

## **Environmental Committee Meeting, Paso del Norte Watershed Council**

June 28, 2017 1:30 PM AM at EBID office, Las Cruces

Chairs are: Brian Hanson, Gill Sorg, Leslie Grijalva (Meeting arranged by PdNWC Chair since potential NMED announcement may be forthcoming)

Attendees –

Chris Canavan NMED [chris.canavan@state.nm.us](mailto:chris.canavan@state.nm.us)

Gary Esslinger EBID [gesslinger@ebid-nm.org](mailto:gesslinger@ebid-nm.org)

Conrad Keyes Chair PDNWC [cgkeyesjr@q.com](mailto:cgkeyesjr@q.com)

Elizabeth Verdecchia IBWC [Elizabeth.verdecchia@ibwc.gov](mailto:Elizabeth.verdecchia@ibwc.gov)

Zach Libbin EBID [zlibbin@ebid-nm.org](mailto:zlibbin@ebid-nm.org)

Kevin Bixby, SWEC [kevin@wildmesquite.org](mailto:kevin@wildmesquite.org)

Fernando Cadena, EBID

Molly Malloy

### **1. Elephant Butte Irrigation District 319 Project Drain Health**

Zack Libbin described EBID's proposal for drain health using 319 funds from NM Environment Department. They will submit a proposal to NMED. The goal is to address illegal dumping (including manure and trash) on drains and thereby potentially reduce ecoli into the Rio Grande. The project could include 1) forming partnerships for illegal dumping with entities such as Dona Ana County, BLM, Sheriff, Stormwater Coalition, DASWCD, municipalities (particularly Sunland Park/Anthony in the focus are of Mesquite/East Drains), 2) outreach (brochure, website materials, mailing for EBID constituents that live along the drains), 3) cleanup day, 4) public meetings, and 5) signage. Discussion of how do you show effectiveness? Is monitoring needed? Chris Canavan said for outreach you don't need to show load reductions. You can report success by # of attendees and/or tonnage of trash picked up. CRP has data available in Anthony and Vinton for a monitoring baseline if needed. Gill suggested a postage-paid postcard to see how many people read the mailed materials. Discussion of cleaning vegetation along drains as part of the project, but Chris said that is a stretch for the outreach funding. Gary discussed a park that was done on a drain in Vado, which could be promoted. A bulk waste day was also mentioned.

EBID said match would include Council's in-kind support, including Council meetings, public meetings, cleanup, and technical review. Conrad recommended the draft proposal be ready for the October 13 Council meeting, and earlier for the Environmental Committee to look over and endorse.

### **2. Possible Wetland at Las Cruces Effluent**

Also known as the Bowden wetland, this idea has been around for many years and was brought up at USIBWC's ROD stakeholder meeting as a possible USIBWC aquatic habitat site to consider. City of Las Cruces is required to put back into the river a certain amount of water from the effluent. Is this requirement during irrigation season only? Chris said that if this wetland is not lined it could be considered a groundwater discharge of wastewater and therefore NM Groundwater Bureau has jurisdiction. This could be lined with a clay liner. It would not fill up in the summer irrigation months then. One idea is to create a check structure on the cement channel and open the gates during non-irrigation season to fill up the wetland cell(s). Who owns the

water after it enters USIBWC property before it goes into the river? Where is the discharge point? At the plant? At the levee? At the river? Gill said he would ask the Utilities department about the water rights and discharge point. Could you create a meander within the floodplain? Or alter the shape of the cement channel? If this depletes water then you use Project Water. Gary said the wetland at Mesilla Valley Bosque on Picacho Drain was designed to have a no net depletion. EBID said the timing is bad because the TX v. NM case is discussing the same thing – groundwater depletions (who's taking groundwater and who's taking Project Water). Some discussion on the Sunland Park wetland, similar idea, that it could be a polishing wetland for the effluent. Chris said this is an excellent project but all organizations have to answer all hard questions about the water legalities and logistics.

Molly read a poem written by Chuck Bowden about his idea for a wetland there and thanked the group for considering it.

### **3. Other**

Kevin reported that he was contacted by the Conservation Director with the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA). They apparently have a funder who would like to support Rio Grande restoration projects on city land or parks in New Mexico. He thought the Bowden Wetland might qualify and he would report back to the NRPA after today's meeting on the status of the project and keep the Environmental Committee posted.

notes by Elizabeth Verdecchia