



Minutes

Paso del Norte Watershed Council Executive Committee

US Bureau of Reclamation Office
10737 Gateway West - Suite 350
El Paso, TX

Jan 14, 2008

Chris Brown, Chair
Jennifer Montoya, Secretary

Sue Watts, Assistant Chair/Recorder
Ari Michelsen, Treasurer

In attendance:

Chris Brown-New Mexico State University Dept. of Geography
Inga Groff-League of Women Voters El Paso
Joe Groff-Chihuahuan Desert Wildlife Rescue
Woody Irving-Bureau of Reclamation El Paso Office
Mike Landis-Bureau of Reclamation El Paso Office
Mike Fies-U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Albuquerque District
Sue Watts-Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center
Julie Maitland- New Mexico Department of Agriculture
Conrad Keyes, Jr., consultant to USACE
Zhuping Sheng-Texas A&M University
Ari Michelsen- Texas A&M University
Carlos Peña-IBWC
Kevin Bixby-Southwest Environmental Center
Jose Lopez-Ysleta del Sur Pueblo
Ed Hamlyn-University of Texas at El Paso
Hector Garza-USGS
Bert Cortez- Bureau of Reclamation El Paso Office

1. Meeting called to order at 1305 by Chris Brown.
2. Review of URGWOM and related CDP Activities –Zhuping Sheng reported that the Technical Committee is finishing their Phase IV of the Corps project and they are writing their final report. Ping is working with Bobby Creel on a subcontract for Phase V for the Corps. As one of their deliverables, they will be giving presentations to the URGWOM Steering Committee and the PdNWC. Mike Fies reported that the URGWOM line-item FY08 budget has about \$800,000 for updating URGWOM along with additional funds for studying storage options, particularly in Abiquiu and Cochiti reservoirs. For the next year, the primary programs for URGWOM will be the study of groundwater/surface water linkages, ET toolbox, and using PowerSim for

monthly modeling. The URGWOM Lead Agencies are refining the 5-year plan and are working with the URGWOM Technical Team on filling in the details for individual projects. Projects are to be eventually arranged in a priority order and they would like the Council's input on this. The projects all fall into 3 areas: URGWOM development and enhancement, Rio Grande operations, and environmental planning and support. For FY09, the Corps is hoping for at least the same budget as FY08 (they've requested ~\$2million) and will continue on the above tasks. In the future, they would like to develop a streamflow prediction model, surface water quality simulation, and a water operations model that would allow for things like groundwater banking. Lastly, the 729 project report on the Forgotten Reach will be available on Jan 30. The Rio Grande COG in El Paso will have a copy.

3. Self-introductions by all present.
4. Approval of the agenda and minutes from December Meeting– Brown-(Undertaken once quorum present.) Agenda approved. Minutes approved as amended with Conrad's recommendations plus clarification made by Mike Landis for item 5, pg 2. (Strike final sentence.)
5. Review of 5 year plan for URGWOM – Bulk of information covered in Mike Fies report above. When new version of plan is released by Corps, they would like our feedback on the content. A subcontract is being negotiated by Zhuping Sheng for tasks to be undertaken by the Technical Committee.
6. Discussion of funding for Watershed Coordinator Position – Mike Fies stated that some support could possibly come from the Corps in the future but not this year. In Phase II of the 319 grant, there will be support for coordinator associated with that project and would probably be available in July. We need to investigate support from foundations and other sources.
7. Update on USBR Operating Agreement – Bert Cortez gave an overview of the operation of the Rio Grande Project. With the agreement of the irrigation districts, they are now allowing carryover from year to year. The districts may carryover up to 20% of their current allotment to the next year and may accumulate up to 60% of a full allotment. Additional information is available on their website.

8. Update on WRAS, both Phase I and RFP on Phase II – Julie Maitland reported that Phase I of the WRAS has been turned into the New Mexico Environment Dept and they have accepted it. The RFP for Phase II funding has not yet been released but is expected any day. The committee requests feedback from the Council and seeks input about setting priorities. A team volunteered to help with drafting the proposal for Phase II (Mike Landis, Ping, Sue, Conrad). The budget will need much consideration. Council members also discussed the need to include all available data in the establishment of a TMDL for sections of the Rio Grande. There was also a recommendation to consider the possibility of implementing BMPs now based on the currently available data.
9. Update of Bylaws and Mission Statement on area of interest – In response to resolution passed at the annual meeting concerning the expansion of the geographic area of interest to include the Forgotten River, Sue Watts reported that area of geographic interest is mentioned in the suggested bylaws handed out at this meeting. So the bylaws will need to be amended. She will send out the proposed amendment to the Council membership 30 days prior to the next meeting so that the EC may vote at the next meeting. Changes to the mission statement will also be voted on at that time.
10. Treasurer's report – Ari Michelsen reported that the Council has received just under \$1.1 million in grant support, most of which has come from the Corps.
11. Other issues – Ari stated that TAES has a new name: AgriLife Research. He also reported on new initiatives in the area: a) Rio Grande Basin initiative which will assess transboundary aquifers including the Hueco and Mesilla Bolsons; b) Task Force to evaluate climate change impacts in the Rio Grande watershed organized by Senator Shapleigh; and c) a coalition being organized to study salinity management which is being supported by the Rio Grande Compact Commission. Mike Fies reported that at the Mar 13 URGWOM meeting they will be demonstrating the river modeling software. Everyone is invited to attend this meeting which will be held at the BIA office in Albuquerque. Kevin Bixby stated that he is interested in being re-elected for the Council's Executive Committee. Carlos Pena will talk to Steve Smullen about who should be the US IBWC representative to the Council.

12. Date and location of next meeting- March 3, 2008, 1 pm at NMWRRI.
13. Executive committee meeting adjourned 1510.

1. Meeting of Watershed Council convened.
2. Nomination of Kevin Bixby for Executive Committee. Elected by unanimous vote.
3. Meeting adjourned.