Arroyo Colorado Watershed Partnership
DRAFT Meeting Summary – April 14, 2005

ATTENDING: 4-14-05 MEETING:

Alan	Moore	Cameron County Drainage District # 5
Alan R	Gonzalez	City Of San Benito
Andy	Garza	TSSWC
Antonio	Limones	S & B Infrastructure
Ceinette	Garcia	IMAS
Clare	Lee	U.S. Fish And Wildlife Service
Ernesto	Reyes	USFWS
Gilbert	Aguilar	City Of Weslaco
Hudson R	De Yoe	University Of TX Pan American
Jim	Chapman	Sierra Club
Jose A.	Villescas	City Of Alamo
Juan	Anciso	Texas Cooperative Extension
Juan	Flores	City Of Weslaco
Juan	Selvera	City Of San Benito
Kay	Jenkins	Texas Parks And Wildlife Department
Kevin	Wagner	TSSWCB
Lisa	Williams	The Nature Conservancy
Mary Lou	Campbell	Frontera Audubon/Sierra Club
Neil	Haman	TX Water Development Board
Ni-Bin	Chang	TAMUK
Olivia	Gomez	TX Parks & Wildlife
Randy	Rush	US Environmental Protection Agency - Region 6
Richard	Kiesling	USGS
Rocky	Freund	Nueces River Authority
Sylvia A	Waggoner	US IBWC
Tom	Heger	TX Parks & Wildlife
Tony	Reisinger Jr	Sea Grant Marine Advisory Service
Roger	Miranda	TCEQ
Earlene	Lambeth	TCEQ

CALL TO ORDER/WELCOME/INTRODUCTIONS:
Laura De La Garza, the Arroyo Colorado Watershed Coordinator (TX Sea Grant) opened the meeting with self-introductions. Approximately 27 participants were welcomed and a special thank you was given to the Weslaco Chamber of Commerce for contributing refreshments for the work session. The quarterly meeting was structured as a work session to progress on the Watershed Protection Plan (WPP) that is due in December 2005. The meeting covered the nine (9) elements of the WPP required for federal funding. Roger Miranda (TCEQ) was asked to give a brief overview of the Arroyo Colorado impairment(s), possible impairment cause(s) and history of the project.

The steering committee voted to change the name to the Arroyo Colorado Watershed Partnership to encompass more of the needs of the group. Within that Partnership there is a Steering Committee and five workgroups. Another Land Use Workgroup will be formed in the near future to bring the total workgroups under the Partnership to six. Laura has been talking with community planners and has drafted a list of names for possible participation in the Land Use

Workgroup.

WORKGROUP UPDATES

Habitat Workgroup - Kay Jenkins with TX Parks and Wildlife gave the Habitat Workgroup summary. Kay reported that the TCEQ had increased the Habitat Workgroups funding by $14,000 to purchase 1930's photos of the Arroyo Colorado in order to assist the workgroup in describing the historic and current habitat in the watershed. The TPWD will scan the photos and they will be housed on TNRIS for all agencies to access. The TPWD should have a draft RFP in the amount of $86,000 out soon for a feasibility study that will be done on the Arroyo Colorado. Kay reported that the Habitat Workgroup had met earlier in the day with approximately 20 in attendance. The Habitat Workgroup has now formed three subcommittees – one will look at historic and current conditions of the Arroyo habitat, the second subcommittee is called the Inland Group that will work on developing habitat restoration opportunities upstream of Harlingen, and then the third group is the Coastal Group that will work downstream. Kay extended an invitation to anyone who would like to work on one of the subgroup(s) and said she would let everyone know who was working on what group. Kay also encouraged other workgroup(s) members to contact the subgroups for assistance in designing a retention pond, polishing ponds, or whatever need they had.

Agriculture Workgroup – Kevin Wagner reported that the Agriculture Workgroup met earlier in the day with about 20 people in attendance. There has not been a great deal of progress in the actual writing of the agriculture portion of the WPP. Three project proposals have been submitted to the EPA for funding. One of the proposals was for a grant to educate producers on BMP's in the Arroyo Colorado and the Texas Cooperative Extension is the lead; the second proposal is for assessment of agriculture non-point source pollution in the Arroyo Colorado which is being led by TX A&M Kingsville, Dr. Ni-Bin Chang. The third proposal is to provide cost share funding for BMP implementation for the area around the Arroyo Colorado that will include 300 soil samples. Laura reported that the Agriculture Workgroup would have a good draft Ag component of the WPP in July to take to farmers and stakeholders and receive comments before the final draft in December.

Education and Outreach Workgroup – Laura reported that the Workgroup has met several times since the last Steering Committee. She said the Workgroup is continually compiling and improving the list of organizations currently working in the Valley on water related issues. They are busy establishing ties with "key" partners; partnerships recently formed were with Valley Proud, Lower Rio Grande TPDES Storm Water Taskforce and the International Museum of Art & Science (IMAS) in McAllen. Laura also reported that with the assistance of Roger Miranda with the TCEQ, another $70,000 was allocated for a market survey. That is needed to complete the "Getting In Step" education and outreach work plan developed through the EPA that the workgroup is following. A RFP will be posted for this market survey shortly through TX A&M.

TMDL Workgroup – Roger Miranda, the lead for the TMDL Workgroup, stated the purpose of the workgroup is to refine the TMDL study that was completed in 2002, to reduce uncertainty in the analysis, and "home-in" on the load reductions that are necessary in order to meet water quality standards in the Arroyo Colorado. The workgroup has been slow in getting started on the sampling plan due to a lack of funding and resource shortfalls for the workgroup. The last draft of the QAPP was received from USGS and is being sent to the TMDL Workgroup to review and comment. Sampling is expected to start this summer. The Agriculture Workgroup is gathering data that the TMDL Workgroup will use in updating the watershed model for the Arroyo

Colorado.

Wastewater Infrastructure Workgroup - Roger Miranda, also the lead for the Wastewater Infrastructure Workgroup reported that the Workgroup would be meeting Monday, April 25 at the Harlingen Library. System reviews have been done on each wastewater plant in the Arroyo watershed looking at self-reported data, extensive file reviews have been done and then meetings with each facility operator to assess needs, understand the problems each facility faces and to get ideas on plans for the future. The purpose for conducting the individual meetings was to gather information to design a plan for the wastewater portion of the WPP that would address problems and reduce loadings. Positive feedback was received from the cities and different utilities from the individual meetings.

After the break Laura began the second half by addressing the nine elements required for federal funding to be used for implementing the WPP under the CWA, Section 319. The nine elements are:

1. An identification of the causes and sources or groups of similar sources that will need to be controlled to achieve the load reductions estimated in the watershed-based plan (and to achieve any other watershed goals identified in the watershed-based plan)
2. An estimate of the load reductions expected for the management measures
3. A description of the NPS management measures that need to be implemented to achieve the load reductions
4. An estimate of the amounts of technical and financial assistance needed
5. An information/education component that will be used to enhance public understanding of the project and encourage their early and continued participation
6. A schedule for implementing the NPS management measures identified
7. A description of interim, measurable milestones
8. A set of criteria that can be used to determine whether loading reductions are being achieved
9. A monitoring component to evaluate the effectiveness of the implementation efforts.

The format of the WPP will be one large document - written with chapters or sections. One of the elements required under the federal funding requirements is to estimate load reductions. Discussions were held on various ways to accomplish this possibly through the agriculture plan or wastewater plan. There were a variety of ways expressed on how this could be accomplished and how to measure load reductions. Roger expressed various ways for reductions possible from wastewater, Kevin had ideas on reductions through agriculture, and Kay said the Habitat Workgroup might recommend pilot projects be implemented first to better estimate the habitat portion of the load estimate reduction needed.

Randall Rush with the EPA from Dallas, Region 6 was present at the meeting and addressed the group. He said he felt the 9 elements being discussed was a good, logical roadmap to assist in the EPA acquiring federal funds for the WPP. He made suggestions on strategies, using the funding year after year, and continuous on going monitoring with milestones in place.

Laura said she would be working with the Storm Water Task force to get load reduction numbers from non-point sources such as from the public, stormwater BMPs, etc.

The next element discussed was the criteria for verifying assessing load reductions, followed by water quality monitoring. Laura then reported that another workgroup was needed in the

Partnership for this task – overlapping all the workgroups to assist in the water quality-monitoring component of the WPP. One suggestion was to possibly make up the Water Quality Workgroup from all the workgroup leaders and additional people who had an interest. Roger Miranda, Hudson DeYoe, Clare Lee, Richard Kiesling, Rocky Freund, Dr. Chang, Kay Jenkins, Kevin Wagner, Andy Garza, Jose Villescas volunteered and others that would be interested include: William Berg UTB, Elizabeth Heise – UTB, and Jude A. Benavides – UTB for the workgroup. The group will set a date soon for the first workgroup meeting and possibly meet in Corpus Christi. This will bring the total workgroups under the Steering Committee to six.

Detailed description of non-point source management measures was the next element discussed. Laura suggested again that the group rely and partner with existing groups for this information (i.e. Lower Rio Grande TPDES Storm Water Taskforce).

The group had discussions on a timeframe for the WPP. The consensus was to draft a plan that would be a continuous process – short term and long term goals and objectives, revisit the plan every five years updating and making changes as needed. Intermediate goals would also be outlined in the plan.

The Education and Outreach Workgroup will address the information/education component at the next meeting. The schedule for implementing the NPS management measures identified will also be addressed as the plan develops. The milestones of 10 – 20% reduction can be evaluated every five years to see if results are being achieved.

Laura is hopeful that the workgroup leaders will have a good outline of the WPP components, which can be presented at the next meeting in July.