

Paso del Norte Watershed Council

Executive Committee Meeting

Minutes

May 16, 2002, EPWU, Second Floor Conference Room

Chair – Conrad G. Keyes, Jr.

The meeting was called to order by Conrad Keyes at 2:05 PM. Members present were: Sue Watts, Woody Irving, Ed Fierro, Inga Groff, John Sproul, Marilyn Taylor, Zhuping Sheng, Christopher Brown, Bobby Creel, Ari Michelsen, Conrad Keyes, Julie Maitland, Ed Hamlyn, Joe Groff, Dan Santantonio, John Burkstaller, Brian Hanson, Jose Granillo, Cecilio Ortiz, and Carlos Ricon.

- 1) April 5, 2002 Meeting Minutes Summary by Ed Fierro – Meeting Summary approved with no additional changes.
- 2) Coordinator Position and Grants and Financial Report – Ari Michelsen/Ed Kosak – Ari reported that Ed K. is putting together a contact list with email, postal addresses, and phone numbers. He asked that council members assist in supplying contact information. It was suggested that Ed K. contact Ed Hamlyn for a list that Ed H. compiled for a project he and Ari worked on.

Ari also reviewed the meeting held with the officers and Ed K. when he was first hired. Ed's project priorities will be to help finalize the strategic plan, work on grant funding, keep track of financial expenditures from the various grants, and develop brochures with the assistance of a 'brochure committee'. Together, they will produce a brochure that explains who we are, and what our purpose is, as well as the content, format, visuals, etc. Materials will be developed for different audiences, to include elected officials, the general public, and granting agencies.

Financial summary: We have \$32,000 from El Paso Water Utilities, and \$29,000 provided by RiverNetwork. These two provide salary and fringe benefits for the program coordinator for a year, as well as funding for developing publications, postage, etc. A cooperative agreement with the Bureau of Reclamation will be completed soon for \$10,000 with Mike Landis as administrator. A World Wildlife Fund Grant for \$5,750 should be finalized soon for translation of educational materials into Spanish.

- 3) Council Membership – List of Councilors and/or proposed additions to the Executive Committee – Ed Kosak was asked if there were any additional members from other groups that might be interested in being involved with the WS Council – No new members to add since last meeting. Members present agreed that efforts are needed for contacting potential new members. Proposed educational materials should be helpful. Committee appointed to help Ed K. with brochure development - Sue Watts (chair), John Sproul, and Inga Groff. Inga offered to utilize the Master Naturalists to assist with the brochure.

- 4) World Wildlife Fund Grant Proposal - Sue Watts– WWF had contacted us with questions about whether our educational materials could be considered lobbying material. We responded that they were not. So, we hope that the award will be arriving soon.
- 5) Updated Draft Strategic Plan – Sue Watts/Brian Hanson –Discussion about latest version of strategic plan with suggestions for a few additional changes. Conrad Keyes asked the council for a motion to, and a vote to, accept the strategic plan. A motion was made by Ed Hamlyn and second by Bobby Creel that we accept the existing strategic plan as a working document. The motion carried. Brian Hanson recommended adding #3, under “C” (pg 4); to initiate collaboration with other entities, and then list ARC under #3. He also suggested that because some years are not as eventful as others, an annual summary be included to the strategic plan. This would allow, as Inga Groff added, the strategic plan to stand and other documents merely be added. As agreed, the strategic plan will address the long-term goals of the Council and a separate annual business plan will be developed to set the short-term goals. Conrad Keyes suggested that the word “draft” be taken out of the title. Conrad also stated four or five NM congressional members had already seen the draft strategic plan.
- 6) Data Management/GIS Committee report – Ed Fierro. – The committee should meet by the end of May 2002. The committee will draft a scope of work consisting of a simple agreement letter to be presented to John Burkstaller. EPWU can provide \$50,000 for the first year to get the project started. We plan to develop additional funding can be developed for subsequent years from other sources. One potential source is the Corps of Engineers, and the EPWU funds could possibly be used as cost sharing funds. Sue added that Rosemary Staley had reported to her that the City of El Paso has GIS information and that Jose Granillo of El Paso Water Utilities is working with the city on GIS, but funding needs to wait for committee approval.
- 7) External Coordination – Christopher Brown – At the May 2 meeting of the Management Advisory Committee (MAC) and the PdN Water Task Force, after lengthy discussion, it was apparent that the individual groups should remain autonomous for now. Each group has a specialized function. They had discussions about duplication of effort. The MAC might cease to exist after its planning project is complete. There is potential for collaboration between the groups, e.g. a GIS project coordinated database and linked web pages. Also, possible benefits from field trips (ride-along) to the irrigation districts, and information transfer among the groups. A broad consensus was indicated - can we take advantage of what’s already been accomplished? The target is to put out increased volume of information. The map is the portal, and again, the goal is to move more information.

Related topics: Bobby Creel said that financing for the Paso del Norte Water Task Force/Hewlett GIS Mapping Project is through the Hewlett Foundation. Also, there can be a map displayed on the viewers computer screen, they can gain access to a photo then a chart or possibly make it available on CD ROM. Ari Michelsen asked if Bobby could give any examples of the data layers. He replied that base map layers consisted of topography, rivers and streams, well points, transportation, ect. Ari then asked about addressing demographics. Bobby replied, yes in the form of a census population. Also, well data in Dona Ana county would include the date of drilling, depth of well, latitude and longitude.

There was then a brief discussion about a presentation being included during the next Water Task Force meeting. It was asked how long of a presentation. Bobby responded by saying, one and a half hours would be enough time. Then he mentioned that the principle players will be notified and asked when the next task force meeting will be. Carlos Ricon said that it will be at El Paso Water Utilities, June 28th, he is pretty sure at 11:30 AM.

- 8) IBWC's Canalization Project EIS – Doug Echlin – Rio Grande Canalization Project – Parsons Corporation discussed project alternatives and EIS development at El Paso County Water Improvement District No. 1 Board Meeting on May 8th. A revised schedule for completion of the EIS is forthcoming from Parsons now that meetings with the irrigation districts have been concluded.
- 9) NM/TX MAC & Paso del Norte Water Task Force meeting – May 2, 2002 – Ed Fierro reported that the minutes for the meeting will be available by May 22. Carlos Rincon reported that the Water Task Force is developing bylaws and a strategic plan that would be presented at their mid-August meeting.
- 10) NM/TX MAC meeting –July 11, 2002 – Ari Michelsen and Ed Kosak will represent the Council at the meeting. The other officers will be out of town. Bobby Creel said that a presentation/demonstration of the Hewlett Map project could be made then also.
- 11) Next PdN Watershed Council or Executive Committee meeting –July 1, at WRRI at NMSU. 1:30 PM
- 12) Proposed Paso del Norte Wetland Project – Sue Watts, et al. – The draft proposal was distributed by e-mail by Christopher Rustay through John Sproul and distributed at the meeting. The proposal requests funds from a USFWS grant program for the Rio Bosque Wetlands Park, (\$141,000); the Mesilla Valley Bosque Park (\$400,000); the Keystone Project (\$336,000); and the New Mexico State Parks/Bureau of Reclamation – including Caballo Lake State Park, Percha Dam State Park, and Leasburg Dam State Park - (\$100,000 combined). The total grant, not including in-kind match funds for the combined projects is approximately \$977,000. The project is combined as one proposal to help meet the requirements of the grant matching. The Keystone project is the largest contributor of matching funds with \$2,731,000, followed by the Rio Bosque with \$1,215,308. The other matching contributions vary from \$89,500 to \$410,000. Several committee members expressed their opinion that this is the type of project the Watershed Council should encourage and undertake. However, there are several unanswered issues such as fiscal agent, management support, land acquisition, accounting and construction liability, and willingness/ability for a university to take on this program. Of the combined one million dollar proposal, only \$23,000 is budgeted for administrative costs. There was recognition that this amount is unlikely to be sufficient to provide management costs for the project. In addition, there was no indirect cost recovery budgeted. There was discussion that regardless of the fiscal agent, increased management and indirect costs would need to be included. Even if universities (UTEP or Texas A&M) were willing to act as fiscal agent (meaning they are ultimately responsible) they would likely require a minimum IDC. Ari commented that

several Federal government agencies have pre-negotiated IDC rates with universities, typically in the 15-20 percent range. Even without management costs, a 15% rate would leave \$850k for the projects and there were some questions on how this would affect the ability to complete projects and impact on associated matching. Discussion continued on challenges with universities purchasing land and contracting/managing construction projects. Alternatives mentioned included having the university subcontract with each of the wetland project organizations and exploring whether the El Paso Community Foundation would be interested in acting as fiscal agent. These alternatives would still require information on the ability to protect/transfer liability and approved accounting and contracting capabilities of the organizations. University subcontracts would still likely be required to meet State bidding, management and accounting regulations requiring substantial oversight.

In terms of the granting agency (USFWS) proposal review criteria, Sue explained that here is a point system that determines the value of a contributor; a 10% match or more is considered a partner, if a contributor is classified as “unique” (if they are first time participants) more points are rewarded. The ratio has to be at least 1:1, (from non-federal sources). A ratio of 2:1 is even better. The last page of the proposal shows indirect funding for acquiring land or improvements. No one agency is or can be the grantee. The next proposal deadline is July 26th. One reason for trying to submit before this deadline is the loss of some funding considered as “old match” dollars, helpful in meeting the grant match requirements. After that date funds are considered “new match” dollars. Conrad Keyes said that if the July 26th deadline could be met, does the executive committee want to pursue this? Ari Michelsen made a motion for the members of the Executive Committee go forward by investigating what needs to be done to put this together - to proceed through the WSC and universities or other entity. A motion was made by Ed Hamlyn to conceptually accept the proposal of the Wetlands Project, second by Bobby Creel. Because of time limitations, an amendment was made for the officers to approve the fiscal agent. The Watershed Council Executive Committee passed this motion to conceptually support the proposal and to investigate mechanisms for implementation.

- 13) Other business – Carlos Rincon introduced Cecilio Ortiz who will be working as a consultant for Environmental Defense until the end of the calendar year. During summer session, Phd candidates will work in Juarez. If funds are available, this may be extended for one year.