

Minutes
Paso del Norte Watershed Council Executive Committee (EC) Meeting
September 8, 2008 3:30 – 5:30 pm
Offices of the IBWC-4171 Mesa Street
The Commons, Bldg. C El Paso, TX

In Attendance:

Chris Brown- NMSU	Mike Landis-USBR
Jennifer Montoya- USBLM	Brian Hanson-USFWS
Hilary Brinegar- NMDA	Bert Cortez-USBR
Erin Ward- NMWRRRI	Ari Michelsen-TexasAgriLife Research
Conrad Keyes, Jr.-USACE	Woody Irving-USBR
Bobby Creel-NMWRRRI	Beth Bardwell-WWF
Kevin Bixby-SWEC	Inga Groff-League of Women Voters
Rita Krise-USIBWC	Joe Groff-Chihuahuan Desert Wildlife Rescue
Daniel Borunda-USIBWC	
Carlos Pena-USIBWC	
Zhuping Sheng-Texas AgriLife Research	
Jose Lopez-Ysleta del Sur Pueblo	

- 1) Approval of the Agenda: Approved
- 2) Approval of Minutes from April 2008 and June 2008: April 2008 minutes, Comments- Item 11. The meeting with Congressman Reyes, which has not happened yet, will include Senator Bingaman. Please include the Senator's name. Item 7 - the spelling of Duran's name needs fixing and add the words, "Current IBWC Commissioner Marin". June 2008 Minutes: Bixby is misspelled. Item 9 also, SWEC's property was received as a donation, not as a purchase. April 2008 Minutes *Approved*. June 2008 Minutes *Approved*. Minutes Process Discussion: Group discussed and agreed that within a week of the meeting, Jennifer will send the draft minutes out for review and then before the next meeting, with the agenda, the officers will send the revised minutes as well. Executive Committee will then vote on minutes. Secretary must ensure that everyone can read and edit the minutes and view the agenda. Secretary will send them as Word 97.
- 3) Introduction of new USIBWC representative: Daniel Borunda of the Environmental Management Division, handles all the border environmental projects. He is also Manager for the Rio Grande Canalization collaborative. His work load includes Cultural resources studies, Environmental Studies on levee rehab work.
- 4) Frontera Land Alliance (FLA or Frontera below) Presentation, Doug Echlin : Mission of the not-for-profit FLA is to protect forever, lands and open space in lands of cultural and natural value in West Texas and Southern NM. FLA cooperates with landowners, agencies, & donors, to conserve the beauty and character of the region's deserts, mountains, rivers for all to enjoy.

Resler Canyon Project concerns 91 acres of land in an arroyo in El Paso. In 2003 Hunt Corporation, developers, got their plat approved by the city for about 200 homes. Coronado Homeowners Association had been involved with the City in trying to protect Resler Canyon previously. Richard Teschner, a member of the Association, received a sizeable inheritance, and Richard, a language arts professor at UTEP, began his own personal negotiations to purchase Resler Canyon with Woody Hunt, CEO of Hunt Corporation, contingent upon being able to develop Resler Ridge (11 acres, 40 homes). Homeowners Assoc were not opposed to that. Hunt took two years to figure out the situation and Teschner was successful in purchasing it, but it took his entire inheritance. The title was in Teschner's hand just 45 minutes. He then handed title over to Frontera Land Alliance, and it has been re-christened The Wakeem-Teschner Nature Preserve at Resler Canyon. Dedicated in 2006. Resler Arroyo- first time open space has been dedicated as a nature preserve (not counting Franklin Mts). City didn't know how to deal with it. There are so many deed restrictions on the land that it will never be developed but the City kept appraising it as if it could be developed and FLA had to pay enormous taxes, under protest. Now the City understands and now each of the 4 parcels are valued at \$50 each. FLA was refunded the original taxes. Trash pickup regular basis. Lots of it was there before it was picked up by FLA.

Thunder Canyon, bounded on east side by north Stanton street, south side by Thunder Crest lane. Sharondale and Oak Cliff drives are the easiest access. Upper Mesa Hills Neighborhood Assoc. Another neighborhood Association requested a Public Improvement District (PID) - Any association can purchase open space within their boundaries. These people would accept a tax to protect the canyon. They needed \$500,000 to buy the land and protect it. They came up with a plan. The City took possession of it as a PID and then the homeowners will be taxed a certain amount and may end up paying quite a bit more than their regular property tax. Tax depends on their frontage to the property. Frontera made sure the easement met all of the issues and concerns that the neighbors in that district had for preserving thunder canyon. Willis Home. Frontera holds the easement. They did an environmental evaluation of the canyon. Provided info to Parks and Recreation coordinator. City of El Paso will expect annual reports from Frontera. Another project, reviewing a cooperative agreement, ACUB, Army Compatible Use Program, which is a program to set up buffer zones around military reservations. Working with willing sellers adjacent to Fort Bliss to keep lands, if they wish, in their natural state. Keep these lands separate from development adjacent to Fort Bliss. FLA has met with one landowner in NE El Paso to get their ideas.

- 5) Update on URGWOM and other USACE Activities: April Sanders was ill today. Conrad Keyes, Jr., consultant to the Corps, provided a brief update. The URGWOM and Corps budgets submitted to the president's office, as all budgets are. The amount of funding is about half of what was planned for the next year. Probably no write-ins for a while. Funding for next year will be closer to \$1 million for the URGWOM budget, if a continuing resolution comes about. In the 5- year plan the Corps will be spending last year's money next year. URGWOM steering committee meeting is this Thursday in

ABQ at the Corps office. Everyone will learn more about funding then. April is now head of reservoir operations management for the Corps. Mike Fies has also taken a new job. April was trying to send Conrad a document, which she wanted to hand out at this meeting, but wasn't able to. Chris to follow up to get this information and append to the minutes so we can send it out to EC if available.

- 6) Update on USBR/EPCWID#1/EBID Operating Agreement, Bert Cortez: Provided a historical perspective on Rio Grande Project and the recent developments in creating an operating agreement that all parties have signed. There are actually three documents. A 30 year process: An Operating Agreement; an Operations Manual; and an Agreement to Agree to dismiss the lawsuits. One of the important changes is a carry-over agreement. If they have water left over in their account, they can carry-over this account until the next year. There is a 60% of a full allocation limit on the carry-over. If one district has reached the limit and the other has not, any extra carry-over water goes into the other's account. Mexico is still getting their proportion even if there is carryover. They still get what they are due based on the full percentage of delivery. San Juan Chama is not available to the project. The Rio Grand Project expects to have over 600,000 acre-feet at the beginning of the next irrigation season. Quiet title suit will be dismissed – this pertains to the waters held by the Bureau of Reclamation in the Rio Grande Project. Working with the NM State Engineer on this. D1 D2. Texas got guaranteed delivery based on historical Rio Grande Project efficiencies. NM got historic ground water pumping. Any water downstream of Caballo is project water.
- 7) Update on the PdNWC Coordinated Database, GIS and Modeling, Zhuping Sheng: USBR 2025 Challenge Grant Technical Report 344 is available from the NMWRI Website. Monitoring network for water quality in upper valley is enhanced as a result of this project. Current USACE contract has been extended until April 15, 2009 for a complete technical report. Current subcontract for NMSU and UACJ has been extended for model development and subwatershed reconnaissance work. Soil samples have been collected from selected subwatersheds to characterize infiltration and runoff traits. Also are simulating the 2006 flood to look at the model and how to calibrate to predict future flooding. Chris suggests that the next scope of work from the Technical Committee be circulated among the EC for vote. As Conrad noted that the TC has been authorized by EC to continue the ongoing projects. TC will provide documents to EC for review and any new projects for EC to approve.
- 8) Discussion of topics related to Rio Grande Canalization Collaborative Project. Water Marketing: USBR was set up to prevent water speculation. What if Las Cruces wanted to sell to T Boone Pickens, that couldn't happen. USBR cannot let that happen by law. USBR and market forces are juxtaposed. Project water is tied to the lands within each irrigation district. Can't take water out of the project area. You can change the use. There is a protection for the original use of the project. If a landowner owns water and doesn't need it, they may lease it to the Special Water User's Association. Interesting discussion about invoking the miscellaneous purposes act to send environmental water from NM to TX. Also, thinking about a TX call for that NM Environmental Department

water instead?. Consumptive right is never 100%. The Rio Grande Project is based solely upon a right of delivery and not on consumptive use. Biological resources group will draft a discussion paper for the next meeting.

9) Treasurer's Report: Handed out by Zhuping in Ari's absence.

10) Location and Date of Next Meeting: 28 October 2008, Las Cruces, NMDA or SWEC.