

**Arroyo Colorado Watershed Partnership
Steering Committee and Partnership Meeting
Meeting Summary – November 10, 2005**

ATTENDING:

AARON	WENDT	TEXAS STATE SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION BOARD
ALAN	MOORE	CAMERON COUNTY IRRIGATION DISTRICT #5
ALEX	GONZALES	DONNA ISD
AMADO E	SALINAS	MILITARY HIGHWAY WSC
ANDY	GARZA	TSSWC
BOBBY	VILLARREAL	HIDALGO COUNTY JUDGE OFFICE
BRAD	COWAN	TEXAS COOPERATIVE EXTENSION
BUTCH	PALMER JR	THE PORT OF HARLINGEN AUTHORITY
CHRIS	RAKESTRAW	COALITION TO SAVE THE ARROYO COLORADO
CLARE	LEE	U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
DARRELL	GUNN	CITY OF HARLINGEN
ESTEVAN	PENA	CITY OF MERCEDES
FRANK	ZAMORA	DONNA ISD
HOLLY	BJORUM	INTERNATIONAL MUSEUM OF ART & SCIENCE
HUDSON R	DE YOE	UNIVERSITY OF TX PAN AMERICAN
JOE LEE	RUBIO	TEXAS MASTER NATURALIST
JOHN	JACOB	TEXAS SEA GRANT
JUAN	ENCISO, PHD	TEXAS COOPERATIVE EXTENSION
KEVIN	WAGNER	TWRI
LAURA	DE LA GARZA	TEXAS A & M
MARY LOU	CAMPBELL	FRONTERA AUDUBON/SIERRA CLUB
MINERVA	MARTINEZ	EAST RIO HONDO WATER SUPPLY
NEIL	HAMAN	TX WATER DEVELOPMENT BOARD
RANDY	BLANKINSHIP	TEXAS PARKS AND WILDLIFE DEPARTMENT
RICHARD	EYSTER	TX DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
RICK	REYES	INTL BOUNDARY WATER COMMISSION
ROCKY	FREUND	NUECES RIVER AUTHORITY
SAM	SIMMONS	COTTON GROWERS ASSOCIATION
TERRY	LOCKAMY	TEXAS COOPERATIVE EXTENSION
TOM	MCLEMORE	HARLINGEN IRRIGATION DISTRICT
TOMAS	GARCIA	DONNA ISD
TONY	REISINGER JR	SEA GRANT MARINE ADVISORY SERVICE

CALL TO ORDER/WELCOME/INTRODUCTIONS:

Laura De La Garza, the Arroyo Colorado (AC) Watershed Coordinator (TX Sea Grant) opened the meeting with appreciation for the good and diverse turn-out. She informed the group that this project is the focus of much attention as the state and EPA need a success story of delisting an impaired water body; with that, there is financial backing for this

project. Self-introductions were made and the meeting was turned over the Chairman, Dr. Jude Benavides.

Dr. Benavides expressed witness to the diligent work of the work group leaders and reminded us that this is the last step and the first step in this process. It is the last step in completing this first round with still plenty of time for comment and input, and it is the next step in the plan of attack.

WORKGROUP UPDATES

Wastewater Infrastructure (WWI)– Roger Miranda, work group leader, stated that they had hoped to have the second draft of the WWI portion of the plan ready but that the reason it was behind schedule is that the TCEQ is looking at the legal standing of watershed protection plans (WPPs). WPPs are a relatively new vehicle for water quality improvement and the TCEQ is evaluating how to incorporate them into their regulatory structure. They could be considered as a state Water Quality Management Plan (WQMP) where the Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs), Implementation Plans (IPs) go, or passed as a resolution which is not legally binding, or they could be made a watershed rule which would require a lengthy public comment and legal process. No decisions have been made as these and a few other legal options are considered.

The WWI component of the plan is in draft form and not much has changed between the first and second drafts. The proposed measures have not changed but the table of content has and currently waiting for legal clearance before sending out. Copies of the table of contents were passed out. In short, there are seventeen (17) direct discharges, five (5) of which will have permit changes because of new construction or improvements of existing facilities. Five (5) entities have fairly firmly agreed to enhanced treatment and four (4) plans to increase re-use programs that will reduce nutrient loading. The plan will have a section on loading reductions in terms of quantitative measures starting with the year 2000 in order to include what has been done since that time in terms of reduced non-point source (NPS) pollution, and the increased treatment in terms of pounds of BOD, nutrients, and total suspended (TSS). Proposed actions will follow.

The theme within the WWI plan will be 5-year intervals, 2000-2005 (historical), 2005-2010 (short-term), and 2010-2015 (long-term). The year 2000 is a good benchmark because the first TMDL study concluded in 1998, and EDAP started in 1999 with major actions happenings after 2000. The NPS section of this part of the plan is not related to municipal discharges but related to industrial type situations. Originally this section was in the habitat section and there needs to be discussion on where to put this, habitat or WWI portion.

Roger reminded the group that this is a voluntary plan and two municipalities will have no action items and that is acceptable because it is voluntary which will be updated periodically.

On the NPS issue, Laura stated that she has been working on a signed agreement with the Storm Water Task Force and Texas A&M Kingsville and that they will have draft procedures by the end of December 2005 (new due date is January 12, 2006). These procedures will be coordinated with on going efforts of the Task Force with the cities. The plan will include specific BMPs already under consideration.

Roger bought up one on the ground NPS effort; the TCEQ funded composting program that includes the city of McAllen, Weslaco, and Brownsville. The Small Business Division of the TCEQ is sponsoring a demonstration project using compost to reduce nutrient loading from storm water runoff with a “grow green” component focused on urban landscapes. This project is in the contracting stage with the City of Weslaco as the lead agency.

Agricultural (Ag) Issues – After an introduction by Dr. Benavides, Kevin Wagner, work group leader, presented the progress made by that Ag work group. Kevin pointed out that agriculture is extremely important to the economy in the Valley. According to the 2002 Census of Agriculture, the market value of crops sold in Cameron County is over \$62 million and over \$182 million in Hidalgo County.

Agricultural NPS runoff has been identified as responsible for high percentages of the suspended sediment, biological oxygen demand (BOD), nitrate, ammonia, and phosphate load in the Arroyo and as a result, the Ag Issues work group was formed. Ag Workgroup first met 2 yrs ago to develop a strategy with Andy Garza as co-work group leader.

The overall objective of the strategy is to encourage the voluntary adoption of best management practices to reduce suspended sediment levels resulting from **cropland erosion**, BOD (oxygen demanding organic material) from **runoff of crop residue**, and nitrogen and phosphorus **fertilizer runoff** from irrigated cropland fields. Much has already been done. BMPs have already been implemented on ~50,000 acres through the TSSWCB WQMP Program and the NRCS EQIP. The goal of the Ag workgroup will be to achieve the voluntary adoption of BMPs on 33% of the irrigated cropland by 2010 and 50% by 2015.

Four types of assistance will be needed to achieve this goal:

- Technical assistance to provide individual landowners help in developing individual farm plans
- Cost share assistance to help farmers pay for the practices included in their individual farm plans.
- Education programs to keep farmers throughout the watershed up to date on proper management and production techniques.
- Monitoring and assessment to assess agriculture’s contribution to the loadings, evaluate and demonstrate the benefits of implementation of BMPs, and measure progress

Kevin presented and estimated annual sediment, nitrogen, and phosphorus reductions resulting from WQMP implementation.

Constituent	Est. Reductions Per Treated Ac	Est. Annual Reductions (T) From Treated Acres		
		50,000 acres	100,000 acres	150,000 acres
Sediment	1 ton/ acre	50,000 T	100,000 T	150,000 T
Nitrogen	0.567 lbs/acre	14.2 T	28.4 T	42.5 T

Phosphorus	0.0947 lbs/acre	2.4 T	4.7 T	7.1 T
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Short-term goal costs (needs over next 5 years from 2005-2010) = **\$4.2 million in addition to existing programs**. Long-term goal costs (needs for years 5-10 from 2010-2015) = **\$4.6 million in addition to existing programs**. Thereafter, approximately **\$100,000 per year** will be needed.

A number of funding programs are available for assisting:

- SB 503 Water Quality Management Plan Program (TSSWCB)
- Clean Water Act Section 319(h) Program (TSSWCB)
- Environmental Quality Incentive Program (NRCS)

Each year, \$173,316 in SB 503 Water Quality Management Plan Program cost share funds are allocated by the TSSWCB to the three SWCDs in the watershed. The FY05 CWA 319 Grant provided \$172,373 for Education, \$780,000 for Cost Share, and \$190,478 for TA. In 2005, \$106,000 in cost-share from EQIP is available to each SWCD in the state for addressing local concerns. In addition, \$540,508 in cost share through EQIP is available to the Lower Rio Grande Valley Irrigation Area for addressing the State Resource Concern of Water Quantity – Irrigation FY06 CWA Section 319 funding will be requested from the TSSWCB to fund edge of field and sub-watershed monitoring

Kevin concluded his presentation stating his belief that the goals are achievable and that they are close in finalizing the plan for Ag issues. Tony Reisinger asked what are the most common BMPs. Andy stated, crop rotation, residue management, irrigation improvement, nutrient management and soil testing. Tony asked about buffer strips. Andy stated that they could be added as one of the strategies however that they may not be applicable in all cases.

John Jacob asked if any money was for salaries and will there be more 319 money. Kevin stated that most of the money goes to cost-share and because this is the first watershed plan, he sees the EPA is still willing to fund this project into the near future. Richard Eyster stated that although the TDA does not have money to contribute, they do support this effort and that want to do what is right.

Tony asked about education and outreach (E&O) and if the TCE is playing a role. Kevin answered yes that the TCE is playing a major role in E&O. John asked if the proposed money was enough to make a dent in reduced nutrient loading. Kevin answered yes, if 50% of the irrigated farm lands were under WQMPs and the focus was on nutrient management and we would be getting the most benefit according the study by Dr. Wes Rosenthal.

Tony said there has been a nation-wide decrease in fertilizer use. Sam Simmons explained that the cost of fertilizer had just doubled and that the margin in crops is down so farmers are trying not to put in more than what they could get in return. Has a lot to do with the decreasing use of nitrogen along with the desire to be stewards.

Habitat Work Group – Randy Blankinship presented the update for Kay Jenkins who could not attend due to a scheduling conflict. Randy passed out a hand-out showing a brief description of the ten (10) strategies Alan Plummer Associates Inc (APAI) are working on as part of their contract to do a feasibility study. Randy explained that many

strategies were presented (39) and that the work group narrowed it down to the 10 most feasible for this area. Six of the strategies involve NPS source treatment systems, two strategies involve constructed wetlands to treat point source pollution, and the last two strategies involve large-scale constructed wetlands to treat both NPS and point source loads. The following table categorizes the top ten strategies:

Major Category	Sub-Category	Strategies	Vote Tabulation
Non-point Source Treatment Systems	Ponds	Micropool extended detention ponds	15
		Multiple pond systems	
		Wet extended detention ponds	
		Wet pond	
	Stormwater runoff wetland treatment systems	Series of wetland cells within small drainage	13
		Wetland swales	
		Extended detention shallow wetland	12
		Pocket wetland	
		Pond/wetland systems	
	Bank/slope stabilization/erosion control	Bioengineering with vegetation	12
Filtration	Filter strip buffer zones	7	
Channels	Wet swale/wetland channel	6	
Point Source Treatment Systems	Constructed wetlands for tertiary treatment following mechanical or lagoon treatment plants	Regional wetland systems polishing flows from multiple wastewater treatment plants in close proximity	11
		At individual wastewater treatment plants (municipal, industrial, agriculture, aquaculture)	6
Collective (non-point source and point source)	Large-scale constructed wetland system	On-channel wetland system	12
		Off-channel regional wetland system	11

At the upcoming December 8, 2005 Habitat Work Group meeting, the workgroup members will review preliminary designs, estimated load reductions, implementation opportunities and constraints, and estimated costs of the recommended strategies.

Randy announced the effort to organize a canoe/kayak float trip on the middle section of the AC beginning below Llano Grande. Anyone interested is to contact Kay Jenkins.

Tony Reisinger asked about the possibility of putting in a weir/aeration system on the Arroyo. He stated that this is a very popular effort supported by the City of Harlingen, the Valley Sportsman Club, and the Port of Harlingen and asked if the Steering Committee would support such an effort. There were discussions on why the weir/aeration structures did not make the list of top 10 strategies listed by the Habitat work group. Chris Rackstraw said that may not have made the list because people are already working on it and that the benefit in water quality might not be substantial. Roger stated that we really do know the amount of potential increase in dissolved oxygen and that Bill Norris of NRS Engineers should come to the next meeting and do a presentation. Laura relayed that NRS would be happy to supply any additional information and that they would address any concerns.

Dr. Benavides noted that this is a good item for the Steering Committee because he there is question on the selection process. The discussion on the weir/aeration project ended with a request to have NRS Engineers come to the next Steering Committee meeting and present additional information in order to get the formal support from the AC Steering Committee and Partnership.

Education and Outreach (E&O) Work Group – Laura De La Garza, work group leader, explained that the E & O work group has been following the USEPA “Getting in Step: A Guide for Conducting Watershed Outreach Campaigns”. The first step of defining the driving force, goals, and objectives has been completed however there was an impasse in moving on to the next step due to the need for a market survey. To this end, the E&O work group has been mainly working on hiring a consultant. In October 2005, Karen Ford of White Hat Creative, and Susan Poag and Cathy Schechter of SUMA/Orchard Social Marketing, Inc. were hired to conduct a market survey and to help promote the development and implementation of the E&O component of the plan. The results of their efforts will be recommendations and materials for an effective outreach campaign to promote long-term stewardship of AC watershed.

The hiring of the firm has taken longer than expected and the E&O work group is behind schedule in producing their portion of the plan. According the work plan and contract, the final deliverable from the consultants is due May 2006. However, the work group plans to have a good draft of what portions they can address by the end of December. Projects like signage marking the watershed boundary and the making of an educational video have been identified to be part of the plan. There is ongoing work with IMAS and the City of McAllen to initiate a storm drain marking project and the draft educator’s guide “Restore our Watershed: Arroyo Colorado Watershed Curriculum” is currently under review by Christina Mild. She will be improving the section on plants and animals specific to the AC watershed.

Laura distributed a copy of the consultant’s work plan and informed the group that the first step in the development of a market survey is one-on-one telephone interviews with stakeholders. Twenty (20) to twenty-five (25) interviews are planned to take place in December, from the information received, materials for focus group meetings will be

developed. After, the four (4) focus group meetings are held and analyzed; questions and materials for the market survey will be developed. Laura said that several individuals in the room have been identified for the one-on-one interviews and that their time and participation will be appreciated. Laura concluded her presentation by informing the group that she has conducted numerous presentations about AC and this planning process and that they have been well received and new partners recruited.

TMDL Work Group – Roger Miranda, work group leader, began his presentation with a review of the TMDL process. He explained that it is a requirement of the state by the federal government and that it is enforced to bring water quality back to standards. Therefore, the AC had a TMDL study conducted which began in 1988 and concluded in 2002. The results of the model identified a need to reduce pollutant loading by 90% in order to meet water quality standards. With this, Roger was asked to do a zero or natural run with the model and even under natural conditions, the AC would have trouble meeting WQ standards. The implications include either the standards are not appropriate or something else is wrong with the Arroyo Colorado.

There are physical problems with the AC: it is dredged, there is no significant riparian environment for much of the course, it is a leveed floodplain with a pilot channel within the levee so there is no benefit of a canopy which would reduce temperature and increase the solubility of oxygen, there are areas where bank instability is noted, it has excess amounts of TSS which act as a vehicle to transport phosphorus to the Port of Harlingen and at that point the velocity is reduced as it goes into the turning basins, the sediment drops, the photic zone increases in the very nutrient rich waters and the result is algal blooms. So in addition to the nutrient loading problems, the physical condition of the Arroyo Colorado is conducive to the depletion of dissolved oxygen (DO) and the decrease in water quality. This is why there is a habitat component to the plan and that they have not given up on a TMDL for the AC.

The goal of the “Phase II” TMDL study is to reduce uncertainty in the analysis, to determine how much of the problem is associated with loading and how much is due to the physical condition of the AC. They want to reduce the uncertainty of parameters that had to be pulled from literature, like, algal productivity, algal mortality, and settling rates. They are investigating rates and constants usually used in models as imperial values recorded in the literature for similar systems. They want the right values for the AC.

The quality assurance project plan (QAPP) has just been completed to conduct monitoring. The plan is to start monitoring in January after approval from the EPA. Laura will get the QAPP to the group and post it on the website. The main emphasis of study is reach dynamics. Two reaches have been identified, one that straddles Rio Hondo and one beyond Camp Perry. Collection is a synoptic survey of intense data collection for two periods; one in a non-critical time (winter, average flow) and a critical collection period next summer. The goal is to collect during average conditions for oxygen production and algal growth rates, mortality for grazing, and settling rates. The basic need is to come up with the rates for the AC and use them in the new model which will be more complex and sophisticated than what was used in the first TMDL model for the AC. This will be a fully

dynamic, 3-D model which will look at the water column in the vertical, lateral, and x-direction of flow.

Roger is partnering with Dr. Wes Rosenthal of the Blackland Research Institute to look for funding to shift the watershed model from the HSPF (hydrologic simulation program in Fortran) to a better model which simulates contributions from Ag in a more mechanistic manner. The SWAT model does a better job in determining and modeling loads from Ag.

Phase II TMDL modeling is expected to be completed by 2007 so looking at 2008 for the development of a TMDL for the Arroyo. Pollutant loading allocations may not come to pass in terms of adoption if headway is made in nutrient reductions with this WPP. There is a clause in the CWA which states that if a regulatory mechanism is already in place, then the water body could be placed in a different category in lieu of a TMDL. The crux of the matter is definition of a "regulatory mechanism" which goes back to the legal standing of the WPPs. WPPs are a new vehicle for water quality improvement and all the "bugs" have not been worked out on the legal standing. This is a completely voluntary effort at this point so we can hardly call it a regulatory vehicle unless adopted as a WQMP or as an agency order and there are other legal options.

Dr. Benavides asked who is funding the TMDL. TCEQ is funding the instream water quality modeling and data collection for calibration of the model with the hope that at the time when ready to use the instream model that we will have a new watershed model. If the HSPF model is not updated with new land use and new information, it is better to have a model that better represents Ag loads. There was question about funding for the SWAT model. Kevin stated that currently there was no funding but that TAMU is looking as several mechanisms. USDA funds may be an option, also TSSWCB 319 funds.

Randy asked about the contributions from Ag off-loading activities, what efforts to collect that data, and even collect what is the potential for a stored amount to be leached into the AC, if there are any stored amounts. Roger stated he could try to get that data however that it would be difficult. It is called a pulse load which could occur 4-6 times a year at the port. The question is whether the loading remains in place or if it is pulsed downstream. This is hard to model.

Randy stated that there was one major fertilizer spill from a barge in the late 1990's that resulted in a fish kill so there could be residual material and is it worth investigating? Roger stated that sampling is conducted up- and down-stream of that point and could incorporate sediment sampling to determine if there are huge amounts of phosphorous and nitrogen in the sediment. They had planned to look at sediment-nutrient cycling and were going to core, take to a lab, and incubate to find out mass-balance but had to cut out because they ran out of money, in fact, running out of money. Started with a budget of \$191,000 from TCEQ with a USGS match of 60% but that is being spent faster than thought and sampling has not been started. Therefore, if another way of sampling is not found, the scope of work may change. Sampling at the Rio Hondo site is currently

happening but there is no money to operate for the next two years. Will do reach dynamics and get rates and constants but may not get a calibration data set due to lack of funding.

Laura discussed the October 19, 2005 with the fertilizer handlers operating at the Port of Harlingen (Port). The meeting was held at the Port with representatives from four fertilizer companies and the Port. They were asked about quantity spilled per off-loading event. They told us how many dry fertilizer barges come through per year (5-6) and how much they thought they could be losing (200-300 lbs per barge). They said that they would come up with a management plan to reduce spillage. At the meeting, there were discussions on the possibility of extending the dock underneath the hopper where the dry fertilizer is bucketed (using a “clam shell”). The two dry fertilizer handlers agreed to draft a management plan. These improved management techniques will be incorporated into the Arroyo WPP.

There was a question of where this would be incorporated in the plan, point or non-point? Roger said that this is a NPS issue that can be thought of as an unauthorized discharge. It can also be a stormwater issue.

Sugar on-loading was also discussed. Laura stated that she is working with Steve Bearden, President and CEO of the Rio Grande Valley Sugar Mill and that he was very willing to address the issue of sugar entering the AC. An improved management plan for that loading practice will also be included in the plan.

Water Quality Monitoring – Rocky Freund stated that this group has met once and has been communicating via email. Ag and WWI will have their own monitoring component and the monitoring she is referring to will take place in the main channel of the AC to evaluate the effectiveness of the BMPs in stream itself. Rocky passed out the list of twelve (12) stations, the list of parameters to be monitored, and a map of showing the locations. Monthly sampling is proposed for the twelve (12) sites, seven (7) sites area already being monitored quarterly by the TCEQ-Region 15 office. Initial budget is approximately \$10,500 per quarter, about \$41,000 per year. She did not know how many years this sampling would go on. There were no questions or comments.

Land Use – Laura stated that the second work group meeting had been held earlier that week in the offices of the Hidalgo County Metropolitan Planning Organization who are new partners. The plan is to create a tool box of smart growth options which will help preserve water quality. John Jacob distributed a brochure dealing with issues of urban growth titled “Choices for Growth”, a product of Texas Sea Grant and funded by the GLO. John pointed out that the Valley will grow by about 2 million people over the next 30 years plus more on the other side of the border. This portion of the plan will not lay out a land use plan, but discuss the state of the watershed in relation to urban growth, what is coming, the is potential impact of that growth, and what, if any alternatives there may be. This is the goal of the land use segment of the plan.

John reminded the group that there is nothing we can do that is better than natural habitat in terms of preserving water quality. Compact growth, 3-4 times as dense as the typical subdivision, are alternative growth modes and are consider BMPs. The key is to determine runoff on a watershed bases verses site by site bases. If we want an interesting, vibrant place, we need density. There are emerging trends for building better neighborhoods for people and the point of putting this in the WPP is to get these ideas out to the communities.

Review of the Outline for the Arroyo Colorado Watershed Protection Plan

Laura passed a copy of the outline for the WPP and stated that this was distributed via the Arroyo Colorado listserv. She said that this is what the plan was beginning to look like and that Ag, WWI, E&O, and Habitat would have individual documents which would be included in the appendices. It is Laura's job to pull it all together in the most concise manner.

Laura went over the outline starting with acknowledgements, the executive summary, and the mission, visions and goals section. The mission statement "To restore, protect, and preserve the water quality of the Arroyo Colorado" was developed by the work group leaders and if anyone wished to comment on this, comments to be emailed to Dr. Benavides at jbenavides@utb.edu. Dr. Benavides said that he did not think we needed this section and asked for comments.

Next Laura reviewed the introduction and state of the watershed chapters and stated that the GIS data base is a major tool and that discussion are needed to determine how this information is to be permanently housed. A recommendation was made that a special task force be formed to make sure this data could be fed into other models. Dr. Benavides said he would be personally involved with this group and was identified as work group leader.

Laura continued down the outline stating that many of the entities listed under institutional framework will most likely end up in the appendices with a discussion of the most important governing bodies being discussed in this chapter.

The chapter on estimated loading will rely on estimates from the 2002 draft TMDL report. There was question of applying estimated loading reduction solely to projects committed to. Laura told the group that some strategies have been identified along with entities who would take the lead. She passed the following list of entities with an expressed interest in the AC watershed related projects as of November 2005:

- LRGV Chapter of the Texas Master Naturalist – Wetland Project
- UT Pan American, Dr. Don Hockaday – Tug Boats on the Arroyo Study
- Valley Proud Environmental Council – "You Dump It, You Drink It" and "Up to You" Trash Campaign
- City of San Benito – WWTP Wetland Polishing Ponds and Park/Trails
- City of McAllen and City of Pharr - WWTP Wetland Polishing Ponds and Park/Trails

- City of Weslaco – WWTP Wetland Polishing Ponds in cooperation with Las Palomas Wildlife Management Area
- Military Highway WSC – WWTP Wetland Polishing Ponds
- Nature Conservancy – Project Wet Training
- Port of Harlingen – Demonstration Project for Product Handling
- Arroyo E&O Work Group – Awareness Projects (making of a video, watershed signage)
- City of McAllen and IMAS – Storm Water Drain Marking Project
- IMAS – Promotion of Teacher Training and the Watershed Curriculum
- Cameron County Drainage District #5 – Drainage Ditch Habitat Improvement Project
- James and Georgiana Matz – Land Preservation and Restoration Projects
- Dr. Kim Jones – GIS studies for land preservation
- Dr. Hudson DeYoe – Coordination of Research Projects associated with the LLM
- Dr. Wes Rosenthal-SWAT Model (added)
- Storm Water Task Force – NPS BMPs (added)

Roger stated that we will be relying on Loretta Morky of APAI, to tell us what kind of load reductions can be achieved from the generic designs. The plan will propose specific projects and we will determine and monitor for expected load reductions. For the WW treatment plant, there will be upstream and downstream monitoring of the wetland cells along with basin wide monitoring to gage the progress on a watershed bases.

Upon reviewing the list of interested entities, Laura told the group that when working on this project, she does not exclude Edinburg and Brownsville because they are in the greater Lower Laguna Madre Basin which the AC watershed is a sub-watershed of. Laura informed the group that currently James and Georgiana Matz and Dr. Hudson DeYoe have requested letters of support for grants they are currently applying for. Tony motions that the SC support these projects. Randy requested that before any letters of support are written that they be first sent to the SC. Laura said that she would forward a description of the project, purpose, and scope before any decisions are made.

Motions were made and there was question if Roberts Rules were to be followed. The answer was no, so the “motion” is called an idea/procedure to grant authority to the SC to review and approve, on a case-by-case basis, any external request for letters of support or funding. Randy asked about the benefit of these letters of support. It was explained that SC support makes them more eligible for grants and this is part of the purpose of the plan, to demonstrate collaboration with activities which are in-line with the objectives of the plan.

The following procedure was supported by the SC: That we grant our authority to the SC to review and approve potential grant projects or proposals. When the Watershed Coordinator (WC) receives any requests for support on an AC project, the WC will forward to the SC for approval. Tony asked about a case of any opposition. It was agreed that we would not try to get consensus but that if someone objects, then that project will not be supported.

Laura continued reviewing the outline for the WPP. There were discussions concerning the schedule of implementation. Laura identified the need to decide how to prioritize projects. Dr. Benavides said that for now, we will assume that all projects will get funded and later in the process we must do a cost-benefit analysis. For now, those that can obtain funds for specific objectives of the plan should be supported; that members should be encouraged to seek funding to get the job done. Dr. Benavides recommended that if more than one project in the plan can be up for funding, then we would need to prioritize. Laura stated that grants often allow more than one project and that her job is to look for funding based on the type of projects we want to do in order to improve the quality of water in the AC.

Laura stated that she has developed a table of grants, that there eighteen (18) different EPA grants we could apply for, additional grants by the GLO, TPWD, USFWS, ACE, and many other private grants. Projects listed as part of the plan will have more credibility and a greater potential to get funded. The plan will list projects, and this list will be dynamic.

Laura and Dr. Benavides completed review of the outline and a request was made to review and forward any comments to Dr. Benavides. Dr. Benavides also requested that he be emailed any questions on what was presented at this meeting today.

Dr. Hudson DeYoe was then given time to present his proposal to the Texas General Land Office Coastal Management Program. He passed out a brief description of his proposal to develop a research plan for the coastal waters of South Texas. That he proposes a holistic management plan and that he is interested in people who are willing to write letters of support and people who can help. Tony asked if we could support this endeavor. Laura said she would get an electronic version and send it to the SC for approval.

The meeting concluded with the drawing for the door price. Darrell Gunn won a tiled plant stand.

Meeting adjourned at 6:30 PM.