

**Minutes of Paso del Norte Watershed Council Meeting**  
**October 6, 2006,**  
U.S. International Boundary and Water Commission  
Executive Blvd., El Paso, TX

In attendance: Conrad Keyes, Brian Hanson, Cynthia Campo, Zhuping Sheng, Girisha Ganjegunte, , Ari Michelsen, Sue Watts, Julie Maitland, Mike Mecke, Mike Landis, Ed Hamlyn., April Sanders, Alfredo Granados, Bobby Creel, Chris Canavan, Inga Groff, Joe Groff, Mike Fahy, Jennifer Montoya, Geri Quisenberry

**Agenda Item 3: Minutes of August 25, 2006 will be distributed electronically for approval at a letter date.**

**Agenda Item 4:**

There was extensive and detailed discussion of proposed changes in Paso del Norte Watershed Council documents reflecting the change in relationship with MAC. A summary identifying document references to the NM-TX Water Commission was prepared by Irene Tejada and distributed at the PdNWC August meeting. A subcommittee was formed with Mike Landis and Steve Smullen to review documents and draft potential revisions for discussion:

Suggested Comments on Article 3 objectives:

The Council will Assess, Select, plan and implement projects dedicated to the establishment and maintenance of a viable Rio Grande watershed. The council will continue to address environmental enhancements and mitigations associated with the El Paso/Las Cruces Regional Sustainable Water Project EIS. The Watershed Council will work w/stakeholders to accomplish these objectives.

Article 5- Wherever it says the Council, replace w/Executive Committee

Article 6- Any recommendation to be issued on behalf of the council will be circulated to the full membership, before being subjected to vote by Executive Committee. If the full council is not in agreement, then a disclaimer will be included in the recommendation that the comments may not represent all views of the council. The formal vote for acceptance will be issued by the Executive Committee.

Sue asks for a vote and there is acceptance. This is satisfactory as an interim article until we meet as a subcommittee.

Discussion regarding the language describing how we function. The suggestion was made that we create a by-law review subcommittee to wordsmith these issues. Some key ideas were:

operating on a principle of stakeholder inclusion, and that we should be able to vote electronically. Dates on by-laws and strategic plan also need to be updated.

By-law changes will need to be cleaned up on the website.

By law subcommittee Brian, Steve, Sue, Mike Landis. Conrad and Ari to review

### **Agenda item 5 - General Updates**

Watershed Council status announcement letter

- a) - There was discussion and agreement to send to people on the Sustainability EIS list and all previous PdNWC contacts, however that list needs to be updated. Also we should send the Letter to Federal agencies and state level legislators, 2025, and all members of the Council.
- b) Need to update the PdN contact database. Members are asked to review the existing contact list and submit corrections and additions. -
- c) Add letter to the New button on website.

*PdN Water Task Force Meeting Update* A discussion about the most recent meeting of the Water Task Force- Their by-laws will be revised Proposed changes were circulated. Comments needed to go to them by Oct. 15. PdN Watershed Council and the Task Force would be interested in seeing their membership broaden, and we would like to be a member. There are permanent members and there will be quasi members that will be associates, but they need to be nominated by the permanent members. They will not have voting privileges. Task force also updating strategies. Looking at salinity policies and river management issues. May include Pecos issues. Will address many of these things at January meeting. Meeting should be open to the public according to new by-laws. Composition and membership of Task force emphasis of bylaw changes.

*Salinity Management Discussion.* Several organizations are in the process of discussing and developing a federal initiative proposal for a Rio Grande Basin Salinity Management program. The USBR is proposed to be the lead in partnership with the State Water Resources Research Institutes. NMSU and TAMU representatives are working on including this project in their federal initiative requests for FY08. This is an excellent opportunity for Watershed Council participation in partnership with others. An issue to be resolved includes the scope of the program, Pecos River, Colorado. The Water Task Force has also received a presentation by USBR on this proposal and it may be proposed to be included as a part of their strategic plan to be set at their January 29 meeting. -

*USCOE Update by April Sanders.* URGWOM/URGWOPS Final EIS moved up to end of month for release. Corps to send out letters, executive summaries and CDs. Full document is available on their website too. BOR has a Notice of Availability in federal register which provides 60 days so that final comments can be added. The Corps will recommend further studies on Abiqu and Cochiti. No direct action recommended but tiered actions are to be developed. USCOE interested in continuing model development below Elephant Butte. .

*Project Rio Meeting Report-* Dr. Sheng reported on a three day meeting, funded by the UN GEF. It was very similar to the Rio Grande Summit in November 2005. The meeting purpose was to identify transboundary issues for Rio Grande and create a framework to prioritize these issues. Project Rio will be looking at social, cultural, environment, economic issues.

*Federal Flood Assessment Conference:* A Federal Flood Assessment Conference was requested by Congressman Reyes and held Sept. 6<sup>th</sup>, at the Texas A&M Research Center. Eleven federal agencies and irrigation districts convened to discuss the summer flooding events in the El Paso and Southern New Mexico region and agency actions, coordination, and recommendations. A summary report was prepared within 30 days of the Conference and is available at [www.elpaso.tamu.edu/research/](http://www.elpaso.tamu.edu/research/) (downloadable pdf, top right of page). Recommendations include funding for additional support for gauging and climate real-time monitoring, improved communications planning and capacity, infrastructure associated with water management and flooding.

*New project to study at feasibility of treating winter irrigation return flows.* This program, funded by the American Water Works Association Research Foundation, USBR and EPWU is a collaborative research program with CHIWAHA members UTEP, A&M and NMSU (total of \$340,000). Mike Fahey is the program coordinator as a consultant to EPWU. The 16 month program started Sept. 15.

*Coordinated Database Questionnaire:* Update by Zhuping Sheng on survey results. There were 38 responses, 2/3 were aware of the database and GIS. Approximately 1/3 currently are using the data. Government researchers and consulting firms are the biggest users. The full survey results will be posted on the PdNWC website

*Update on Development of a Coordinated Database for Water Resources and Flow Model in the Paso del Norte Watershed (USCOE Phase III)-* Zhuping Sheng. A technical report on the Riverware model and water quality data availability has been prepared as part of the USCOE Phase III study. Research was conducted by Phil King, Alfredo Granados and Zhuping Sheng. The plan is to eventually link to the Juarez irrigation district. The Phase II technical report has been externally reviewed and is finalized and should be in print soon. Vegetation coverage is now available. In future phases, this information will be linked with the Hewlett Foundation project maps along the river.

*319 Water Quality Grant-* Julie Maitland and Geri Quisenberry. Intercambios will lead the stakeholder participation aspect of the grant. The Data survey RFP was distributed for a 2nd time on Oct. 4<sup>th</sup> due back on Oct. 24<sup>th</sup>. If we don't get a successful bid for the 40k worth of work, NMDA can parcel out the work in 10k pieces, which could benefit NMSU partners/Council members.

**TREASURER'S REPORT-** See attached.

**Other Business**

*Lower Rio Grande Collaborative Project-* Jennifer Montoya discussed the progress being made among BOR, EBID, IBWC, Environmental Defense, and WWF. Flo2D modeling underway through the Corps to look at opportunities for wetlands within the floodway.

*NM Forest and Watershed Plan-* Brian Hanson reported that NM Dept. of Forestry is the lead on this plan, signed off in late 2004. He attended a meeting for implementation. Governor wants to look at the entire state to work together to analyze ecosystem health. State has funded four fulltime positions at NM Highlands University. Highlands to be the central location in NM that will address watershed health on a statewide basis, including monitoring.

*State of Chihuahua Water Plan-* Alfredo Granados described the new water plan for the state of Chihuahua w/ an emphasis on Juarez. Watergy was the main consultant for this plan. Discussed new water plants, water importation, and bolson depletion (Watergy has an agreement w/ the Junta Central and will be their advisors).

Ari Michelsen distributed the Call for Paper for the UCOWR 2007 Annual Conference to be held July 24-26 in Boise, ID.

Next Date and Time: 1 p.m. November 10<sup>th</sup> in Las Cruces. Place TBD.

Sue- motions to adjourn at 1 p.m.