

Arroyo Colorado Habitat Workgroup

Estero Llano Grande World Birding Center
3301 S. FM 1015, Weslaco, Texas 78596

February 19, 2015

2:00 pm - 4:00 pm

Attendees:

Jaime Flores, TWRI
Ashley Gregory, TWRI
Marilyn Vincent, ACAS
Willy Cupit, TPWD
Jimmy Stout, TPWD
Javier De Leon, TPWD

Jose Uribe, TPWD
Kim Jones, TAMUK
Brunilda Fuentes-Capozello, TPWD
Tony Reisinger, TX Sea Grant
Rodrigo Davila, San Benito
Jacinto Hinojosa, San Benito

MEETING AGENDA

Welcome and Introductions.....Dr. Kim Jones, TAMUK

Phase II of the Arroyo Colorado Watershed Protection Plan

Update of the ACWPP..... Jaime Flores, TWRI

Jaime began by discussing the edits that have been made to the latest draft of the update; adding tables instead of text to display the WWTP upgrades, new WWTP's and colonia connections. Jaime also discussed his efforts to visit with all individual WWTP's to get the most recent numbers on WWTP capacity, any plans to expand/upgrade and time frame, any plans to hook up additional colonias in the next 5, 10 and 15 year.

What should we do as far as permit discharge limits in the Update?

- All plants with the exception of Alamo are discharging at the 10-15-3 permit; numbers represent Total Suspend Solids-Biological Oxygen Demand- Ammonia
 - Alamo has installed 4 solar powered circulators to break down solids before treatment. Must complete new plant/wetland to achieve 10-15-3 by 2017.
- The most recent WWTP's to upgrade their facilities; Mercedes and Pharr already operating at the newest discharge permit 7-12-2. ACWP wants to set 7-12-2 permit as new discharge permit goal short term goal and 5-5-1 as long term goal.

Ramsey Park Project

- TAMUK has been working on a solution for the wetland; since the park was built over a land fill they have been having issues with the water seeping out of the wetland areas, which could pose a threat to ground waters. As a solution they plan to line the wetlands with a 1

inch thick geotextile liner that should prevent seepage. The liner costs \$1.62/sq. ft. and they have enough in the budget for 2 acres of wetland area.

- The parking lot has also been an issue, when it rains water pools in the center of the parking lot causing the asphalt and caliche subgrade to fail and turning into a muddy pit despite repeated attempts to repair the section. To alleviate this issue a bio-retention filter will be built in the center of the parking lot to capture the water with an overflow pipe that will run underneath the parking lot to discharge the water into the wetlands. The bio-retention filter will be able to capture pollutants and sediment and filter the stormwater before it drains into the wetlands.
- City of Harlingen Parks and Rec Director Javier Mendez has stepped up and agreed to work with the city to pave the parking lot. Dr. Jones' team is working on a budget for the paving project and will present it before the City Commission for approval on March 4th. They hope for the whole project to be complete before the Birding Festival in November.
- The City really likes the project and thinks the parking lot area could also serve as a demonstration site for future commercial development.
- There is a possibility that 3 million gallons of water may become available, in the event that this happens the ACWP is preparing a plan for the hydrological connection of several parks.

Harlingen Projects

- Harlingen has a new master plan for their Parks and Rec department. They are planning a hike and bike trail that would cross the Arroyo twice and include kayak launch sites.
- A grant from TX Parks and Wildlife is helping to fund this project.
- There is some discussion of having kayaking all the way to the City of Rio Hondo but there are concerns about the danger of the barge traffic.

San Benito Project

- San Benito and TWRI have received a grant from CMP to add on to an existing constructed wetland system at one of their WWTPs. They will be installing a pipe line to move water into 10 pond areas to increase the size of the wetland area.
- As part of the project an old warehouse will be repurposed as an outreach and education pavilion for the city. To garner public involvement, the sheet metal panels will be taken to schools and the kids will paint murals of birds and their school name for the new pavilion area.
- The project should begin in Sept. or Oct.
- They may add a kayak launch site to this wetland area.

There is a possibility that with all of these projects being planned and constructed at the same time that some project coordination between the various cities can occur to discuss the the best way to have similar construction details that would result in continuous kayaking from Harlingen all the way to San Benito and Rio Hondo.

IBWC Projects

- IBWC is searching for ways to alleviate possible flooding during major rain events in the Harlingen area. From modeling results they concluded that an inline channel, about 20-30 miles upstream from Harlingen would help reduce flooding issues. The IBWC is also clear cutting large sections along the Arroyo From HWY 77 to FM 509. They have cut a section along Ramsey Park. USFW representatives were trying to stop the cutting but the IBWC continued despite USFW protest.
- This description lines up nicely with a project that AC Habitat WG have been discussing for over a year; the dredging of Llano Grande Lake, the lake used to be about 20 feet deep and 1 ½ to 2 miles long. As it sits around 20-30 miles upstream from Harlingen this project would be ideal for what IBWC is looking to do.
- IBWC is interested in dredging the lake and has said they would look into what it would take to begin such a project.
- If this project happens, eventually we could have kayaking all the way from FM 1015 to San Benito.
- After about 15 years, IBWC is finally making the move to issue permits to install rip rap Aeration Structures in 3 areas in Harlingen; Tony Butler, Altas Palmas, and right before 499.
- CCA said that once the permits were issued they would offer \$10,000 in assistance.

All of the projects listed below were discussed in the last meeting in October. The Habitat WG wanted to discuss the projects in greater details as we prepare to include these projects as major components of the Habitat section of Phase II of the ACWPP.

La Feria Tio Cano Lake Drainage/Wetland Project

This area was flooded during Hurricane Dolly for over six months. This project will consist of developing 460 acres next to a 440 acre USFW managed property. The project will consist of providing infrastructure to drain the affected area and move the water to a wetland area that is owned by the USFW. The WG agreed to include this project in the AC WPP Update.

Hickory Hill Park Stormwater Detention Project

The City of Harlingen is proposing to develop this project. The project area is undeveloped land used for farming which is adjacent to residential areas.

Park will serve an estimated population of 65,665 people

The detention facility will drain an area of approximately 201 acres

Proposed Location Located west of Bass Boulevard and north of Expressway 83, approximately 46 acres (11 acres owned by the City and 35 acres to be acquired).

Proposed Improvements Create a park to include trails, pond, birding observation stations, wetlands, playground area, restrooms & parking areas to incorporate LID features (permeable pavements, green roofs, rainwater tanks, bio-swales)

Excavate a tiered detention facility. To include a controlled discharge to a drainage ditch located to the west of the detention facility. The WG decided to include this project in the ACWPP Update.

Palm Valley Stormwater Ponds and Drainage Rehabilitation Project

These ponds serve as the SW collection and drainage system for the city as well as water hazards for the Golf course. Over time, the ponds have silted in and have lost the original storage capacity. The city is planning to dredge the ponds and SW discharge pipe in order to restore the holding capacity of the ponds. The WG decided to include this project in the ACWPP Update.

Alternative BMPs

- Waiting on modeling to be complete, but there is the possibility that due to the extreme modifications to the Arroyo that traditional BMPs may not be enough to alleviate the pollutant loading in order to achieve the desired water quality standards. We may need to look at unconventional BMPs like aerators, circulators.

Upcoming RPFs

- TCEQ 319 will come out in June/July
- TSSWCB 319 will come out in April

Next Meeting

- April, most likely 3rd week
- Will email agenda, draft of update, update plan document and photo contest flyer to WG