

## **DRAFT**

### **Meeting Summary of the Arroyo Colorado Habitat Restoration Workgroup of the Arroyo Colorado Watershed Steering Committee Texas A&M University Kingsville – Citrus Center December 2, 2004**

#### **ATTENDING WORKGROUP COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

Laura De La Garza – Arroyo Colorado Watershed Coordinator

Kay Jenkins – TPWD

Olivia Gomez – TPWD

Roger Miranda – TCEQ

Earlene Lambeth – TCEQ

Randy Blankinship – TPWD

Michael Weeks - TPWD

Wilson Palmer, Jr. – Port of Harlingen

Neil Haman – TWDB

Miranda Key – Harlingen Proud

Cheryl LaBerge – Harlingen Chamber of commerce

Chris Watenpool – TPWD

Sue Griffin – Citizen

Billy Snider, Jr. – Citizen

Martin Hagne – Valley Nature Center

Sam Patten – TPWD

Ni-Bin Chang – Texas A&M – Kingsville

Mary Lou Campbell – Sierra Club

Tom Wilson – City of Harlingen

Paul Bergh –

Gary Jones - USIBWC

Sylvia Waggoner – USIBWC

Selena King – Frontera Audubon

Kim Jones – Texas A&M – Kingsville

Jonathan Gonzalez – Cameron County

Juan Anciso – Texas A&M - Kingsville

#### **CALL TO ORDER/WELCOME/INTRODUCTIONS**

Kay Jenkins (TPWD) opened the fourth meeting of the Habitat Restoration Workgroup meeting held in Weslaco on December 2, 2004. The workgroup members in attendance introduced themselves. The meeting attendees were asked to review the existing workgroup member list and make any corrections to their information. They were also reminded to initial the “share info” column of the sign in sheet if they were willing to have their contact information shared among the workgroup members.

Kay Jenkins briefly stated the workgroup’s purpose is to develop a habitat restoration plan that would restore and enhance fish and wildlife and wetland habitats in both the nontidal and tidal segments of the Arroyo Colorado to improve BOD and nutrient assimilation and thus

reduce the low dissolved oxygen problems in the tidal segment. The workgroup's plan is to be included in the broader Watershed Protection Plan. The workgroup is also tasked with finding funding sources to implement the habitat restoration plan.

Kay Jenkins reported that the workplan that TPWD submitted to the General Land Office (GLO) for CMP Cycle 9 funding for a feasibility study for habitat restoration and modification in the Arroyo Colorado was approved by the Coastal Management Program. A project cooperation agreement between GLO and TPWD will be prepared once GLO receives their federal funds for Cycle 9.

Sylvia Waggoner stated that the IBWC maintains parts of the Arroyo Colorado channel. She said that vegetation and habitat in the right of ways can create backwater effects flooding problems in the urban areas. She suggested that the workgroup submit potential habitat projects or bank stabilization projects on the Arroyo Colorado to her for review.

## **AGENDA ITEMS**

### Presentation

Tom Wilson, Director of the City of Harlingen's Public Services Department presented maps showing the City of Harlingen's current land holdings on the Arroyo Colorado and the land uses occurring on those sites. The City's main parks along the Arroyo Colorado include Hugh Ramsey Nature Park and World Birding Center (56 acres), Harlingen Thicket (40 acres), Tony Butler Golf Course (160 acres), Arroyo Park (27 acre complex of small sports fields) and Dixieland Park. He stated that partnerships and volunteer groups have made Harlingen's parks what they are today.

Laura De La Garza suggested that perhaps the City could provide kayak launch areas at appropriate places in the parks along the Arroyo Colorado. Gary Jones reported that the IBWC mows the area along the Arroyo Colorado upstream of Harlingen between the water level and the high water mark once a year. He said they only do maintenance work in Harlingen when requested by the City. He said that generally easements within the levees of the Arroyo Colorado have a vegetation height restriction of 3 feet to maintain flood conveyance. Roger Miranda suggested that the banks of the Arroyo Colorado need to be assessed for bank stabilization since sediments in the water column increases total suspended solids, reduces algal growth and assimilative capabilities of the stream.

When asked about potential sites for creating wetlands or restoring riparian habitat, Tom Wilson mentioned that the City of Harlingen has applied for an EPA Innovation Grant to restore prairie habitat using wastewater effluent at Hugh Ramsey Nature Park. There followed much discussion on the possibility of creating a pilot constructed wetland project in existing drainage ditches within Hugh Ramsey Nature Park. TPWD staff agreed to meet Billy Snider at the park the following day for a preliminary site visit. Tom Wilson mentioned that there was another park, McCollough Park that had 11 acres of undeveloped property along the Arroyo Colorado but it has a high bluff. There is also the City's landfill site near FM 106, east of Ramsey Park. He also said that there is property below the reservoir that could possibly be acquired. The Harlingen Waterworks also had property that

could be considered for off channel wetlands. Randy Blankinship reminded the workgroup that there would probably be several possible sizes and types of habitat projects that could be contained in a habitat component of the Watershed Protection Plan.

#### Workgroup Discussion and Approvals

The meeting summary from the August 13, 2004 meeting was approved by the meeting attendees. Kay Jenkins presented revised workgroup goals for the group to consider. Roger Miranda suggested that the workgroup look at the parameters and assumptions that went into the modeling done by the IBWC and Corps of Engineers on the flood control project in the Arroyo Colorado. He suggested that perhaps the USGS or the Bureau of Reclamation could be asked to provide a second opinion. Gary Jones stated that IBWC and the Corps of Engineers are in the second stage study for the levee improvement project. Kim Jones suggested that developing a pilot habitat project could be added as a short term goal.

Kay Jenkins presented a draft scope of work for the upcoming feasibility study for review by the workgroup. Roger Miranda provided written suggestions to Kay about the scope of work. Roger Miranda and John Jacob volunteered to serve on a committee to review proposals submitted by firms and organizations interested in conducting the feasibility study when TPWD puts out a request for qualifications or proposals.

#### **CLOSURE**

Expectations for the next meeting are to have the workgroup goals and scope of work for the feasibility study solidified and to have the agreement between TPWD and GLO for the feasibility study signed. TPWD will also work on compiling background information that will be helpful for the workgroup. The next meeting is expected to be held in March 2005.