

Arroyo Colorado Steering Committee/Partnership Meeting

Texas A&M Kingsville, Citrus Center
Rio Red Classroom
312 N. International Blvd, Weslaco, Texas 78596
August 21, 2008 4:30 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.

MEETING SUMMARY

ATTENDEES:

Jim Tabak, Valley Land Fund	Jennifer Buratti, TCEQ
Patrick Conner, Nature Conservancy	Kim Jones, TAMUK
Sonia Najera, Nature Conservancy	Anthony Reisinger, Texas Sea Grant
Patrick Daize, IBWC (replace rick Reyes)	Ruben Saldana, AgriLife Extension
Pam Casebolt, TSSWCB	Andy Garza, TSSWCB
Rocky Freund, NRA	Ray Prewett, Texas Citrus Mutual
Laura De La Garza, TWRI	Wayne Bartholomew, Frontier Audubon
Cecilia Wagner, TWRI	

4:30 Social

5:00 Welcome and Introductions.....Laura De La Garza, TWRI

- SC members present agreed to accept Patrick Daize (IBWC) as Rick Reyes' replacement on the SC. No objections stated. Patrick provided a local IWBC update:
 - o Levee improvement project currently going on
 - o Were prepared for Dolly and levees did their job. Continuing efforts post Dolly (desilting, etc.)
 - o Dolly reminded us how much the Valley has grown and where problem areas are
- Tony Reisinger (habitat workgroup) nominated Laura De La Garza as a SC Member. No objections

5:10 Work Group Updates:

Agricultural Issues Andy Garza, TSSWCB

- Met yesterday (August 20).
- Brad Cowan gave update on education program- upcoming nutrient management workshop in mid-October
- Juan Enciso, Xavier Peries, Venki Uddameri provided update on ag BMP and drainage ditch monitoring program. Also provided update on BMP map currently being developed
- Cecilia Wagner gave update on SWAT Model process.
- 376 WQMP plans certified on 36,662 acres (total with 319 and NRCS programs addressed includes 670 WQMPs on 65,766 acres)

Habitat IssuesDr. Kim Jones, TAMUK

Tony Reisinger, Texas Sea Grant Extension

- Met on August 14, 2008

- Had presentation from Tom Wheelan (UT-PanAm) regarding arsenic contamination in AC. Group suggested he pursue CIAP funding
- Discussed the fact that AC listed as an impaired waterbody for Mercury
 - o Currently, 17 waterbodies are listed for Mercury impairment (listed as a 5c, which means more data is needed). Because of this, a TCEQ workgroup directed towards Hg contamination is being developed. They have public meetings which are open to the public and are available on webcast (next meeting - Sept 17). The workgroup is addressing what can/needs to be done in the AC to address Hg. Our involvement would be good
 - o Jennifer Buratti suggested inviting a speaker (Patt Bohanan) to the SC or habitat workgroup to provide info on the mercury issue. Presentation could be at the habitat or SC meeting. Laura/Jennifer will invite Pat to the habitat workgroup to discuss.
 - o Questions that need to be answered:
 - The alligator gar (catan) is a primary food source for many Valley residents and we want to know if this fish has any mercury in it
 - Why is the AC just now getting listed for mercury?
- Jim Tabak, Valley Land Fund, suggested that the VLF adopt the habitat workgroup. Jim then presented to the group their plan:
 - o Provided background on VLF
 - o Provided breakdown of the types of land that typically fall under land trusts (wetlands, river corridors, and watershed/water quality comprise 52, 51 and 47%, respectively)
 - o Provided bylaws of VLF and those 'action items' that the VLF would like to pursue for the habitat workgroup. The proposed action items include: action 1, 2, 9 and 10
 - o Habitat workgroup voted to develop a MOU with Valley Land Fund to establish this relationship
- Received funding from TCEQ on City of McAllen RDF program where the RDFs could treat the water (as in a wetland) when it is full; Contract is currently being developed.
- Laura was asked to remain involved in the habitat workgroup

Water Quality Monitoring..... Rocky Freund, Nueces RA

- Volunteer monitors – 7 actively monitored sites; Future sites are needed to be monitored
- Provided handout of water quality data
- TWRI needs to get graphed data on the AC website

Wastewater Infrastructure.....Laura De La Garza, TWRI

- 4-city wetland project has become a 2 city wetland project. La Feria is losing their funding because they were not ready to move forward with project. So La Feria funds were reallocated to San Juan and San Benito who are moving forward. La Feria will likely reapply for funding to continue work.

Education and Outreach.....Laura De La Garza, TWRI

- Physical watershed model remains at Esterro Llano Grande
- Ecotourism luncheon held on Aug 7 and had great turnout
- Watershed boundary signs to be put in at at least 10 sites

- Stormdrain stenciling project: Decided on design and type; Working with stormwater task force) to purchase additional markers (get a better price)

5:50 Feedback on Partnership’s Efforts to Date..... Cecilia Wagner, TWRI

- Tables outlining projects and project status passed out
- Did not have time to discuss

6:10 Long-Term Partnership Sustainability Cecilia Wagner, TWRI
 Laura De La Garza, TWRI

- Laura provided a presentation on forming our own nonprofit organization (e.g. 501c3)
- Group raised several questions:
 - o Regarding the success of the WPP implementation - at what point would the TCEQ still come in with a TMDL
 - o Could we raise funds from the 3 counties, cities, private funds?
 - o What about charging a small fee on utility bills? (\$1 per resident?)
 - LRGVDC uses a per capita formula to assess funding charges; NRA mentioned a similar formula for Region N.
 - o What about basing funding on loading?
- Question about the actual board of directors was raised:
 - o Ray suggested members from city and county to serve on board since they will likely be supporting the effort
- Tony Reisinger moved to form 501c3, Jim Tabak seconded. After discussion, SC voted to move forward with the process of beginning developing the necessary information to form a 501c3 at which time the SC would be allowed to review the information prior to official submission of application.
- Follow up items:
 - o Laura provide summary to SC members
 - o Laura and Jim develop paperwork for filing
 - o Task group meet to discuss future following 501c3. But the task group needs to include potential board members NOW rather than the staff that has been working on it. These board members need to be involved on the front end rather than afterwards because you will have a better chance of them wanting to support it if they help build it
- Patrick suggested the new watershed coordinator be tasked with developing the materials/paperwork necessary to file for a 501c3; and then work to identify the new board members. SC should provide guidance on the nomination or appointees of the board.

6:40 Grants Update..... Cecilia Wagner, TWRI

- Habitat workgroup voted to propose a VLF driven proposal to TCEQ 319 to develop a natural areas map (p 84 of the WPP). Nature Conservancy has been working with USFWS to develop a Conservation Plan for the area (Hidalgo, Starr, Willacy and Cameron County). Kelly McDowell (conservation leader for USFWS) has recently come on board to develop this plan. TCEQ proposal will have to be developed for VLF by a negligible entity given 319 program is not open to non-profits.

- Submitted the proposal to State CIAP program on a study for development of regional wetland. Three potential locations for the regional wetland includes: San Benito wetland expansion, 100 Ac private acreage, Harlingen parks system.

6:50 Other BusinessLaura De La Garza, TWRI

- Senator Hutchison brought up a meeting with local officials where they asked her to address local flooding issues. What does IBWC know about this?
 - o IBWC deals with issues on an international level and deal with the national sides
 - o The local plea to Senator Hutchison appears to be a local issue that the communities/cities need to deal with
- Change meeting date to possibly Mondays, Wednesdays or Fridays to accommodate Jude Benavides:
 - o Monday was the consensus
 - o Next meeting was set for Oct 23, a Thursday. However will likely be moved to Monday.
- Please announce the watershed coordinator position. Need a replacement ASAP.

7:00 Adjourn.....Laura De La Garza, TWRI