces-ra.org/CP/CRP/wastewater.php](http://www.nueces-ra.org/CP/CRP/wastewater.php).
- For more information, search TCEQ Chief Clerk Database.

**Discuss/Prioritize Future Funding Needs and Sources** ..... Lee Clapp, TAMUK

- TWDB water and wastewater planning grant.
- Grant table review.
- Near-term WWTP infrastructure improvements:
  - Alamo (30/90) – **needs funding** (see below).
  - MHWSC – Progreso (30/90) – **still awaiting USDA funding** (need update)
  - La Feria (30/90) – has funding, will break ground soon.
  - San Benito – has funding
  - ERHWSC – has funding
  - Hidalgo (30/90) – done.
- Near-term WWTP expansions:
  - Pharr – has funding.
  - Donna – has funding
  - Weslaco – has funding
  - HWWS #1 – closed

**Discuss Funding Sources** ..... Laura de la Garza

- CWA 319 funding is possible if effluent is combined with stormwater and/or irrigation return water.
- CWA 106 funding could be available fro wetland development
- Can construct wetlands in parks – Texas Parks & Wildlife Department can provide leveraged funding.
- EPA 2025 funding, NRS?
- Coastal Management Program (CMP) grants – Rio Hondo?
- Coastal Impact Assessment Program (CIAP) grants – LRGVDC feasibility study for regional wetlands system.
  - Rio Hondo pledged up to 0.5 MGD to wetland system.
  - Rio Hondo wetland to be part of a nature park and educational center with additional public access to the Arroyo Colorado

- Megan and Roger will discuss the Port of Harlingen proposal in more detail.
- Laura met with Robert de Leon at Alamo to discuss proposal for 30/30 plant.
  - Will request a meeting with the TCEQ permitting group?
  - Comite Resources is conducting a feasibility study for upgrading the Alamo wastewater treatment system and the development of wetlands.
  - MHWSC has an over-sized mechanical plant just south of Alamo.
- Kristina indicated there is funding available through TWDB. The application is a bit long, but available funding is expected to be large this coming year because of President-elect Obama's proposed stimulus package. See website below:  
[www.twdb.state.tx.us/assistance/financial/fin\\_infrastructure/cwsrffund.asp](http://www.twdb.state.tx.us/assistance/financial/fin_infrastructure/cwsrffund.asp)

**Other Business/Upcoming Events** ..... Laura De La Garza

- TCEQ is considering sponsoring a bio-solids composting conference in the Valley
  - Ross Pumfrey, Austin TCEQ, held a conference call 10/9/08 to determine interest in a biosolids conference and participants expressed interest.
  - TCEQ will survey a few other cities and determine which additional approaches to sludge management merit presentation at the workshop.
  - Laura said it would be important to discuss the finances and economics of any approach that is presented, so that the participants understand what resources and payoffs are involved.
- Stormwater:
  - Roger indicating that, when updating plan in future, we need to beef up stormwater section since stormwater permits are being issued now -- MS4's didn't exist at the ACWPP was first developed.
  - New Storm Water Task Force members may be back-charged.
  - S & B's MS4 plan for the county? Get from Michelle at Mercedes.
  - Most cities went with the Storm Water Task Force; Harlingen developed their own plan.
- Phil Wheland (UTPA Chemistry) has a grad student studying heavy metals at the mouth of the Arroyo.
- Lee and Elizabeth Heise will develop a work plan for a two-year sampling program for nutrients and bacteria.
- Juan Enciso is conducting a shallow groundwater sampling study as part of his ag assessment study.

**Next Meeting Date/Adjourn**..... Lee Clapp, TAMUK

- Discussed having the meeting quarterly because of the amount of information and data that needs to be updated.
- Need more participation from the cities with the WWTP permits to see where they are and if they are meeting the goals set forth in the WPP.
- Next meeting will be in February.