

Watershed Council Executive Committee (EC) Meeting
November 16, 2001
Meeting Summary

Prior to discussion, Conrad Keyes requested the addition of two agenda items, 14(a) Announcement of the Rio Grande Riparian Ecological Quarter Project Workshop to be held in Las Cruces. and 14(b) Report on Restoration Conference held in Albuquerque.

1) March 29, June 11, July 31 and October 19 meeting summary approvals.

No one had comments/changes to the previous meeting summaries sent out by Sue Watts. The summaries were approved as written by unanimous vote.

2) Council Membership

a) Addition of Councilors to Membership – Jim Stefanov and Ed Fierro reported no new applications or requests for Council membership.

b) Term limits and duties of EC – Jim mentioned that the Bylaws call for 1 year terms for EC members, and stated that he thought this was too short a term. The EC agreed. According to present Bylaws, this must be passed by to the total membership 30 days prior to an official vote of the EC and this will be done immediately and prior to the next meeting of the EC/Council.

c) Nomination for Secretary of EC – Conrad stated that Ed Fierro had been nominated for EC Secretary, but that the EC still needed to vote on this. He asked for further nominations for this position. No other nominations were offered. A motion was made and seconded to elect Ed Fierro as Secretary – motion passed by unanimous vote.

d) Nominations for Treasurer of EC – Since the Bylaws do not currently include the Treasurer position, Jim read his proposed language for the duties of this position as follows: “The Treasurer shall maintain accurate and up to date books of accounting showing the receipts, disbursements, and assets of the Council. The Treasurer shall present a budget report at each Council meeting and will prepare an annual financial statement.” Sue Watts made a motion to establish position of Treasurer as a member of the EC and with the duties read out by Jim. Motion was seconded and passed unanimously. Ed Fierro nominated Ari Michelsen for Treasurer. No other nomination were made. Motion was made to select Ari as Treasurer. Motion was seconded and passed by unanimous vote. This position will be added to the Bylaws as soon as possible.

8) Proposal for Coordinated Data Management within the PdN Watershed –

This agenda item was discussed out of order at Tony Tarquin’s request. Ed Fierro mentioned that he had e-mailed a Meeting Summary of the Nov. 2nd meeting to the EC and stated that the end result of the meeting was a decision to select one or two members

from the four institutions mentioned in the Summary. Tarquin stated that he had brought with him Raed Aldouri from Pan American Center for Earth and Environmental Studies (PACES) to the meeting for this purpose and that Aldouri was ready to start work on this immediately if directed by the EC. Keyes replied that this meeting was not meant to be the meeting for the selected individuals to meet – other individuals still had to be selected and a separate meeting would be scheduled, probably in late November or early December. Keyes suggested that a committee be set up to work with the selected group to establish the website. Tarquin stated that Aldouri was already working on setting up a similar website for as part of another project. Aldouri went over some of the technical requirements for setting up the website. Keyes advised that a proposal would have to be drafted for review by El Paso Water Utilities, who is the agency that will be providing funding for part of this project. Sue Watts made a motion to create a committee, formally entitled “Coordinated Data Management Committee”, to draft the proposal and handle the project. Keyes also suggested that Ed Fierro serve as temporary chairman of this Committee until a permanent chair is selected during the first meeting of the Committee. The motion passed by unanimous vote. Fierro will call the entities involved and set up a Committee meeting of selected individuals. The EC also agreed that the selected Committee members need not be members of the Council.

3) Council’s data storage facility/institution.

Keith Landreth of Ft. Bliss volunteered a storage site located inside Ft. Bliss for archiving of the EC/Council files. A discussion followed concerning whether the Coordinator to be hired should keep these files in his/her office instead. However, it was explained that the Ft. Bliss storage location would only be used for archive file storage – recent files currently in use would be kept in the Coordinator’s office.

4) EPWU/TAMU Cooperative Agreement for Coordinator Position.

Ari Michelsen reported that the Agreement had been slightly revised from the previous version to account for lag time in start-up of a coordinator. He added that the PSB had approved the Agreement at the last PSB meeting and was waiting for it to be returned for final processing at TAMU.

Michelsen stated that he will draft a newspaper ad for the Coordinator position and will submit the add to the Officers of the EC for their review. The position’s term is for one year from the date of hire. Michelsen will be revising the standard job description circulated previously to emphasize the grant writing aspect of the position, and also modify the required job skills to better define those required of the Coordinator. Kevin Bixby suggested that these skills include knowledge or training in the fields of geology and/or hydrogeology. Michelsen agreed.

5) Draft Strategic Plan – Brian Hanson

Hanson distributed copies of his draft for the Strategic Plan. He stated that he had researched a variety of documents to come up with this draft, including the Council’s

Bylaws and “Statement of Purpose”, plus the strategic plans from other entities. Keyes suggested that the Council schedule a “Strategic Planning Session” to brainstorm ideas and come up with a final document. Sue Watts said that the Coordinator could assist with this task, or alternatively, a draft can be provided to the Coordinator after he or she is hired to use as a guide in coming up with a final Strategic Plan. Keyes stated that in his opinion the Strategic Plan should be a dynamic document and should be revised yearly as required to reflect the Council changing priorities and focus. Keyes appointed three new members to the Strategic Plan Steering Committee - Dan Santantonio, Kevin Bixby, and Brian Hanson. Also, Chris Brown volunteered to serve on this Committee. Existing member of this committee are Doug Echlin, Mike Landis, and Julie Maitland. Keyes suggested that the EC schedule a one-hour Strategic Plan brainstorming session after the next Council/EC meeting. After some discussion, it was agreed that Brian Hanson would set up a Steering Committee meeting in late December or mid-January to follow up on the brainstorming session and hopefully finalize the Strategic Plan. The plan is to finalize the Strategic Plan by the end of January 2002.

6) WAG proposal status

Sue Watts advised that if the Council were awarded the WAG by Rivernetwork, the Coordinator position would be upgraded to 3/4 full time position with fringe benefits. Rivernetwork has requested a financial statement from TAMU as part of the application process. Sue will talk to Rivernetwork to get specifics on what they need and relay this information to Ari so TAMU can submit the required documents. Rivernetwork should announce the grant awardees by the end of November, and it looks promising. She will send out an e-mail to EC members as soon as she is notified of the outcome of the awards. If the Council gets the grant, TAMU would be the recipient of the grant and Michelsen will have to sign the grant document.

7) Julie Maitland and Conrad Keyes reported on the NM Water Quality Control Commission’s 10/10 hearing in Las Cruces. The section of the Rio Grande that had changes made to the standards was from Percha Dam to American Dam. Julie advised that the Commission had decided to retain the Secondary Contact designated use for this stretch of the river, but had voted to change (lower) the standard for this stretch for fecal coliform bacteria. Keyes added that the City of Las Cruces and EBID had provided comments at the hearing, along with representatives from NMED, SWEC, IBWC, Force Guardians, and one private citizen from Juarez. The Commission for the most part accepted what the City of Las Cruces and EBID recommended and that was one option recommended by NMED.

8) World Wildlife Fund (WWF) Grant Proposal

Sue Watts stated that the WWF had asked for more specifics about the public outreach program for which the grant funds are to be used. The funds are intended for Spanish translation services of the Council’s public outreach materials. Questions were asked about the goal of the public outreach campaign – what is the target audience, the message that will be communicated, and the media outlets that will be used? Keyes suggested that

two other EC members be assigned to assist Sue to develop materials for the public outreach campaign. There may not be enough money to do more than one than two media releases, especially if translation services are intended. Doug Echlin stated that there are already some public outreach materials related to watershed issues that have been published by the IBWC and other agencies. The Council could distribute these materials as part of their public outreach campaign. Sue stated that this is precisely the type of information the WWF was asking for. Kevn Bixby recommended that the Council finalize its Strategic Plan before embarking on a public outreach program.

10) Freedom of Information Act request to DOJ on curtailment of extending URGWOM from Elephant Butte to Fort Quitman.

Conrad stated that he had heard on TorC news radio that the Appellate Court was hearing the case at this time, and asked the EC if anyone else had any more information on this issue. No one had heard anything else. Keyes added that he had called the Reclamation office in Albuquerque to inquire about this but that they did not want to give out additional information. He will ask Mike Landis about this later and continue to work with Mike on this matter.

11) Coordination with other groups doing similar work and draft guidelines.

Ed Hamlyn stated that he had sent out questionnaires to 65 entities that deal with water issues in the region, and had received responses from about 2/3 of them, which was higher than expected. One of the questions in the questionnaire concerned the entity's "source of authority". However, the answers to this question were inconsistent. Another important piece of information asked for in the questionnaire concerned the entity's geographical area of responsibility, jurisdiction, or study. He has the responses in a text file but has not organized this information in any way. There is no budget set up to do analysis of this data. Chris Brown suggested that the Council may be better served by developing more formal connections with people from a few of the key water groups – for example, Barbara Kauffman and Jake Brisbin of the El Paso COG, Bess Metcalf of Rio Grande/Rio Bravo Basin Coalition and Darrin Swartz-Larson of EPA. Conrad stated that he could ask Sally Spener of IBWC to disseminate information on the Watershed Council at IBWC's next Public Citizens Forum meeting. The Council may also consider inviting some of these people to join the Council. Other entities that have lists of water groups were mentioned – the New Mexico Water Dialogue website may have a list, Gail Stockton and Chris Shaffer of the COE may also have developed a list during its recent workshop in El Paso. The WRRRI's institute website has a list of New Mexico groups, but it excludes non-governmental groups. Ed Hamlyn agreed to send the mailing list used for the questionnaire to Ed Fierro for distribution to the EC.

12) Discussion of IBWC's Canalization Project EIS

Kevin Bixby stated that he had no additional info to report, but added that the release of the Draft EIS would be a major opportunity for the Council to get involved in by providing comments. He added that the release date had been delayed by about one or

two months. Some revisions are being done by the consultant concerning the analysis of the four alternatives. The probable release date is January of 2002.

13) Keyes mentioned that the next MAC/SC meeting would be on November 29 at the EBID offices in Las Cruces. Sue Watts will not be able to make that meeting.

14) Other Business

a) Keyes went over the announcement letter dated November 7th for the Rio Grande Riparian Ecological Corridor Project Workshop to be held in Las Cruces on November 27, 1:00 pm, at the Branigan Cultural Center. There will be three workgroups in the program. You may call Carol McCall at (505) 528-3148 if you want to be included in one of the workgroups. The workshop covers an 11-mile stretch of the Rio Grande from Shalem Bridge to Mesilla Dam.

b) Keyes asked Kevin Bixby to report on the Restoration Conference held in Albuquerque recently. Bixby stated that he only attended one day. The conference had good topics. Unfortunately, it had a number of presentations going on concurrently, so he could not attend all of them. The conference had much practical information on planning and implementing wetlands projects. The sponsor was The Association of Floodplain Managers.

Michelsen handed out copies of the slides for a presentation entitled "Using the Internet for Watershed Management and Environmental Protection" which was presented at an American Water Resources Association Conference on November 12~15 in Albuquerque. He briefly described the material presented at this conference. Ari also handed out a notice for the Watershed Management Council Ninth Biennial Conference scheduled for November 3~6, 2002. This conference is sponsored by The Watershed Management Council.

Rosemary Staley advised the Council that El Paso County's \$6 million grant application for the Rio Grande Trail System did not make the short list of projects recommended by the TxDOT to the Texas Transportation Commission. However, there is still \$55 million remaining to be awarded. Ms. Staley urged members of the Council to send in letters of support for the County's grant application to the three Commission members. The names and address of the Commission members are listed in the letter she wrote to the Rio Grande Task Force Members on this topic. She will provide a copy of the letter to Ed Fierro for distribution.

c) The next Watershed Council Meeting was scheduled for 9:00am, January 22, 2002 at Las Cruces Utilities Administration offices.