

Minutes
Executive Committee Meeting
Paso del Norte Watershed Council
2:00pm, Tuesday, June 1, 2004
(Continued 1:30 to 3:00pm, Monday, June 14, 2004)
6th floor conference room, Rio Grande Conference of Governments
1100 N. Stanton, El Paso, TX 79902

In Attendance on June 1:

Sue Watts, Chair

Ari Michelsen, Treasurer

Nancy Hanks, Program Coordinator

Christopher Brown, Department of Geography, New Mexico State University

Tim Darden, New Mexico Department of Agriculture

Mike Fahy, El Paso Water Utilities

Inga Groff, League of Women Voters

Joe Groff, Chihuahuan Desert Wildlife Rescue

Brian Hanson, U. S. Fish and Wildlife

Jennifer Montoya, World Wildlife Fund

Carlos Rincón, Environmental Defense

Lori Rivera, Ysleta del Sur Pueblo

Zhuping Sheng, Texas Agricultural Experiment Station, Texas A&M University

Rosemary Staley, City of El Paso

Jim Stefanov, International Boundary and Water Commission, U. S. Section

Irene Tejada, Paso del Norte Water Task Force

1. Convene Meeting

Sue Watts convened the meeting at 2:10 pm. The agenda was revised to accommodate late arrivals and to move the discussion of the updated By-Laws, Business Plan, and Strategic Plan to later in the meeting.

2. Approval of Minutes from April 30, 2004

Christopher Brown moved to approve the minutes from April 30, 2004, as written. Zhuping Sheng seconded, and the vote was unanimous.

3. Council Activities

Nancy Hanks reported on the MAC/SC meeting that she attended on May 7, 2004. After a discussion of the comments from the MAC/SC members, Sue Watts concluded that better communication was needed between the Council and the MAC/SC. This would include an opportunity for the MAC/SC to review Council comments in the future. Nancy distributed copies of the resolution that formed the Council.

Regarding the meeting with the IBWC to discuss the Draft EIS, Sue said that Chris went to the first meeting because she, Julie, and Ari were all out of town at that time. Chris reported that the meeting was the result of an informal extension of the comment period. Although EBID did not attend, 10 agricultural producers were there to request a dredging (404) permit to allow water to flow in the river. Jim Stefanov reported that the comments that the IBWC received were so polarized that it indicated a lack of understanding on all sides and that these meetings were to bring people together. Tim Darden will represent the Council at the next meeting with the IBWC, scheduled for June 2.

The Council agreed that it should write a letter to EBID and EPCWD#1 and invite them to join the Council. Nancy will accomplish this with Sue and Julie's signatures. The Council also agreed that a letter should be written to the City Manager of Las Cruces, asking for another representative for the Council. Nancy will draft that letter as well.

4. Grant Proposals in Process

Nancy reported that the Council was included as a partner on two grant proposals. The first, "Water Conservation through the Reuse of Gray Water," has been awarded funding from the U. S. Bureau of Reclamation, Albuquerque Office. The Principal Investigators (PIs) on this proposal are Dr. Naomi Assadian and Dr. Zhuping Sheng, both of the Agricultural Research and Extension Center, Texas A&M Research and Extension Center. There is \$1400 of funding written into this proposal for Nancy, as a

representative of the Council, to do public outreach and publication of fact sheets and programs.

The second proposal is "Water Quality Variation in the Elephant Butte Reservoir and Its Impacts on the Sustainability of Water Supply Downstream." Dr. Sheng and Dr. Phil King are the PIs for this proposal, which was submitted to the EPA, National Center for Environmental Research on May 20, 2004, so we don't know yet if it will be funded. There is approximately \$3000 of funding written into this proposal for Nancy Hanks, as a representative of the Council, to do sample collection and data analysis.

Nancy distributed copies of the Request for a Pre-Proposal for the Assessment and Watershed Protection Program Grants (AWPPGs). It would be possible to use this proposal to encourage members of the agricultural community to join the Council through public education or RiverWare tools. Jennifer Montoya suggested an emphasis on conservation through the purchase of flow meters. Carlos Rincon commented that metering works better on the New Mexico portion of the watershed than the Texas portion. He reminded the Council that there will be an IBWC/CILA water summit in February 2005 that would provide an opportunity to meet with stakeholders. Carlos also recommended using the Rio Grande/Rio Bravo Basin Coalition as an organization that would be eligible to apply for this grant. Jim Stefanov suggested creating a series of videos to inform the public about water issues. Jennifer suggested a series of state- or federal-owned wildlife refuges on the Rio Grande where water could be stored temporarily. Ari suggested a federal role for managing the Rio Grande similar to that of the Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Program. It was determined that Jennifer would coordinate the writing of a pre-proposal for this grant, which has a June 21, 2004, deadline. [Subsequently, on June 18, it was discovered that the goal of the proposal was inappropriate for the Council and WWF, so the pre-proposal was dropped.]

Ari urged the Council to identify projects by topics and principal investigators prior to announcements of proposals. Jennifer agreed, saying that every item in the Business Plan should have a proposal attached to it. Chris cited the NSDI proposal as an example of one that was not pursued due to lack of time and the requirement of matching funds. Ari recommended that the Council establish some process that would verify that a proposed project will actually further the objectives and goals in the Council's Business Plan, similar to the role of the Grants and Contracts office in a university.

5. Progress of the Coordinated Database/GIS Project

Chris reported that the EPWU-funded activities regarding the Coordinated Database included a conference call on May 11, at which time the parties involved laid out activities, deliverables, and a timeline. He added that he met with Gary Esslinger and the EBID staff. They will provide updated information for the GIS. Chris will give a demonstration of the project at the July 7 meeting of the MAC/SC.

Chris described the web site recommended by Ari Michelsen (<http://www.baeg.uark.edu/DSS>). Ari commented that the recommendation related to the user/educationally friendly presentation of information, not that large amounts of data are needed on our site. We already have much of this presentation information available and it seems that this could be placed on our web site. This would include developing user-friendly layers such as boundaries, geographic features, elevations, hydrology, urban and agricultural land use and ownership, and transportation data. Given the cooperative agreement tasks in place, Ari said that this type of enhancement would best be part of the EPWU-funded project (and not the Corps). It was agreed that the Technical Committee would look at the GIS on July 7. Chris suggested a link on the GIS site to Will Hutchinson's Hueco groundwater data. Zhuping Sheng added that it could also be linked to TWDB well sites.

Sue requested that a Committee member attend the June 10 URGWOM meeting in Albuquerque to review the RiverWare modeling project. Tim Darden said he would be attending the meeting. Ping reported that the Council's proposal to U. S. Army Corps of Engineers (Galveston District) now has a Scope of Work and a budget of \$100,000 (as of May 25, 2004). Although the URGWOM model does not extend to El Paso, it is still useful for the Council to learn how the model is being used upstream, and the Corps wants to make the Council more familiar with how it works. Council members will have an opportunity to receive training in the use of the RiverWare software in August and September 2004.

6. Budget

Ari presented the budget. Jennifer stated that the World Wildlife Fund has set aside \$5,000 for the Council. Nancy pointed out that there was \$694 in travel money to be spent before September 30, 2004. She was assured it would be spent.

7. Discussion of Updated By-Laws, Business Plan, and Strategic Plan

The discussion of the By-Laws, Business Plan, and Strategic Plan is attached as a separate item.

8. Date and Location of the next Executive Committee Meeting

Because several members of the Executive Committee had to leave before the discussion of the By-Laws, etc., was finished, it was decided to meet again at 1:30 pm on June 14, 2004, to finish the review of those documents.

9. Adjournment

Chris moved for adjournment, Ping seconded, and the motion to adjourn was passed unanimously at 4:10 pm.

Continuation, Executive Committee Meeting

Paso del Norte Watershed Council

1:30 to 3:00pm, Monday, June 14, 2004

6th floor conference room, Rio Grande Conference of Governments

1100 N. Stanton, El Paso, TX 79902

In Attendance June 14:

Sue Watts, Chair

Julie Maitland, Assistant Chair

Valerie Provencio, Secretary

Nancy Hanks, Program Coordinator

Mike Fahy, El Paso Water Utilities

Inga Groff, League of Women Voters

Joe Groff, Chihuahuan Desert Wildlife Rescue

Jennifer Montoya, World Wildlife Fund

Carlos Rincón, Environmental Defense

Zhuping Sheng, Texas Agricultural Experiment Station, Texas A&M University

Rosemary Staley, City of El Paso

1. Convene Meeting

The meeting was convened at 1:45 pm. Because there was no quorum, no vote was taken on any matter, and the meeting was considered to be a working meeting to continue with revisions to the By-Laws, Business Plan, and Strategic Plan.

2. Other Business

There was a brief report on the effort to write a pre-proposal for the Assessment and Watershed Protection Program Grants (AWPPGs). Carlos Rincón informed the group that the Paso del Norte Watershed Task Force had received funds from Hewlett to study the legal aspect of water market issues in the watershed. He said that Christopher Brown and Jose Garcia are working on the issues in New Mexico, where water trading is between farmers via water banking through EBID. Ari Michelsen and UTEP Associate Professor and Fulbright Border Scholar Tom Fullerton are working on the issues in Texas, where water is leased. Oscar F. Ibáñez is working on the issues in Chihuahua, where water is informally traded between farmers. Carlos added that a draft document is ready, and he will circulate it to the officers of the Council.

Jennifer stated that the USCOE has asked Senator Bingaman for funding of a Rio Grande Basin Environmental Management Plan within the boundary of New Mexico and that if the voting is delayed until 2005 then the Council would have time to meet with people in the Corps to see what role the Council might play. She said she will try to find out more about it.

3. Continuation of Revisions of the By-Laws, Business Plan, and Strategic Plan

The group completed revisions to the By-Laws and the Strategic Plan. Because of time constraints, Jennifer suggested that the Business Plan be drafted by Nancy and sent out to the Executive Committee for further revisions. Nancy agreed to do that, as well as to send the draft revisions of the By-Laws and the Strategic Plan to the Executive Committee via email and to present them to the MAC as a courtesy.

4. Date and Location of the next Executive Committee Meeting

The next meeting of the Executive Committee will be held on July 12, 2:00-4:00pm, at the New Mexico Department of Agriculture, New Mexico State University, in Las Cruces.

5. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned by unanimous consent at 3:15pm.

NOTE: The following suggestions were either received in writing from Council members or proposed in one of the working meetings held on June 1 and June 14. Any of these proposed revisions that did not make it into the draft documents can still be added at the July 12 meeting.

NOTES ON THE DISCUSSION OF PROPOSED CHANGES IN BY-LAWS

EPWU wanted to add “salinity control” to the Statement of Purpose and the Objectives, but Sue suggested it would be better in the Business Plan and the group agreed. Also, after some confusion, Nancy determined that it would be best to provide the full name of the New Mexico-Texas Water Commission whenever it was mentioned.

Article 4, Section 1

Carlos requested (and the group agreed) that the sentence in Article 4, Section 1, be changed to read: “The Council will seek representation from municipalities, water agencies, researchers, educators, businesses, environmental, agricultural interests, volunteer organizations, and concerned citizens.”

Article 5, Section 1

EPWU wanted to change the number of people on the Executive Committee to ten people, but the group did not want to change that item. Chris asked if the number could grow if the irrigation districts accepted the invitation to join. He suggested increasing the number in the bylaws or bumping people that have not attended in the last several months at the next meeting.

Article 5, Section 2

Conrad asked why change the term to three years when the current folks can be re-elected at the end of any two-year term.

Article 5, Section 3

After some discussion, it was decided that the sentence in Article 5, Section 3, be changed to read: “Those who miss more than four (4) consecutive Committee meetings may be asked to step down from the Committee so that another representative for that stakeholder group may be elected by the Executive Committee.” Conrad agreed with this. Chris suggested that there be a provision for proxies to attend in members’ absence with advance notice, allowing the Council to be more forceful on attendance overall.

Article 5, Section 4

Inga was concerned that the revision mentions a Program Coordinator, but the position of Program Coordinator was not created in the by-laws. To clarify this, the group agreed to create a new Article 5, Section 4, which will describe the duties of the Program Coordinator. Possible wording would be: “*Program Coordinator.* The Council, through its Executive Committee, may hire a Program Coordinator to help accomplish its goals and objectives.”

Brian suggested changing “Committee Chair” to “Committee Chairperson” when Chair is used. Conrad had no problem with this change.

Article 5, Section 5

There was a suggestion to change the term from “Executive Committee” to “Steering Committee,” but it decided to leave it as it is to avoid confusion.

Inga suggested that the Secretary be responsible for the minutes, regardless of who does the work, and that parliamentary authority be addressed separately. EPWU suggested that the Council reconsider the need for having a Secretary as an officer, given the limited duties of the Secretary under the existing structure. Chris Brown had a similar comment concerning clarifying the role of the Secretary. EPWU recommended that the Program Coordinator be made the Secretary. There was a suggestion to remove the Secretary position altogether, but after some discussion it was decided to allow it to remain, and it was agreed that the new Article 5, Section 5, be changed so that the duties of the Executive Committee Secretary read: “The Secretary shall be responsible for maintaining Council records and representing the Council when needed.”

Article 6, Section 1

Section 1 (b) was eliminated. Conrad suggested Section 1 (c) be revised to read, “submit recommendations to the Council...”

Article 6, Section 2

Regarding the change from “working committee” to “subcommittee,” Conrad thought that the Coordinated Database Working Committee was more constructive than a Coordinated Database Subcommittee.

Brian did not agree with the statement that each Executive Committee member should be on one subcommittee per year. He suggested that the Committee encourage it, perhaps stating that members are expected to participate in subcommittees. He thought that the officers especially contribute enough without being forced into a subcommittee because of the bylaws. Conrad suggested stating that “Executive Committee members, excluding the officers, ...”

EPWU suggested that this section be amended in a way that requires individual Executive Committee members to take on at least one concrete assignment per year related to accomplishing the objectives in the Business Plan, possibly in conjunction with giving the Chair the authority to assign tasks to members who don't volunteer. The group decided to make the language broader than that.

Article 6, Section 3

Ed Fierro suggested that Section 3 contain a clause that states, “Recommendations or comments prepared by the Council in response to publication of Draft Environmental Impact Statements must be presented to the membership of the NM-TX Water Commission for their approval prior to submittal to the sponsoring agency.”

Brian thought that this section was too restrictive. He wants to empower the officers to take action in some cases. He did agree that the Committee should seek complete consensus, but he thought it was too time consuming and restrictive to vote on everything. Conrad suggested that placing a Voting Document on the Web Site with a notice by email, etc., wouldn't take too much time--just give people one week, two weeks, one month, or whatever is a reasonable time. He added that, if a FAX Ballot is needed, then do it, and that if extensions are granted for discussions, then more time could be provided. He emphasized that management of such is very hard, BUT essential. Chris liked the idea of a formal vote for recommendations to go out and the disclaimer that was discussed.

Article 7, Section 5

Brian could not agree with this section until he read the rules. He asked where he could get a copy of the rules. The group determined that they were available on the Internet and that, when there was a question of order, Inga would interpret the rules.

NOTES ON THE DISCUSSION OF PROPOSED CHANGES IN STRATEGIC PLAN

Mission Statement

Chris Brown suggested that the mission statement now end with “...that promote a healthy watershed.” The group agreed.

Goal A

Mike Mecke suggested it be changed to read, “Promote effective watershed planning and proper management, as well as provide recommendations.” Chris suggested it be changed to read, “Promote and provide recommendations for watershed planning and management.”

Goal B

Mike Mecke suggests it be changed to read, “Support riparian and watershed restoration and enhancement projects in the Watershed.”

Objectives for Reaching Goal A

Jennifer suggested adding “Promote Awareness of Drought Issues” to the objectives of Goal A and the group agreed that it was appropriate. After some discussion, the group determined that many of the items in the Strategic Plan would be more appropriate in the Business Plan. For example, actions related to salinity control and salinity management would be in the Business Plan under “Identify water quality issues of concern in the Watershed.”

NOTES ON THE DISCUSSION OF PROPOSED CHANGES IN THE BUSINESS PLAN

Because of time constraints, most of the comments on the Business Plan were very general. Ari suggested that it should include more specific action steps to implement each objective. Ping suggested we separate the on-going projects from the new projects. Jennifer suggested that it should be a sequence of events to pursue an objective and hoped that the Council would link up and down stream to the broader issues that WWF is working on. Sue asked if there should be a theme to a year's issues. EPWU wants the Council to develop an action-based process to achieve the goal of economic self sufficiency within a pre-determined time frame, such as two years.

Specific ideas were presented but not acted upon at this time.

- **Under Goal A. Promote watershed planning & management & provide recommendation**
 - Chris felt that the Council should institutionalize funding efforts since the current idea of having Nancy be on the lookout for RFPs, then sending them out to see if anyone is game to take a run at these RFPs is simply not working. Sue wants to develop a funding strategy and broaden the base of support for Nancy's position. EPWU suggested that the Council identify and develop an incentives program that will benefit the members who participate with the PdNWC in submitting grant proposals related the Paso del Norte watershed.
 - EPWU felt that items involving the criteria for selecting restoration projects should be low priority since it is not likely any restoration projects will be implemented anytime soon.
 - Mike Mecke suggested that, if a water quality database is created, then it should include basin groundwater and aquifers which may interface with the river.
 - Rosemary thought there was an overlap between the actions related to the database/GIS and the baseline natural resource inventory.

- **Under Goal B. Support restoration & enhancement projects in the Watershed**
 - Jennifer suggested that the USACOE be added to the goal, "seek support for watershed planning/management, ecosystem improvement, watershed education, and institutional support."
 - Conrad suggested that, under Goal B, Objective 1, "Review & provide recommendations for restoration, mitigation, & enhancement projects," input could be provided through letters, meetings, or other communication, as approved by the Council, the Executive Committee, or a subcommittee.
 - Chris suggested that review and recommendations should be of documents related to (not proposed by) the El Paso-Las Cruces Regional Sustainable Water Project.

- **Under Goal C. Facilitate communication among stakeholders & within the Council**
 - EPWU also the Council to implement a marketing-type procedure with incentives to encourage membership of representatives of the Agriculture community.
 - Mike Mecke suggested including Spanish translation at meetings or Spanish-only meetings with Mexican stakeholders.

- **Under Goal D. Provide education & outreach to the public & to Council members**
 - The group felt that educational outreach might be a lower priority than agricultural outreach.
 - Mike Mecke recommended coordinating with the American Heritage Rivers Initiative for better communication and coordination with all the Rio Grande basin stakeholders.

Minutes submitted by Nancy Hanks, Program Coordinator