

DRAFT MINUTES

Paso del Norte Watershed Council Executive Committee Meeting

Friday, June 3, 2005

9:00-11:00 am

New Mexico Department of Agriculture

NMSU Campus, Las Cruces, NM



Attending:

Kevin Bixby, Southwest Environmental Center
Christopher Brown, New Mexico State University
Bobby Creel, NM WRRRI
Tim Darden, NM Department of Agriculture
Mike Fahy, El Paso Water Utilities
Alfredo Granados, Universidad Autónoma de Ciudad Juárez
Inga Groff, League of Women Voters
Joe Groff, Chihuahuan Desert Wildlife Rescue
Ed Hamlyn, University of Texas-El Paso
Nancy Hanks, PdNWC Program Coordinator
Brian Hanson, U.S. Fish & Wildlife
Jaime Iglesias, Texas Cooperative Extension
Woody Irving, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
Conrad Keyes, Consultant to the USACE
Julie Maitland, NM Department of Agriculture, Co-Chair
Mariano Martinez, Doña Ana Mutual Domestic Water Consumers Association
Mike Mecke, Texas Water Resources Institute
Ari Michelsen, TAES-TAMU, Treasurer
Jennifer Montoya, WWF
César Ramos, Souder, Miller & Associates
Carlos Rincon, Environmental Defense
Zhuping Sheng, TAES-TAMU
Steve Trowbridge, City of Las Cruces
Sue Watts, Chair
Karus Witters(?), PCS (Phoenix ?)

1. Convening the Meeting

Sue Watts convened the meeting at approximately 9:15 am.

2. Approval of minutes from April 1, 2005

Chris Brown moved to approve the minutes from the previous meeting as written. Julie Maitland seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

3. Introductions

Those attending introduced themselves.

4. Report on the North Valley Regional Water and Wastewater Treatment Projects (NVRWWTP) in Doña Ana Country, NM

Karen Perez from Souder, Miller & Associates had been scheduled to talk but she could not attend so César Ramos, Senior Engineer with that company, spoke instead, accompanied by Mariano Martinez from the Doña Ana Mutual Domestic Water Consumers Association. Mr. Ramos explained that the Projects were developed in 2002 by five water systems: Doña Ana Mutual Domestic Water Consumers Association (MDWCA), Ft. Selden Water Company, Jornada Water Company, Leasburg MDWCA, and Picacho MDWCA. These water systems, whose combined areas of service comprise an 85-square-mile area north of the City of Las Cruces, plan to jointly address the issues and impact to groundwater resources related to drought and septic tank contamination in the North Valley. The plan is to construct a 121-mile wastewater collection system, a 2.0 million gallon per day (MGD) wastewater treatment plant, and a 2.0 MGD surface

water treatment plant. After his presentation, there were questions from the group. Joe Groff asked how many wells would be taken out of operation. Mr. Martinez said that they were not planning on retiring wells since they needed them for growth and peak demand. Ari Michelsen asked if there were concerns about water quality. Mr. Martinez explained that the reclaimed water would only be used on non-root crops and that right now the New Mexico state regulations group reclaimed water with agricultural water. Jaime Iglesias asked about treating salinity, and Mr. Ramos answered that the salinity should be within limits.

5. Council Activities

▪ Canalization Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) Record of Decision (ROD)

Sue Watts explained that the Council had sent a letter to the IBWC regarding the need to convene the stakeholders for the Canalization EIS. She read part of a letter written by Bernardino Olague from the IBWC to EBID in response to their concerns over the Record of Decision. Jennifer Montoya reported that EBID is working with WWF and Environmental Defense regarding a proposal for a Safe Harbor Agreement for water, in relation to Southwest Willow Flycatcher habitat. They are asking IBWC for funds to create such an agreement and for it to include Flo-2D modeling and other analysis.

Sue explained that although Safe Harbor Agreements were unusual in this area, in southern Texas they have one for Golden Cheek Warbler habitat. Jennifer explained the requirements of a Safe Harbor Agreement, which would insure that if landowners agree to create habitats for endangered species such as the Southwest Willow Flycatcher they would not incur any new restrictions on the use of their land if their actions result in that species taking up residence. They are free to develop that land, even if endangered species have shown up there in the meantime. Safe Harbor Agreements don't affect any preexisting restrictions that may apply to a property as a result of endangered species already living there.

Ari asked how the IBWC's Programmatic EIS would affect such an agreement. Jennifer said they were waiting to see what kind of projects were proposed and she suggested that a representative from Camp Dresser & McKee Inc., the consulting firm preparing the Programmatic EIS, be invited to give the Council an update. Ari said that the Programmatic EIS could allow the IBWC to do the projects it proposed to do under the Canalization EIS. Brian Hanson explained that the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service can't participate in a Safe Harbor Agreement unless it benefits an endangered species, but it wants to encourage good practices to recover species. He suggested that the IBWC provide the Council with another update from the IBWC regarding the relationship between the Canalization EIS projects and the Programmatic EIS. Brian suggested that this was a good opportunity for the Council to partner with IBWC for mitigation.

▪ Water 2025 Challenge Grant

Mike Fahy reported that EPWU had received a survey questionnaire for management practices from the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, which signals the beginning of the Water 2025 Challenge Grant. Woody Irving reported that he would be in charge of grants for EBID and the City of Las Cruces, and that Lorenzo Arriaga would be in charge of the EPWU grant. Woody said that he expects the contract to be signed in August. Ari suggested that the next step was to work on the EPWU and NMSU contracts. Woody added that for the NEPA process, EPWU could either use the Bureau of Reclamation or hire its own contractor.

▪ Sierra Club and BOR Grant RFPs

Nancy has contacted the Sierra Club and offered the Council as a partner for Mexican proposals under the Sierra Club RFP. Woody also urged the Council to submit proposals (up to \$25,000) to the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation for the Water Conservation grant. Ari explained that the Texas Agricultural Experiment Station was currently working on a project

Regarding the Sierra Club grant, Jennifer suggested wetland construction to filter the water of the "Black Ditch," which enters the Rio Grande out of Juarez (similar to the New River project in California). She suggested talking to Carlos Duarte, director of the CONACYT (The Mexican National Council for Science and Technology) Binational Collaborative Program on Technology Innovation, the trade development agency that funds infrastructure feasibility studies in trading partner countries. She said that WWF might be able to hire a consultant to shepherd along the

process. Alfredo Granados said that a former professor at UACJ is now the Director of Ecology in Juarez. Ari suggested water quality testing. Alfredo said there were concerns about West Nile Virus in Juarez.

Ari said that the Bureau of Reclamation's Water 2025 program may not be funded after this year and Woody agreed. Ari mentioned that Woody has offered funds to support Council programs. He said that EPWU was providing organizational support and that the Bureau of Reclamation money should go for specific products. He said that about \$4000 of the Bureau's money was used as bridge funds to support the position of Program Coordinator and that there was a Plan of Work and a budget which were good through September 2005. He added that the Program Coordinator's salary was built into the Water 2025 Challenge Grant. He asked what products the Council should be producing, saying that the Council needs a Scope of Work for the last \$10,000 next week. Ari directed Nancy to form a small subcommittee with Jennifer and Julie to work to identify products and he submitted a list of possible projects.

Jennifer asked if there were gaps in the FLO-2D effort. Ari stated that there were gaps in the Coordinated Database/GIS and that educational materials needed to be published. Mike suggested that the Council go back to the work plan and develop data for the biological portion of the Database/GIS. Conrad wondered if the Council could use the biological products of the Canalization EIS if there was no Record of Decision. It was suggested that the Council use the Sustainable Water project EIS and Nancy's Border 2012 proposal as starting points. Nancy was directed to develop a Scope of Work and give it to Woody as soon as possible.

- **URGWOM**

Ping reported that April Sanders from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers went to an EBID Board meeting in May to present the URGWOM model. Also in May, Conrad and Nancy attended the URGWOM steering committee meeting in Albuquerque. The Technical Committee met on May 23 to determine the Phase 2 of the Corps project, the EPWU report, and the linkage between surface and ground water. Ping said that the challenge was to see if the RiverWare application model was working properly and that the Corps may support a physical model of this reach of the river.

- **Visit by Middle East Delegation, April 15-21**

Ed Hamlyn reported that he hosted a delegation of Israeli, Palestinian, and Jordanian field staff members of the Good Water Neighbor Project in April. They visited the University of Texas at El Paso to learn from the American-Mexican experience in cross border water management. The visitors included two Jordanians, two Israeli Jews, one Israeli Arab, and one Palestinian. They were sponsored by Friends of the Earth Middle East (FoEME) and the European Union.

- **Web site upgrade**

Nancy reported that the proto website was available for Council members to review and that the final version should be ready later this month. She gave the Council the temporary web site address.

6. Report from Working Groups

Christopher Brown reported on the May 23 Technical Committee meeting and the URGWOM / URGWOPS Steering Committee process. He said that June 30, 2005, is the end date of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers project and September 30, 2005, was the end of the EPWU grant. The GIS portal work will be finished by the second end date. Phase 3 of the Corps will go in soon.

7. Date and location of the next Executive Committee meeting

It was decided that the next meeting would be on Monday July 25, 2005, at 1pm at the Texas Agricultural Experiment Station in El Paso.

8. Adjournment

Jennifer moved and Julie seconded that the meeting be adjourned; the meeting was adjourned at 3:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Nancy N. Hanks