

Meeting Summary

Watershed Council Executive Committee (EC) Meeting

April 5, 2002, 1:30pm – NM Department of Ag Offices, Las Cruces

1) Database Management/GIS Committee Report - Chris Brown was participating in the meeting on speakerphone, so Conrad suggested that Agenda Item (4) Data Management/GIS Committee Report be covered first so Chris Brown could discuss the outline he prepared for the Coordinated Database Project. After Chris went over each section of the outline, Conrad asked for comments. John Burkstaller recommended that the tasks under Phase I of the Project, which includes includes a user needs assessment, inventorying of relevant data, and development of MOU's with data providers, be done informally as needed during the implementation of the Project and not shown as a separate phase. John explained that the Council already has a good idea of what data it wants to make available on the website, and about who the user's will be, at least for the initial stages of the Project. Also, he strongly recommended against the execution of MOU's with prospective data providers, because in his view this would get board members and attorneys involved, likely leading to a paralysis in the initial stages of the Project. John pointed out that it was unlikely entities would sign MOU's to agree to share data, and suggested that an informal data sharing process be pursued based on verbal agreements. Most members of the Executive Committee were in general agreement with John on this point. Also, John was under the impression that the Database Committee had selected the "Database replication/distributed network model" architecture for sharing of the data, and thought that this architecture was the best alternative. Therefore, his recommendation was to immediately start with implementation of Phase III, full scale implementation, using data from sources we know will share their data, such as IBWC, USBR, and EPWU.

Chris expressed his concern that Raed and his staff may not have the expertise available to implement the "Database replication/distributed network model," which was the method that was proposed by Srimi of TAMU. Ed Fierro stated that no one has asked Raed about this yet, so he will contact Raed and ask him about which architecture he is most comfortable with. An important factor on which architecture to use is the amount of effort, and associated costs, that would be required from data providers.

Concerning funding, John advised that he wanted other agencies to contribute to funding of the Project. EPWU is willing to provide most of the funding for the initial phase of the project, but the Council needs to identify other sources for continued funding in subsequent years. Conrad asked John what type of funding agreement he needed with the Council in order to provide EPWU funding. John replied that he just wanted a simple Scope of Work document describing the Project Scope in general terms. Once this was done, the Council would then submit monthly invoices through the Council's fiscal agent. Ed Fierro stated that the Coordinated Database Committee will prepare a Scope of Work for submittal to John. He will schedule another meeting of the Committee to discuss this.

2) External Coordination – Chris Brown advised the Council of the next Paso del Norte Water Task Force meeting on April 26th and of the next MAC/SC meeting, which was re-scheduled for May 2nd to avoid a scheduling conflict with Regional Planning Group meeting. The next

MAC/SC meeting will focus on discussion of coordinating the activities of the MAC/SC with the Paso del Norte Water Task Force and the Tri-Regional Planning Group.

3) Corp of Engineer's Roundtable - Since funding issues were being discussed, Conrad next briefed the Council on the discussions he had with COE staff at the COE's Rio Grande Roundtable conference. Chris Shafer of the COE advised Conrad that the COE's current focus is "vegetative management" projects, basically meaning projects for removal of salt cedar. The COE is also interested in expanding URGWOP to include water quality, although they still don't know how they will do this. Nonetheless, they plan to apply for EPA funds to include water quality in the URGWOP model, because they have reached their limits in the funding of that project. They asked for any assistance that the Council's can provide in this area. Conrad stated that the COE has matching funds available for new projects, but no proposals for use of these funds. Ari asked if EPWU funds provided to the Council can be used as matching funds. Conrad replied in the affirmative. Conrad stated that URGWOP will have a lot of information for the Middle Rio Grande region available in 4 to 6 months. However, it has very little data on the Lower Rio Grande.

4) February 22, 2002 Meeting Summary – Conrad asked if anyone had comments on the February meeting summary. No one had comments, and the minutes were approved as written.

5) Coordinator Position – Ari stated that 32 applications had been received, and 4 applicants interviewed. The selection committee had been unanimous in the selection of Ed Kosak for this position. Mr. Kosak's background is in wildlife and range management, and his work experience is with the U.S. Forest Service, Guadalupe District (Carlsbad and Ruidoso). His references confirm him to be a well-rounded, conscientious, and hard working individual. However, he does not have much experience in grant writing. Writing samples were asked for and received from each candidate, and Mr. Kosak's writing skills appeared more than adequate. Ari mentioned the upcoming grant writing course scheduled to be held in El Paso, and suggested that the Council consider sending Mr. Kosak to this course. The Council thought this was a good idea. Ari said he spoke to Mr. Kosak this morning about his interest in accepting the position, and Mr. Kosak indicated that yes, he was still interested. Ari hopes to wrap up the required paperwork and make a formal offer to Mr. Kosak by next Monday or Tuesday. Jim Stefanov offered to find out if IBWC has any surplus computer equipment for the Coordinator.

6) Announcements - While Julie Maitland went to make some copies of the Draft Strategic Plan, the Council took this opportunity to make some announcements:

a) Conrad updated the Council on the NM Water Quality Control Commission's activities over the past 2 to 4 weeks. The Commission held two public hearings during this time period. One concerned the setting of new regulations for human health criteria for the Rio Grande. The Commission may make a decision on this by May 1st. The other hearing involved new regulations on NPDES discharge permits. The Commission has made a decision on this issue and new regulations were approved yesterday.

b) Bobby Creel – Announced that the 47th Annual NM Water Conference scheduled is for October 10th and 11th at Ruidoso. The topic of the Conference is "drought." He also passed out

flyers announcing the New Mexico WRRI's Water Research Symposium scheduled for August 13th. The cost for the Symposium is \$20, which basically covers the cost of the lunch to be provided. He encouraged Council members to consider submitting papers or attending the Symposium.

c) Keith Landreth announced the April 22nd Earth Day Open House sponsored by DOE and hosted by Ft. Bliss. They expect 15 presenters and 1,200~1,300 attendees at the Open House.

d) Ari announced a conference will be held at the El Paso Agricultural Research and Extension Center on April 16th and 17th to discuss the planned projects and program accomplishments of the "Efficient Irrigation for Water Conservation in the Rio Grande Basin Initiative." This is a broad based, cooperative program with efforts designed to facilitate efficient water use. The registration fee is \$30. E-mail notices for this conference will be sent out to Council members.

e) Mike Landis advised that the current run-off flow estimate at the San Marcial gauge was 8% of the 30 year average, which means only about 30,000~40,000 AF of water flowing into Elephant Butte Reservoir this year. Reservoir content is projected at 250,000 AF in storage at the end of the irrigation season.

f) Brian Hanson advised that four new positions were being advertised for the minnow rescue teams. The Bureau will soon be releasing some water held back as part of the Minnow Recovery Plan in an effort to keep water in the river, at least until the end of May, which is spawning season for the Minnow. One of the main activities of the minnow recovery teams are to move minnows found stranded in isolated pools upstream to sections of the river with more water.

Brian also emphasized that the Council needs to make printing of informational pamphlets describing the Council a high priority. He noted a recent situation in which he could have used such a pamphlet to conveniently provide information about the Council during a discussion with an interested party.

7) Updated Draft Strategic Plan – Sue Watts handed out copies of the Updated Draft Strategic Plan. She advised that most of the changes from the previous draft involved re-organizing the goals and objectives as per the comments at the last meeting.

John Burkstaller suggested that a new Goal (E) be added reading as follows: "Support efforts to monitor and improve water quality", and that a new objective be added as Objective A 1(c), "Develop a plan for water quality management." However, someone pointed out that adding a new Goal would require developing additional Objectives to support that Goal. After some discussion, it was decided to add a new Goal (E), "Support Efforts to monitor and improve water quality", with two Objectives (E)(1) "Develop a Water Quality Database" and (E)(2) "Plan for Water Quality Management." Conrad mentioned that he had a meeting with a Congressional Delegation next week and would like to have a draft of the Strategic Plan by next Monday. Ari recommended that Sue print the Strategic Plan on Council letterhead and stamp "DRAFT" on it. Sue will re-draft the Plan as per these recommendations and distribute to the EC next Monday. A final draft can hopefully be provided to Conrad early next week for distribution to the delegation.

Kevin Bixby suggested that the phrase used in Objectives B(1) and (B), "Review and provide recommendations..." be replaced with the phrase "Develop criteria for review and selection..." He stated that the Council can't review and provide recommendations on projects until it has developed appropriate criteria with which to evaluate the projects. Brian disagreed with Kevin, and commented that the Council could spend months developing and debating on appropriate criteria to be used. Some discussion followed, but Conrad suggested that the discussion be tabled at this time to allow Dr. Oshima and Dr. Di-Giovanni to give their presentations without additional delay. The Council agreed to do so.

8) Dr. Di-Giovanni gave an PowerPoint presentation on detection of *Cryptosporidium* using molecular analysis and other methods. Dr. Oshima followed with a presentation on the distribution of water-borne pathogens in the Paso del Norte region. After a short question and answer session, the Council thanked both gentlemen for presenting this information.

9) Next Meeting Date and Time - The next meeting was set for May 14th, 1:30pm at the EPWU Offices at 1154 Hawkins Blvd.

10) Other Business - Dan Santantonio stated that he thought the Council should prioritize its goals and objectives, and identify short term vs. long term goals. Sue advised that she saw this activity as the next step in the process. However, she added that she could identify some initial short term goals and insert them at appropriate locations in the Strategic Plan. After some discussion, Brian stated that he believes that the Council needs to get the Strategic Plan done and distributed, and worry about refining it later. The Council agreed with Brian.

Ari reminded the Council that it will need to give Mr. Kosak clear direction on what we need and also let him know what we expect from him.

11) World Wildlife Fund Grant Proposal – Sue Watts advised that Ari had received and signed the grant paperwork. This is a \$5,000 grant for printing and translation of public outreach materials. The original deadlines for utilization of the funds was for March to December of 2002. However, Ari had received assurance from WW F that they would extend the deadline beyond December as needed upon request from the Council.

12) Other Business - Mike Landis advised that the USBR was working on drafting the Cooperative Agreement with the Council for a \$10,000 grant. This Agreement will be written loosely enough so that it can be used for just about any Council activity. Mike said that the Council should expect to receive the Agreement from their Salt Lake City office within 2 weeks.

John Burkstaller asked about the funding sources currently secured or soon to be secured by the Council. Sue advised that so far the Council is looking at receiving about \$32,000 from EPWU, \$30,000 from the WAG grant, \$5,000 from the WWF grant, and the \$10,000 USBR grant. John stated that he thought that the Coordinator position was for ½ time. Sue advised that it was originally set up as a ½ time position, but was increased to ¾ time position with full benefits after the Council found out it would be receiving the \$30,000 WAG grant. However, the weekly work schedule for the Coordinator may vary during the year to fit the work load, as long as he

averages $\frac{3}{4}$ time over this period. Conrad asked Ari, the Council's Treasurer, to present a financial report at the next meeting. Ari agreed to do so.

Sue stated that the funding set aside for the Coordinator position included \$5,000 to hire a web designer to set up the Council's website. Bobby Creel advised that he had a student on his staff that does web page design and is not utilized full-time. He offered to donate his services to the Council and thereby save the Council \$5,000. Sue and the rest of the Council accepted Bobby's offer and thanked him for it.

Doug Echlin advised that the Canalization Project EIS is still being developed. The first two Chapters (Purpose and Need & Description of Alternatives) are being mailed to the participating agencies for internal review. The Draft EIS should be out this summer. IBWC is planning to meet with the irrigation districts to present summary briefing of EIS. IBWC is on EBID's April 17th Board Meeting agenda and expects to meet with EPCWID#1 that same afternoon or shortly thereafter.