

MINUTES

Paso del Norte Watershed Council
Executive Committee
Monday, February 28, 2005, 1:30 - 4:00 pm
New Mexico Department of Agriculture
Agricultural Programs and Resources
Research Building B
NMSU Campus, Las Cruces, NM



Attending:

Gilbert Anaya, US IBWC
Kevin Bixby, Southwest Environmental Center
Daniel Borunda, US IBWC
Christopher Brown, New Mexico State University
Bobby Creel, NMWRRRI
Tim Darden, NM Department of Agriculture
Mike Fahy, El Paso Water Utilities
Inga Groff, League of Women Voters
Joe Groff, Chihuahuan Desert Wildlife Rescue
Nancy Hanks, PdNWC Program Coordinator
Conrad Keyes, Consultant to the USACE
Julie Maitland, NM Department of Agriculture, Co-Chair
Jacob Massoud, Ysleta del Sur Pueblo
Valerie Provencio, El Paso Water Utilities, Secretary
Zhuping Sheng, TAES-TAMU
Sue Watts, Chair

1. Convening the Meeting

Sue Watts convened the meeting at approximately 1:45 pm.

2. Introductions

Those attending introduced themselves.

3. Approval of minutes from January 7, 2005

Julie moved to approve the minutes from the previous meeting as amended by Mike Fahy. Ping seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

4. Council Activities

▪ URGWOM

Ping, Conrad, Bobby, and Nancy attended the regular URGWOM meeting in Albuquerque on March 10, 2005, at which time they discussed next year's proposal and budget with April Sanders of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Conrad explained that there is \$1 million in the Corps budget for URGWOM and URGWOPS as a line item in 2006. It is possible that the Corps could ask for more (as an extension) when they see what the PdNWC wants to do with the Coordinated Database/GIS. The water resources budget is in committee, but the lower portion of the Rio Grande is not in the budget. We should know by June whether there will be funding to incorporate biological data into the database.

The IBWC should have a two-dimensional flow model by April 2005, possibly all the way down to Fort Quitman in 2006. The URGWOPS Preliminary Draft EIS applies to the stretch of the Rio Grande from its headwaters to Fort Quitman. It was suggested that the Council send a letter to Congress asking for URGWOM to be used through the entire Paso del Norte watershed. The Technical Committee has a draft Scope of Work for a Phase 3 proposal to the Corps and for EPWU. Gilbert Anaya was added to the Technical Committee.

▪ Grant Proposals

The Council has received a grant from the Friends of the Rio Grande, sponsored by the IBWC/TCEQ Clean Rivers Program, for about \$4800 to upgrade the Council's web site. Nancy asked for volunteers to help determine the information to go into the new site. The Council has also submitted a pre-proposal to the Border 2012 Initiative for one-quarter of Nancy's time to go to the stakeholders and decision-makers and introduce them to the Coordinated Database/GIS. A

future proposal will go to the National Endowment for the Humanities to provide a web site and display of pre-rectification aerial photographs from the IBWC. Kevin suggested SWEC and Chamizal as venues for a public presentation of the photos and Sue volunteered to give a talk. Kevin reported that he had applied for a \$500,000 appropriation through Sen. Bingaman's office.

- **IBWC Programmatic EIS (PEIS)**

Daniel Borunda of the IBWC reported that the PEIS is for all IBWC flood control projects, focusing on levee rehabilitation. The Canalization EIS information will be incorporated into the PEIS, and once the Record of Decision for the Canalization EIS is signed then the PEIS can continue. Alternatively, the Canalization EIS may be completely excluded from the PEIS. Sue asked if there would be a Canalization EIS if the PEIS went into effect. Daniel responded that the consulting firm for the PEIS is waiting for the canalization portion, but they are working on the other projects. They are preparing a scoping report which should be ready by end of April 2005. The IBWC thought that the stakeholders were working together for the Canalization EIS. Since they are not, the IBWC will try to reconvene the stakeholders. The only irrigation district that submitted comments was EBID.

- **Coordinated Database/GIS Workshop**

Chris has submitted the final report with three technical memoranda incorporated into it. The workshop is on March 11, concluding Phase 2 of the EPWU-funded portion of the project. There will be a presentation on March 10, 2005, at the URGWOM meeting in Albuquerque.

- **Executive Committee Terms**

Nancy offered to email the Executive Committee members with a proposal about term limits.

5. Report from Working Group

In Jennifer Montoya's absence, Kevin reported that the World Wildlife Fund was prepared to pay \$5,000 for a consulting firm to draft the requirements for a Scope of Work. Sue requested that the Technical Working Group and the Education Working Group report at the next meeting.

6. Meetings Recently Attended

As the only member of the Paso del Norte Water Task Force present, Chris reported that, although the Task Force usually looks only at water supply, there is now some potential for overlap since both the Task Force and the Watershed Council are seeking funding of their administrative positions. There is also the potential for cooperation through linking the Coordinated Database/GIS to the Hewlett mapping project at NM WRRl. Julie asked if the Task Force would continue past the Hewlett grant or be subsumed into Border 2012 Task Force. Chris reported that it was preparing a strategic plan.

Kevin reported on the Rio Grande Fisheries Workshop held February 1-2, 2005, in El Paso. Representatives from three National Biological Information Infrastructure nodes as well as representatives of state and federal government agencies and universities were in attendance at the workshop.

7. Meetings to be Attended

On March 8 there will be a Fish and Wildlife meeting in Austin for reintroduction of the silvery minnow in the Big Bend. March 9 is Rio Grande Day at the New Mexico State Capitol.

8. Date and Location of the next Executive Committee Meeting

The next Paso del Norte Watershed Council meeting will be on April 1, 2005, at Ysleta del Sur Pueblo at 1:30pm. Sue requested that Nancy extend invitations to the HARC Environmental group to attend future meetings, as well as Souder/Miller. It was also suggested that EP#1 be invited to talk about their water quality and quantity concerns (flooding problems) and canal lining project. It was tentatively determined that, prior to the Council meeting, the Targeted Watershed proposal group will meet at 12:30 am. Nancy will send an email regarding that proposal to ask for people to work on it and will arrange a conference call.

9. Adjournment

Julie moved for adjournment, Kevin seconded, and it was unanimously voted to adjourn at 3:30pm.

Respectfully submitted by Nancy N. Hanks