



Coordinator's Watershed Corner June 2011

A note to the Clean Water Committee, Paso del Norte Watershed Council From the 319(h) Grant Watershed Coordinator, Brian Hanson

Hello all,

We are continuing our stakeholder meetings to develop a strong watershed group. Thus far we have met April 7, May 12, and June 14. We have covered the process by which a watershed based plan is developed, discussed the existing data concerning *E. coli* in the Rio Grande, and our most recent meeting addressed the Vision 2040 document. That document addresses almost all of the geographic area that is of concern to the 319(h) project.



319(h) stakeholder meeting, June 14, 2011

June Events

June 10
Water quality model presentation by Randa Hatamleh at NM Dept. of Agriculture, NMSU

June 11
Raft the Rio: Displayed watershed council material

June 14
319(h) stakeholder meeting: Vision 2040 document, Mesilla Park Recreation Center

On Saturday, June 11, the Southwest Environment Center hosted the annual Raft the Rio event. In collaboration with the City of Las Cruces Stormwater Prevention program, Peter Bennett, Sumer Guffey, and I represented the Paso del Norte Watershed Council, distributing information regarding the Council and best management practices for watershed health.

Randa Hatamleh presented her research findings for "Source, Fate, and Transport of *Escherichia coli* in the Lower Rio Grande, New Mexico," a study in which she used the computer model, Better Assessment Science Integrating Point and Nonpoint Sources (BASIN) on Friday, June 10. Also used by the Environmental Protection Agency, this model will allow for an estimate of the spatial and temporal relationship between bacteria and land use categories in the 319(h) watershed area, from Percha Dam downstream to the international boundary with Mexico. *E. coli* variability in the river can be predicted under different flow scenarios. The model used many variables that affect *E. coli* and was based upon 298 water samples taken from July 2008 through December 2010. The watershed was divided into 15 sub-watersheds and then categorized into three segments of the Rio Grande. The presentation generated a discussion among attendees of the predicted and actual values of *E. coli*.

Watershed Tip:

A malfunctioning or leaking septic system could contaminate ground and/or surface water. An Albuquerque microbial source tracking study found 15.9% of the total fecal coliform bacteria in the Rio Grande were due to human sewage sources. Consider these tips in order to keep your septic system working properly:

- *Inspect your septic system every 1 to 3 years*
- *Pump the tank every 3 to 5 years*
- *Use water efficiently*
- *Do not dispose of hazardous waste in sinks or toilets*
- *Only plant grass in areas surrounding your septic system*
- *Do not drive or park vehicles over the septic system*

*For more information, see the EPA Homeowners Guide:
http://www.epa.gov/owm/septic/pubs/homeowner_guide_long.pdf*



Raft the Rio display, June 11, 2011



Watercraft at Raft the Rio, June 11, 2011

While attending the South Central New Mexico Stormwater Management Coalition meeting on June 16, I learned that this organization will also be developing a watershed based plan. Their watershed area is very similar to the 319(h) project area that will be addressed in our watershed based plan. The watershed suggestions in our plan are more likely to be adopted if the Stormwater Coalition plan contains our suggestions, therefore, we need to coordinate closely with this group.

As you know, domestic animal waste is a possible source of *E. coli* in the Rio Grande. Throughout the month of June, a team documented the amount of pet waste that was left along the walking trail south of Picacho Bridge along the river. On June 9, six pounds, nine ounces of pet waste was removed from an area measuring 1,000 feet in length and 20 feet in width. After several sampling events, it was calculated that pet waste was left along the trail at a rate up to 5.7 ounces per 24 hours. Various sources of *E. coli* will be considered for the watershed based plan. If identified as a source, pet waste will be further addressed.

319(h) Grant Team

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