

**Minutes
Executive Committee
Paso del Norte Watershed Council**

**2:00 pm, Friday, April 30, 2004
New Mexico Department of Agriculture
New Mexico State University
Las Cruces, New Mexico**

In Attendance:

Sue Watts, Chair
Ari Michelsen, Treasurer
Nancy Hanks, Program Coordinator
Julie Maitland, Assistant Chair
Valerie Provencio, Secretary

Gene Adkins, NRCS, Jornada RC&D Council
Kevin Bixby, Southwest Environmental Center
Christopher Brown, Department of Geography, New Mexico State University
Tim Darden, New Mexico Department of Agriculture
Mike Fahy, El Paso Water Utilities
Ed Fierro, El Paso Water Utilities
Alfredo Granados, Centro de Información Geográfica, Universidad Autónoma de Ciudad Juárez
Inga Groff, League of Women Voters
Joe Groff, Chihuahuan Desert Wildlife Rescue
Brian Hanson, U. S. Fish & Wildlife
Mike Landis, U. S. Bureau of Reclamation
Jacob Massoud, Ysleta del Sur Pueblo
Carlos Rincón, Environmental Defense
Dan Santantonio, City of Las Cruces
Zhuping Sheng, Texas Agricultural Experiment Station, Texas A&M University
Rosemary Staley, City of El Paso

1. Convene Meeting

Sue Watts convened the meeting at 2:15 pm. There were no changes to the agenda.

2. Approval of Minutes from March 22, 2004

Julie Maitland moved to approve the minutes from March 22, 2004, as written. Rosemary seconded, and the vote was unanimous.

3. Council Comments on Public Documents

Because of the reactions to the letter sent by the Council commenting on IBWC's Draft EIS, Julie Maitland suggested that the Council put a disclaimer in such letters. Ari Michelsen agreed, offering the following as a possible disclaimer to be added: "These comments may or may not reflect the views of the individual members of the Council." Brian Hanson did not agree that there should be a disclaimer. Some members expressed a desire to reach a unanimous consensus prior to sending out any comments. Others were concerned that even if this were possible, there would be no time to achieve a consensus on comments during the generally short public comment period usually allowed on federal projects. Dan Santantonio suggested that the provision for a disclaimer be put in the by-laws. Ari agreed, saying that the disclaimer needed to be in the letter and that the rules under which the Council would provide such comments might be appropriate in the by-laws.

The Executive Committee also agreed that more time is needed and must be provided to review any comments before sending on behalf of the Watershed Council. Alfredo Granados suggested documenting any discussion regarding the comments. It was also suggested that individuals' names should be left off of the Council's letterhead, using instead just the affiliations (with the exception of the officers). Sue Watts and Julie Maitland agreed to attend the May 7 meeting of the New Mexico-Texas Water Commission MAC/SC to discuss with the Commission how the Council would provide such comments in the future (e.g., more discussion time, letterhead changes, and disclaimer).

4. Alliance Comments on IBWC's Draft EIS

Kevin Bixby presented a PowerPoint that highlighted the Alliance's comments to the IBWC. The Alliance felt that the range of alternatives offered by the IBWC was inadequate and proposed a new alternative. The Alliance also requested that the IBWC delay issuing the Final EIS until scheduled two-dimensional modeling is completed. Gene Adkins suggested that the IBWC's cost estimates per acre were too high if drip irrigation were to be used.

5. Report from Subcommittee Regarding Updated By-Laws, Business Plan, and Strategic Plan

Proposed revisions to the by-laws included proxies for voting and voting by email. Ari pointed out that the Business Plan needs to be very specific about how the Council will achieve the goals set out in the Strategic Plan, that is, identification of specific projects, how they will be accomplished, and who will do the work. The plan to develop educational materials was provided as an example; it is not sufficient to say that various educational materials will be produced, the Business Plan needs to identify what material(s) will be produced, when they will be completed, and how/who is responsible for completing each task.

Sue asked for members to focus on how their agencies could participate in projects sponsored by the Council. A suggestion was made that members should be required to participate in or complete projects as a responsibility of membership. Ari commented that simply stating that members/organizations are required to perform projects for the Watershed Council will not be effective, instead there needs to be incentives for individuals and groups to go through the Watershed Council to develop their projects.

In order to allow all members to participate in updating and revising the by-laws, business plan, and strategic plan, it was determined that the Officers and the Subcommittee (Mike Landis, Rosemary Staley, and Beatriz Vera), as well as any members who want to work on the revisions, will collect comments from all members as soon as possible and then create the new versions that will be sent to each member of the Council at least one week before the next meeting. Ultimately, the documents will be sent out for a final 30-day review before the Council votes on the revisions.

6. Report from IWMP Committee Regarding Grant Proposals

The IWMP Committee had not met and had no report. Nancy distributed information on the following three requests for proposal: the **Collaborative Science & Technology Network for Sustainability** (due May 21); the **2004 the National Spatial Data Infrastructure Cooperative Agreement Program** (due June 4); and **Understanding Ecological Thresholds in Aquatic Systems Through Retrospective Analysis** (due June 22). There was a discussion of using consultants to write and execute grant proposals. Sue asked the Council to develop a repertoire of methods for directing water to restoration purposes.

Ari announced that there would be a meeting on Monday (May 3) of a group composed of himself, Zhuping Sheng, Mike Fahy, Phil King, and Ed Fierro to begin work on a Council proposal for the Collaborative Science & Technology Network for Sustainability RFP. He said that the proposal would include modeling river data to be compatible with the data from the Middle Rio Grande and would focus on the impact of changes in water quality and reservoir levels.

Providing an update on current U. S. Army Corps of Engineers funding, Christopher Brown reported on the second modification to the **Scope of Work for the Development of a Coordinated Database and GIS for Water-Related Resources in the Rio Grande Watershed**. He stated that there should be more to report at the next meeting.

Ari explained that the Corps project has two parts, modeling and GIS. He said that the Scope of Work was driven by what the Corps needs—in this case, implementation of the RiverWare portion of the Paso del Norte model so that it can be used with the already-existing Middle Rio Grande model. The models will only be looking at flood control and will stop at the American Dam. Ari mentioned the urgent request sent by Conrad Keyes to support URGWOM through letters and calls to the appropriate congressional representatives. Sue asked if biological data would be included. Ari commented that biological data was not part of the Corps' direction. Chris suggested that biological management efforts would be more appropriate for another project.

7. Council Activities

There were no **New Member Applications** to report. Under **Introduction of Visitors**, Nancy introduced Gene Adkins to the Council. Gene is the Coordinator of the Jornada RC&D Council, part of the USDA,

Natural Resources Conservation Service, and is based in Truth or Consequences, New Mexico. He stated that the Jornada RC&D was a 501(c)3 non-profit group that works with groups to sponsor projects in the Rio Grande watershed. He invited the Council to attend the next Jornada RC&D meeting at the Water Canyon Campground (between Magdalena and Socorro) on June 18 at 8am. Gene provided handouts on the upcoming U. S.–Mexico Resource Conservation and Development Border Coalition Meeting (May 23-25), the work plan for the Jornada RC&D, and general information on RC&Ds. Nancy will distribute the information via email.

Nancy reported that there were two **Executive Committee Members Stepping Down**. Marylin Taylor has resigned due to current health issues, but will remain a member of the Council. Dan Santantonio announced that he was resigning from the Council due to work issues. The Council gave Dan a round of applause in appreciation of his work on the Executive Committee.

Nancy reported that there was a **Council PowerPoint on Web Site** (pdnwc.org), prepared by Sue Watts as a “generic” presentation about the Council. The presentation, however, is in pdf format on the web site, so Council members will need to contact the Program Coordinator or Sue for a slide copy.

Nancy stated that there had been **Publicity for Council Meetings** in the form of announcements of the current meeting in the El Paso Times and in the Las Cruces Sun. She also reported that, on behalf of the Council, she participated in the Fort Bliss **Earth Day** celebration on April 22, where approximately 1700 school children visited about 16 displays. Nancy suggested that the Council find a way to participate in the EPA’s **River Monitoring** program in October and in American Rivers’ **National River Clean-Up Week**, which is May 15-23. Gene suggested the Council investigate using the Rolling River Trailer, sponsored by the NRCS, the U. S. Bureau of Reclamation, and the New Mexico Department of Agriculture.

Regarding **Grant Proposals Status**, Nancy said that the EPA was still behind schedule in reviewing the pre-proposals for the **Border 2012 RFP**, but that she had been told they would notify applicants by mid-May. Nancy announced that the Council is a partner with the Texas A&M Research and Extension Center, in another grant, “Water Conservation Through Reuse of Gray Water.” Ping stated that the proposal had been accepted and would be funded by the **U. S. Bureau of Reclamation**.

8. Budget

There was no budget report for this meeting, due to delays associated with the new accounting system at Texas A&M University.

9. Past Meetings Attended

Carlos Rincon reported that, along with Christopher Brown, he attended the SCERP Border Institute VI in Rio Rico, Arizona, on April 26-28. Ari reported on a meeting of the Rio Grande Basin Initiative on April 5-7 in Las Cruces. The Initiative’s Progress and Accomplishments Report can be found at <http://riogrande.tamu.edu/>. Ping reported that the Final Cooperative GIS project had published its peer-reviewed report.

10. Upcoming Meetings that will be Attended

Nancy announced several upcoming meetings, including the **Clean Texas Conference and Environmental Trade Fair** in Austin (May 3-5), the **MAC/SC** meeting in Las Cruces (May 7), the **URGWOM** meeting in Albuquerque (May 13), a meeting sponsored by **EDF** and the **Woodrow Wilson Center Mexico Institute** (through BECC) in San Antonio (May 20-21), a meeting about **Border Security** in El Paso (May 25), a meeting of the **Texas Water Development Board** in Austin (June 15), and a meeting on **Brownfields** in St. Louis, MO (September 22-23).

Julie and Sue said that they will be attending the MAC/SC meeting. Ping and Tim said they would be attending the URGWOM meeting. Carlos clarified the sponsorship of the EDF meeting. Ari distributed information on a meeting by the University Council on Water Resources in Portland, Oregon, on July 20-22 (<http://ucowr.siu.edu/04prelimproceed.pdf>). He also distributed the most recent Droughtwatch.

11. Date and Location of the next Executive Committee Meeting

It was determined that the next meeting of the Executive Committee would be at 2:00 pm on June 1, 2004, in El Paso. [The location was later verified as the 6th floor conference room of the Rio Grande Conference of Governments at 1100 N. Stanton, El Paso, TX 79902.] Ari requested that the meeting be held to two hours.

12. Adjournment

The motion to adjourn was passed unanimously and the meeting adjourned at 4:30 pm. Minutes submitted by Nancy Hanks, Program Coordinator