

**Minutes of the
Paso del Norte Watershed Council
Annual Meeting 2003
and the
Executive Committee Meeting
September 15, 2003, 12:30 pm to 3:00 pm
at the
Texas Agricultural Experiment Station, Texas A&M University
1380 A&M Circle
El Paso, TX**

In attendance: Conrad G. Keyes, Jr., Chair Sue Watts, Assistant Chair
 Ari Michelsen, Treasurer Ed Fierro, Secretary
 Nancy Hanks, Program Coordinator

Gilbert Anaya, U. S. IBWC
Roberta Ball, U. S. Army Corps of Engineers
Kevin Bixby, Southwest Environmental Center
Christopher Brown, Geography, New Mexico State University
Mike Fahy, El Paso Water Utilities
Miguel A. Flores Ortiz, INIFAP
Alfredo O. Granados, Universidad Autónoma de Ciudad Juárez
Inga Groff, League of Women Voters
Joe Groff, Chihuahuan Desert Wildlife Rescue
Brian Hanson, U. S. Fish & Wildlife Service
Phil King, New Mexico State University
Mike Landis, El Paso Office, US Bureau of Reclamation
Keith Landreth, U. S. Army, Fort Bliss
Julie Maitland, New Mexico Department of Agriculture
Jacob Massoud, Ysleta del Sur Pueblo
Clay Mathers, U. S. Army Corps of Engineers
Mike Mecke, Texas Agricultural Extension Station
Jennifer Montoya, World Wildlife Fund
Valerie Provencio, El Paso Water Utilities
Lori Rivera, Ysleta del Sur Pueblo
Dan Santantonio, City of Las Cruces
John Sproul, University of Texas at El Paso, CERM
R. Srinivasan, Texas A&M University
Rosemary Staley, City of El Paso
Jim Stefanov, U. S. Section International Boundary & Water Commission
Gail Stockton, U. S. Army Corps of Engineers
Barnet Sugarman, Private Citizen
Beatriz Vera, Rio Grande/Rio Bravo Basin Coalition

1. Convene Meeting (Conrad Keyes)

It was established that there was a quorum so the Annual Meeting was convened at 12:40 pm.

2. Approval of Minutes from August 11, 2003 (Nancy Hanks)

Julie moved that the minutes be approved, Barney seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

3. New Members (Nancy Hanks)

Nancy introduced new Council member Jacob Massoud, representing the Ysleta del Sur Pueblo. Conrad requested that each Council member present introduce themselves.

4. Council Activities (Nancy Hanks)

The report on Council activities was brief, due to the timing of the meeting (the MAC/SC meeting was at 1:30 and the Coordinated Database Workshop was at 3:00 pm the same day). Nancy reported that the Council did not write a letter regarding their concerns about the development of Resler Arroyo in El Paso.

5. Financial Report (Ari Michelsen)

Ari distributed a report of the budget as of 31 August 2003. He said that there was a formal extension of funding from the EPWU to allow continuation of the Coordinated Database through October 31, 2003, to enable Chris and others working on that project to present the workshop this afternoon. Also, funding from the Albuquerque branch of the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers will be extended past October 31, 2003, perhaps for another year. Conrad said that the URGWOM Steering Committee wanted a report at their October 9, 2003, meeting and he asked Chris to give the presentation. Chris said that Phil King will. Ari reported that a recent meeting of the Coordinated Database technical committee discussed year end monies and there would be an attempt to transfer money to Phil to extend Sue's work.

6. Committee Reports

- **Coordinated Database (Christopher Brown)**

Chris discussed the workshop he was conducting on the Coordinated Database, to be held at 3:00pm today. He distributed copies of the report to the Executive Committee.

- **Brochure and/or Education (Sue Watts)**

Sue presented a copy of the most recent, last version of the brochure, and asked Council members to notify Nancy if they needed brochures to take to meetings. She said that they were almost ready for Bea to translate. Jennifer said she was going to the Wetlands Managers meeting in Socorro in November and would need 50 for that. Conrad wants 20. Nancy commented that she needed to add Ysleta del Sur Pueblo to the list of members on the brochure. Conrad asked about printing the organizations with bullets between them. Sue stated that she couldn't left justify them. She thanked Julie and Tim for helping edit the brochure. Ari congratulated the brochure committee and asked that the background on the inside be toned down making it whiter. Sue stated that the next need was for another brochure to introduce people to the watershed concept. She asked for volunteers for the new brochure committee. Conrad asked for that discussion to go under "Other Business."

- **Business Plan (Conrad Keyes)**

Conrad stated that the business plan was "as is." No comments went to him from the Executive Committee. There were \$197,000 in all of the funding mechanisms of the Council as of 31 August 2003 and the business plan was followed.

- **Wetlands (Kevin Bixby)**

Nancy distributed hard copies of "Hope for a Living River" to members of the Council. John Sproul reported that the Paso del Norte wetlands project proposal would be resubmitted in March 2004. He said the original proposal didn't score well at all on wildlife, but that it scored well on the partnership aspect. Conrad said we can redirect that effort and put it into the proposal, but that the subcommittee should be formed soon.

- **Integrated Watershed Planning (Brian Hanson/Julie Maitland)**

Brian discussed the history of the Integrated Watershed Management Plan:

The plan came out of the Council's Strategic Plan, which stated that the Council would put together a guiding watershed document for the group to use to evaluate proposals. Last December there were two public meetings to discuss the biological management plan for 200 miles of the river. One meeting was in Albuquerque and one was in Las Cruces. Input from those meetings led Council members to investigate two methods of writing such a document. One was to contract it out, another was for the Council to write a plan for Sen. Bingaman. Brian wrote a proposal for a plan that would include an inventory of 200 miles of the river environment. WWF developed a proposal for a biological management plan also. The Council met in Las Cruces to decide on how to proceed with the two plans. From that discussion, the plan expanded to \$8 million for a 5-year period. That plan was presented to Bingaman's office, and they were supportive.

Jennifer added that at that point, we missed the FY 2004 budget and appropriation. Mike Connor from Senator Bingaman's office suggested that we submit the proposal to the EPA Watershed Assistance program, but Jennifer said she didn't think the current proposal would fit that program very well. She thought that the Senator would support a well-thought-out, well-documented idea with a lot of diversity and agencies involved, and that MAC support would help. Conrad said that at their last meeting the Executive Council approved a two-page proposal with a near-\$2 million budget, including five projects, listed on page 3 of minutes from August 11, 2003. The proposal was presented to the MAC and they said they would review it and make recommendations today at their meeting.

Conrad was invited to and attended the Lower Rio Grande Water Users Organization Technical Committee to speak about the plan at their August 28, 2003, meeting. He asked for their input, hearing from Bobby Creel, who sent an email to Conrad commenting on the proposal, and Ed Fierro.

Ari added that after the last MAC meeting, Karl Wood recommended a large number of other potential programs. Conrad said that he understood they would give us comments back at today's meeting. Brian thought it was a good process, asking local groups for comments, and that the MAC said they wanted smaller projects and we rewrote it to reflect those concerns. He stated that we need their support. Conrad stated that he passed the proposal on to Gail Stockton of the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers and Kris Schafer of Sen. Domenici's office. Christopher Brown stated that it was clear how the MAC feels, but asked how Sen. Bingaman's staff feels--did they have substantive issues or was it simply a timing problem? Jennifer said they were leaving the details up to us as the experts. She thought it was timing. She wondered if the Council should maintain that working group, inviting members of the MAC to be on it.

Conrad asked Kevin if he had anything to add to John's comments about the big proposal in March 2004. Kevin stated that the Mesilla Valley Bosque Park got \$200,000 to purchase an easement from the biggest private land owners. He said that the New Mexico State Parks was continuing to do a master plan.

7. Election of Executive Committee

Nancy distributed voting forms while Jim informed the Council that there were 22 people nominated and only 20 could serve. Keith Landreth and Barney Sugarman withdrew their names from nomination. Jim moved to accept the remaining 20 members listed on the form and John Sproul seconded. Nancy pointed out that 11 of the names were only being nominated for a one-year term so as to provide continuity for the coming years' elections. The vote was unanimous to approve the slate of new Executive Committee members. (Note: current list of Executive Committee members and their terms of office is attached.)

Ari nominated Sue Watts for Chair, Julie seconded. Jim nominated Julie Maitland for Chair, Sue seconded. The two left the room during the vote. Sue won the vote and the two re-entered the room. The Executive Committee then voted unanimously to elect Julie as Assistant Chair, Valerie Provencio as Secretary, and Ari Michelsen as Treasurer.

It was determined that the Executive Committee should set up the new committees (Education/Brochure and Integrated Watershed Management Plan).

Conrad requested that the three representatives (Gail Stockton, Roberta Ball, and Clay Mathers) from the U. S. Corps of Engineers introduce themselves to the Executive Committee.

The Education/Brochure committee was established: Vera, Montoya, Provencio, and Groff.

Regarding the brochure, Nancy agreed to send the new font ideas to Julie (with an exclamation point).

At this time, the Council as a whole adjourned to go into the auditorium next door and listen to the MAC/SC meeting, which included a discussion of the revised Integrated Watershed Management Plan. The MAC/SC voted to approve the revised plan.

8. Brief meeting of the new Executive Committee to Elect Officers

At approximately 2:15pm, after the MAC/SC meeting, the Executive Council convened.

9. Other Business

Sue suggested forming an Outreach Committee to represent the Watershed Council at various meetings that she might not be able to attend. Jennifer pointed out that Nancy coordinated the distribution

of meeting announcements. Conrad speculated that Nancy's contract with EPWU would include travel to meetings.

Sue suggested that there be either an Integrated Watershed Proposal committee or an EPA Watershed Initiative committee, depending on what was going to be done with those proposals. Conrad asked if the Council could revise their last proposal to the EPA. Sue wasn't sure. Jennifer thought that the salinity proposal was more appropriate for the EPA. Conrad thought it odd that the EPA did not select any proposals from Texas and only one from New Mexico, on the Rio Puerco. It was mentioned that the Rio Puerco Watershed group was already established and funded, so the EPA may have felt more confident in their abilities. Sue asked if there was a new RFP for the EPA Watershed Initiative. Jennifer stated that Mike Connor had said that last year the EPA watershed RFP went out about January. Sue asked for volunteers to keep an eye out for EPA RFPs. Brian stated that the salinity work should continue but that the Integrated Plan is another issue. Sue had been the lead on the salinity proposal and she designated Ping to try to rework the salinity proposal into any new RFPs for the EPA Watershed Initiative. Jennifer said she would call Mike Connor again to see if we can hold off on the Integrated Watershed Plan proposal until FY05.

Sue suggested continuing the Technical Committee. Chris said there would be two potential thrusts for the Coordinated Database project: the USCOE and EPWU. Chris said that as the funding becomes available they would discuss recommendations for future work. Chris and Ping will continue to co-chair committee.

Sue asked if there was any effort to incorporate biological data into the database. Chris said not yet. Conrad said the NEPA document information will be incorporated as soon as it is available. Chris said a lot of it would depend on what the funders want. He added that once they convert to an ARCIMS application it will be easy to incorporate other data in with the GIS spatial data. He added that he would like to look at issues such as water quality sampling, using data from the EPA, and that the Watershed Council should tell provide direction regarding what it wants to explore. He said the SCERP project will do similar things. He said Alfredo is having a GIS tech meeting on 22 September and experts meeting on 24 October and that by 1 December he should know what can be done in that project.

Ed Hamlyn asked for a presentation by the River Park project group. Bea said she could invite the group on the Juarez side that is working on a similar project. Perhaps they could do a joint presentation. Rosemay suggested that they wait until November to invite the Juarez/El Paso Riverpark group. They will be at the EPA American Heritage River Initiative Bi-National Conference on November 3 and 4, 2003.

Kevin suggested that these two groups present at the next meeting to be in El Paso, but that the next meeting would probably be in Las Cruces, and for that one he would like to see someone from the Lower Rio Grande Water Users Organization (LRGWUO) do a presentation on the regional water plan. He said they are accepting public comments, and that there was no analysis of current or future projected demand for water by the environment in the plan.

Jennifer suggested that the City of Las Cruces speak at the next meeting. Dan said that Carol McCall would be the one to speak about that. He said there are only two projects going on---the Mesilla Valley Bosque Park pilot project and alternative materials for surface water connecting La Llorna Park to a main spillway. There is a general inventory of possibilities. Nancy said she had sent comments to Carol from the Council earlier in August. Kevin said he would talk to the LRGWUO to see if a consultant can give a talk. Nancy said she would see if Carol could talk. Kevin and John said they would report on the status of the wetlands proposal.

10. Date and Place of the Next Executive Committee Meeting

The date of the next Executive Committee meeting will be at 9:30 am, Wednesday, October 29, 2003, in Las Cruces at the New Mexico Department of Agriculture at New Mexico State University in Las Cruces, New Mexico.

11. Adjournment

The Executive Committee adjourned at approximately 3:00 pm.

Paso del Norte Watershed Council Executive Committee Members

Terms expire September 2004

Bixby
Brown
Groff
Hamlyn
Hanson
Rincon
Santantonio
Sheng
Staley
Stefanov
Taylor

Terms expire September 2005

Darden
Flores
Granados
Maitland*
Michelsen*
Montoya
Provencio
Vera
Watts*

*elected in September 2003 for a two-year term