

**Arroyo Colorado Steering Committee/Partnership Meeting  
October 22, 2009 4:30 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.**

**Attendees**

Jaime Flores (TWRI)	Ken Jones (LRGVDC)
Laura De La Garza (Comite)	Brad Cowan (Agrilife Extension)
Ernesto Reyes (USFWS)	Amanda Engledow (TWRI)
Claudia Lozano (TQEQ)	Enrique Perez (Agrilife Extension)
Joe Hinojosa (City of Brownsville)	Jude Benavides (UTB)
Rocky Freund (NRA)	Cecilia Wagner (TWRI)
Ronnie Ramirez (TSSWCB)	

**Meeting Summary**

**Welcome and Introductions**

- Jude- introductions and thanks

**Work Group Updates**

- Ag Issues
  - Waiting from EPA on proposal for next 319 project for cost share funds
  - Wrapping up current 319 project. Trying to find money that is not being used and reallocate from now until December
  - BMP maps have been turned in, will be published soon, and will be put with the land use maps
  - Planning a Turf Conference for next year
  - Soil campaign coming up this fall/winter (2009/2010)
- Habitat Issues
  - Updates on 4-Cities wetlands project. La Feria, San Juan, San Benito.
  - San Juan is almost complete (ribbon cutting tentatively in mid November). La Feria had final walkthrough last week.
  - Funding coming up for San Benito wetland
  - Potential for an enhancement wetland in the city of Alamo for waste water treatment. Might be lagoons and treatment wetlands (before compliance) not polishing wetlands (after compliance).
  - Dr. Kim Jones proceeding with drainage project, however he was not present to provide an update.
  - Region M – 4-county regional drainage study
    - Rio Grande water authority and Rio Grande Water Planning Group (region M) - Regional 4 county study to identify drainage problems. The state already has a plan that states that there is a plan and that we need wetlands for this. Areas

have already been identified that are prone to flooding. County/city land will be put aside to divert storm/flood water. No one else can afford to buy that amount of land to do nothing with (except the city) and the city is looking for a place to put the water.

- Ken Jones said that whoever they select to do drainage study, he wants to encourage them to incorporate the WPP priorities including the need for a regional wetland system into the drainage study.
- Shrimp farm a mute issue due to the fact that there are 2 contracts on the land; however it might be possible to have some community input (real estate agent has said that he can be liaison).
- Water Quality Monitoring
  - Quarterly monitoring at 4 different sites.
  - Bacterial Indicator Study, which is determining whether or not E. coli is best indicator to use: Have sampled every month since January. Have been doing grab samples and looking solely at geometric means given new standard would remove single sample criteria. Speaking of new standard, even if the maximum E. coli criteria were raised from 126 to 206 CFU/100ml, the Arroyo Colorado will still remain on 303d list as the sample numbers are outside the 206 range.
  - NRA Has been asked to conduct the RUAA on the non-tidal Arroyo; start date and status unknown at this time.
- Education and Outreach
  - Discussed the grant workshop that was scheduled for August and included representatives from GLO, TCEQ, NIFA, TSSWCB, TWDB, NOAA, NRCS, TDA. Workshop was postponed for a later date.
  - The brochure, “Little waterway with a big job” was printed with additional funds from TCEQ and Jaime now has copies to distribute. Similarly, the Executive Summary of the WPP was also printed with additional funds from TCEQ.
  - Still have a need for promotional items (caps, shirts, and buttons) – will look into smaller education or other grants.
  - Watershed Boundary Signs – got blanket permit from TxDOT for partnership and each city can get permit under this one. 40 more signs are scheduled to be put in place that TxDOT helped identify locations for.
  - We now have public service announcement on channel 12 and channel 17 in schools and available to the public.
  - Plan to reach youth through providing Science Fair topics targeting the Arroyo Colorado.
  - Annual Trash Bash – Arroyo Colorado stakeholders have requested a trash clean up event and given there is a “Trash Bash” event held annually in April (11 cities and Valley Proud participate), the Arroyo Colorado will participate as well. In addition to ground cleanup, there is a plan to get into the Arroyo Colorado in kayaks, donated by Eric Ellman (los cominos del rios), to clean up trash in the waterway.

- Texas Stream Team monitor workshop (Nov 21) – 26 spots available. 2 types of monitoring qualifications will be taught (basic and advanced E. coli). Will be talking to 4-H leaders from Cameron and Hidalgo to get 4-H kids involved and to be stream team volunteers.
  - Model on display (10/18) Pharr Out Kids Nature Day. (see bimonthly update (10/20/09) for specifics)
  - Model needed repair because people have misused it, or it might have been damaged in transport. It will now have a login/logout so that people can be held liable.
  - Will be on display at spooky science fest Sat 10/24.
  - Jaime was in several classrooms Tuesday 10/20 (Stewart Place Elementary) and today (10/22) (Dr. Rodriguez Elementary), Cameron County Annex building (Cameron county teachers) 10 teachers were there.
- Waste Water Infrastructure
    - Trying to track waste water infrastructure improvements
    - Many cities have replied about their attachment to colonias and Jaime is summarizing them.
      - Harlingen (2 mill to 4 mill gal/day), Weslaco, Pharr (more than Harlingen), and Alamo are doing reuse.
      - McAllen south plant. Brad knows land owner that might consider reuse. In past has not wanted to do it because he grew food crops but now is nonfood.

### **Long-term Partnership Sustainability**

- Previous Options Discussed
  - Becoming our own 501(c)3. Legal standing, but it required resources and money that we didn't have. Political activity limited.
  - Going under the umbrella of an existing organization. Few resources necessary to continue at this point and have Human Resources to support Watershed Coordinator (WC). Still no legal standing. There would be an outside board in addition to the steering committee.
- Sustainability Task Group
  - Have met since 2008 to discuss options and determine a plan of action
  - Will meet again on 10/23
- Proposed at last meeting
  - LRGVDC could support Partnership through employing/administering WC.
  - WC funded by a variety of sources (Federal and state through TWRI, LRGVDC, and local funds through LRGV NPDES Stormwater Task Force)
  - WC would still support Partnership and implement the WPP

- WC would also assist with measures that overlap or are directly related to the WPP (Region M Planning, Lower Rio Grande Valley Water Authority, Storm Water Task Force)
- Partnership remain as is
- Steering Committee and Workgroups work together to guide Partnership carried out by WC
- LRGVDC is official government or political entity.
- Partnership will not seek 501(c)3.
- LRGVDC host and maintain account for the Partnership
- LRGVDC has grant writers on staff and subcontracts web support to assist the Partnership
  
- Additional Proposal
  - South Texas Environmental Institute (TAMUK) (Stormwater Task Force) expressed interest in being more involved with sustainability
  - Provide funding through the LRGV TPDES Stormwater Task Force
  - Engage WC on Stormwater Task force tasks that overlap with WPP goals
  - SWTF says they can give \$10,000 to support WC
  - Discussions are ongoing to determine details
  
- Partnership status
  - Funded through a variety of sources through individual implementation projects
  - WC backbone of partnership
  
- WC status
  - Current grant funds WC through TCEQ 319(h) grant
    - Current end date of TCEQ is 2/28/10
    - Provided a NCE is allowed, WC could be sustained for 3.7 months after 2/28
    - TWRI will request an extension thru 5/31/10
  - TWRI has additional funding to carry WC through 8/15/10
  
- Options
  - 1 – WC becomes employee of existing entity and serves their sole purpose and watershed partnership.
    - Provide 100% of funding after TWRI funds expire.
    - Provide funding for Partnership activities.
    - Everything else stays the same
  
  - 2 – WC become employee of existing entity and serve multiple agencies and watershed partnership
    - Existing entity and other local partners provide portion of funding after TWRI funds expire.

- WC will provide support to multiple entities based on the level of funding provided.
- Everything else stays the same
- 3 – TWRI or other entity to submit a 319(h) proposal to TCEQ and TSSWCB to sustain partnership for an additional 2 to 3 years. Project would focus on sustainability and implementation and include local partners.
  - Option contingent upon getting funded.
  - WC employee of TWRI or other entity
  - Project would not likely be funded until 10/1/10 (at earliest) (TSSWCB). 3/11 for TCEQ
  - Tier funding levels for WC to gain local support in 2 to 3 years
  - WC will provide support to multiple entities based on the level of funding provided.
- Where are we going from here
  - Sustainability task group will meet and continue to meet
  - Review all options and develop a more concrete plan with budget numbers
  - Unless the Steering Committee or Task Group is against it, we will definitely submit the two 319(h) proposals.

### Grants Update

- Low Impact Development regional Grant (TCEQ 319) (Harlingen, Brownsville, San Juan, Mission) all would alternate. Brownsville would be the lead (Fiscal Agent). Little behind in meeting the following goals and one of those is low impact development.
  - San Juan – Impervious parking lot and Boardwalk
  - Harlingen – 75 acres convert to RDF
  - Brownsville – Volleyball Complex
  - Mission – Parks (trails and rain gardens)
  - TAMUK wants to do water quality monitoring for BMP effectiveness at each site.
  - Wants cities to adopt a different ordinance for development.
- New Grant (319 TSSWCB) – Directed approach to get producers who don't have water quality management plan or BMPs to have them.
  - Demos for producers so that they can see the BMP for a year and see what it can do.
  - Education/Outreach for cost-share program participation to alleviate fears/misunderstandings about the program
- Solar Bee
  - Hoping to submit to Texas Water Development Board Demonstration Grant
  - TCEQ going to do a demonstration with the Solar Bee this spring

**Other Business**

- Jude is in progress of putting together GIS data for the Arroyo. We need to share land use and BMP mapping and SWAT modeling.