

Brownsville Resaca Watershed Stakeholder Meeting

Rancho Viejo Town Hall
3301 Carmen Ave., Rancho Viejo, Texas 78575

February 26, 2015 5:30 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.

Attendees:

Jaime Flores, TWRI
Jude Benavides, UTB
Maria Solis, UTB
Javier Guerrero, TAMUK
Carlos , Los Fresnos
Augustin Lopez Jr, Los Fresnos
Jacinto Hinojosa, San Benito
Leon Deason, Bayview
Patty Alexander, Stakeholder
Rodrigo Garcia, Pt. Isabel
Sylvia Pineda, UTB
Scott Fry, VMUD#2
Mtkanda Krafka, UTB
Ernesto Hinojosa, Cameron Co.
Raul Gomez, Cameron Co.
David A. Garza, Cameron Co.
Faiz Rahman, UTPA-CSL

Malu Salinas, UTB
Jessica Castro, UTB
Breana Bowman, UTB
Rolando Nino, UTB
Jocelyn Ortiz, UTB
Maria Bautista, UTB
Arthur Talley, TCEQ
Rubi Perez, UTB
Salvador Murillo, Stakeholder
Ben Medina, Rio Hondo
Nicole Martiel, UTB
Roberto Santillana, UTB
Ana Ramirez, UTB
Kenya Gonzalez, UTB
Gabriela Camarillo, UTB
Jose Figueroa, Brownsville
Anne Benavides, Ambiotec

MEETING GOALS

- 1) Watershed planning
- 2) Discuss sources of pollution/impairments
- 3) Discuss sampling activities, proposed Best Management Practices
- 4) Plan for next meeting

Welcome and Introductions Dr. Jude Benavides, UTB

Watershed PlanningJaime Flores, TWRI

Public Participation Plan

Jaime handed out the PPP for the project and explained how it was put together and the purpose of the document. The PPP is designed to help guide the Watershed Planning Process and provide structure to the group as well as outlining the project goals. Jaime will post the PPP to the project website and distribute to the group via email.

What is a Resaca?

Jaime initiated a discussion on the definition of a Resaca.

Most people believe it is an oxbow or oxbow lake and that is incorrect. An Oxbow is; The meander loop of a mature river that has been cut off from the main stem of the river.

Definition of RESACA - noun: re saca: the dry channel or the former often marshy course of a stream. Origin of RESACA-American Spanish, from Spanish resacar to draw back, from re- (from Latin) + sacar to draw, take out, perhaps from Latin saccus sack. Taken from Webster's Dictionary. This definition does not fit what we have in this watershed.

The most correct definition is; A former secondary and/or distributary (opposite of tributary) channel of the Rio Grande.

This is more indicative of what we see in this watershed. The Resaca's are remnant channels of the Rio Grande that can be several miles long and contain meander loops and oxbows within its natural banks and levees. A Resaca is a much larger feature than an oxbow.

What should we name the watershed?

Jaime asked the group what they thought the watershed should be named/called. Some people have already opposed having Brownsville in the naming of the watershed. Jaime listed some names that he thought might fit and presented them to the group;

Brownsville Resaca Watershed
The Resacas Watershed
Rio Bravo Delta Watershed
Las Palmas Watershed

Arthur Talley suggested; Laguna Madre Southmost. A large portion of the group liked the name; The Resacas or Los Resacas Watershed. Commissioner Garza stated that the name of the watershed should include the word Resacas in the name because it is such a prominent feature in the watershed and is what makes this watershed unique.

Commissioner Garza went on to say that he was very pleased to see that the Watershed Planning Process had started in this watershed. He had met with the EPA last year in Dallas to discuss the lack of a watershed plan for this watershed. He stated that 1/3 of Cameron County has an elevation that is actually lower than mean sea level and that is why the Cameron County Coastal Task Force was formed. He went on to say that due to lack of any official watershed protection plan for the region or any real progress in developing a plan would result in the region losing CMP, CIAP, RESTORE and SWIFT funds to the region.

Presentation of preliminary maps of the watershed

Jaime presented preliminary maps of the watershed to group and said he would post them to the webpage.

Historical Data collected from watershed

Jaime presented the historical data that had been collected by TIAER. The maps showed the monitoring locations that had been sampled in the past and the parameters sampled for; Dissolved Oxygen, Chlorophyll A, Nitrates and Enterococcus. We need to decide which monitoring locations and parameters we want sample for to determine the causes and sources of pollution from the watershed.

General discussion:

Jude gave a presentation of the Resaca Restoration Project that is taking place. PUB has provided funds to bring in smaller dredging machines and a dewatering system to separate the sediment from the spoils removed from the resacas. They have already completed town lake and have moved to the Dean Porter Park resacas. This is a great project that demonstrates how business, PUB, can work with the city to solve a problem.

Jose Figueroa-Since the resacas have silted in, you see more and more flooding of the surrounding neighborhoods

Scott wanted to know why developers are looking to build subdivisions/colonias on Tule lake beds near Palo Alto. There are some colonias already there, how can this be allowed to happen? Developers must take responsibility for effects of drainage on subdivisions and watershed. The resacas have been sliced up by irrigation districts for their own purposes, is there any talk about reconnecting the resacas to their original connectivity to mitigate flooding?

Jose-There needs to be an O&E component about the resacas on how vital they are to the community and to aid in mitigating flooding. Too many people dump trash in the resacas and many times they will dump into the ditches and drainage canals that drain into the resacas that results in flooding. There is a real need to educate the public on why this is bad and how it makes flooding issues worse.

Jaime-we can start posting O&E materials and other information materials to the Brownsville webpage on the Arroyo Colorado website; arroyocolorado.org

Have we reached out to the drainage districts?

David- The drainage districts do have some inherent issues; there are areas that are outside of drainage districts that fall in between 2 different DD's. These are no-mans land where neither district are responsible for the no-mans land area and this is where a lot of illegal dumping takes place, then during a storm event these areas flood and the trash moves downstream causing more flooding; 50% of Cameron Co. falls in this no-mans land category

CCDD#1 are making developers build there subdivisions with more green space to handle stormwater. We need to pass ordinances like this in the cities, the county and ID & DD's.

Jude wanted to remind the group that the focus of this project is define the causes and sources of pollution in order to characterize the watershed and select a model that best fits watershed.

Jose-there is some pollution data already available; lets look at the sediment/debris being collected by street sweepers, vacuum pump sampling.

Everyone-we need to sample way back in the drainage canals, along pollution pathways.

We need to know what % of stormwater drains into the ship channel, consider sampling at both ends. Is there any sampling being conducted in the ship channel by the ship channel?

Scott suggested that the levee be the southern boundary of the watershed, we should use station 14875 instead of 13460 and stay with 13459, 14865.

David stated that we need to leverage the private sector, especially those operating in the watershed like TANASCA power plant, they will be discharging through one of the drainage districts. Need these groups to mitigate stormwater/discharges that they create, be proactive and helps us monitor and mitigate and be part of the solution instead of making things worse in the name of progress.

Jaime wanted to reiterate to the group that even though this project will focus on characterizing the causes and sources of pollution, all of the suggestions, potential projects and BMP's brought up today will become the basis of the WPP for this watershed. We will continue to discuss many of these topics/projects to "flush them out" and develop them with greater detail so that they will be ready for inclusion in the WPP when that phase of the project arrives.

Next Steps..... Dr. Jude Benavides, UTB

- Jaime will email a meeting summary to stakeholders present at the meeting and will post them to the webpage.
- Next meeting-proposed meeting locations, dates and times

The group agreed that we should have quarterly meetings and that we should have them at a central location. The group agreed that the Rancho Viejo Town Hall is a good location for the meetings and that we should hold the next couple of meetings there. The next meeting date is scheduled for May 28, 2015 from 5-7pm.

Other Business Dr. Jude Benavides, UTB

Adjourn Dr. Jude Benavides, UTB