

**Minutes
Executive Committee
Paso del Norte Watershed Council**

**Southwest Environmental Center, 275 N. Downtown Mall
Las Cruces, NM
Monday, June 30, 2003**

PRE-MEETING ACTIVITIES

- **Field Trip to Mesilla Valley Bosque Park (Kevin Bixby)**

Approximately 25 people associated with the Council met at 9:00 am the Mesilla Bridge (aka Calle del Norte bridge) and took two vans to the Mesilla Valley Bosque Park. Kevin provided information on restoration techniques used there and future plans for the park. The group returned to the SWEC meeting room by 10:30 am.

- **Update on the Rio Bosque (John Sproul)**

John Sproul handed out copies of the Rio Bosque Wetlands Park newsletter. He presented details of water management and discussed the role of the following groups: UTEP, which manages the site for the City of El Paso; Ducks Unlimited, which manages the wetlands; the IBWC, which built the wetlands; the U. S. Bureau of Reclamation, which did the planning; and the EPID#1 and EPWU, which provide the water. John also discussed the increase in the number of bird species found in the park.

- **Coordinated Database GIS Project Demonstration (Christopher Brown)**

Chris Brown presented details of the Coordinated Database, explaining the seven elements of metadata: source, spatial, date, data, restrictions, format, and access. He cautioned that the FGDC spatial data transfer standards must be used for spatial data sets that are part of federal projects. He promised to inform the Council when the test database goes online. The group went to lunch at about 11:45 am.

- **Keystone Heritage Park (Bernie Sargent)**

The group returned at approximately 12:30 pm, when Bernie Sargent presented information on the future plans for the Keystone Heritage Park. He also handed out membership flyers. He said that the park was 17 acres in size and that they had removed the salt cedar from about 4 acres.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

In attendance: Conrad G. Keyes, Jr., Chair Sue Watts, Assistant Chair
Ari Michelsen, Treasurer Ed Fierro, Secretary
Nancy Hanks, Program Coordinator

Beth Bardwell, World Wildlife Fund
Kevin Bixby, Southwest Environmental Center
Christopher Brown, Geography, New Mexico State University
Mike Buntier, U. S. Fish & Wildlife
Bobby Creel, New Mexico Water Resources Research Institute
Tim Darden, New Mexico Department of Agriculture
Doug Echlin, U.S. International Boundary & Water Commission
Inga Groff, League of Women Voters
Joe Groff, Chihuahuan Desert Wildlife Rescue
Brian Hanson, U. S. Fish & Wildlife
Keith Landreth, U. S. Army, Fort Bliss
Jacob Massoud, Ysleta del Sur Pueblo
Mike Mecke, Texas Water Research Institute
Valerie Provencio, El Paso Water Utilities

Debbie Rhinehart, Rio Grande/Rio Bravo Basin Coalition
Lori Rivera, Ysleta del Sur Pueblo
Dan Santantonio, City of Las Cruces
Bernie Sargent, Keystone
Zhuping Sheng, TAMU, Agricultural Research & Extension Center
John Sproul, UTEP, CERM
Rosemary Staley, City of El Paso
Barnet Sugarman, Private Citizen
Beatriz Vera, Rio Grande/Rio Bravo Basin Coalition

1. Convene Executive Committee Meeting (Conrad Keyes)

The Executive Committee convened at approximately 12:45 pm. Conrad announced that there were copies available of the New Mexico Surface Water Quality Bureau announcements and information on the New Mexico Environmental Department. He asked if there were any changes to the agenda. It was suggested that there be a discussion of the biological management plan, but that was postponed because it would be the topic of a working meeting to be held after the Executive Committee meeting.

2. Approval of Minutes from May 9, 2003 (Nancy Hanks)

Kevin Bixby moved that the minutes of the May 9, 2003, meeting be approved with minor corrections. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

3. Action Items (Conrad Keyes)

Conrad asked for responses to the list of action items from the last meeting. Ari stated that he checked on the ERS/USDA Invasive Species Competitive Grants Program and found that it was not an appropriate grant for the Council's activities. Conrad stated that Beth got comments from many Council members regarding the restoration plan. Bobby stated that he found out that the EBID will apply for money from the New Mexico Water Trust Board, and that Gary Esslinger would like the endorsement of the Watershed Council. It was proposed that Gary report on the project at the next MAC/SC meeting. Kevin agreed to write a one-paragraph summary of the proposal for the North American Wetlands Conservation Act, even though SWEC did not get the grant. He did set up the field trip to the Mesilla Valley Bosque Park. Nancy provided Brian Hanson with a copy of the old brochure to take to Washington, DC.

4. New Member Applications (Nancy Hanks)

There were no new member applications. Bobby added that the membership application forms were on the website. There was a discussion of getting a new domain name for the website. Nancy asked if the Council wanted to vote on the domain name. It was unanimously voted that there would be an email ballot of names to the Executive Committee.

5. Update on Brochure (Sue Watts)

Sue Watts reported that there was a draft of the new brochure, which Nancy distributed. They asked for revisions and corrections to the current brochure to be sent to Nancy by July 9, 2003.

6. Reauthorization of the Rio Grande Project (Beth Bardwell)

Beth announced that the City of El Paso has requested Sen. Hutchinson's office to reauthorize the Rio Grande Project for municipal purposes and that the request had received a letter of support from the City of Las Cruces and the EBID. She stated that the WWF is concerned about unintended impacts to environmental transfers. She gave as an example a situation where, under the reauthorization proposal, the Miscellaneous Purposes Act would no longer apply and as a result the Bureau of Reclamation would no longer enter into third-party contracts, making it easier for the City of El Paso to enter into direct negotiations with individual farmers. Therefore, if the reauthorization is just for municipal purposes, the environmental community would be required to enter into a third-party contract when it wanted to lease or purchase water rights for the environment. Although it may not be as much of an issue in EP#1 where they have already entered into third-party contracts and have some template to follow, in New Mexico they have no experience with this, and the WWF is concerned that it will eliminate environmental users from voluntary market-based transactions. She stated that this has implications for the Watershed Council and the work it would like to do.

Conrad asked about the procedure that the Department of the Interior would go through under the Miscellaneous Purposes Act. Beth stated that there is a third-party contract that the Bureau enters into with the irrigation district and the municipality, but then there is another third party contract with an individual irrigator. Conrad asked if the Interior would take the proposed legislation before certain committees in Congress for a hearing. Beth said that yes, and that it would be possible to present testimony on this issue. She understands that proposed legislation has only been submitted to Sen. Hutchison's office, but nothing has been introduced in the House or the Senate. Conrad asked if we had a copy of the proposed legislation that was sent to Sen. Hutchison. Beth has a hard copy and will give it to Nancy who will scan it and send it to the Council. Beth would like to work to reframe the reauthorization language to allow environmental uses to be adversely impacted. It was agreed to put the topic on the agenda for the next meeting to determine what action if any the Council will take.

7. Update on the San Acacia Plan (Steve Harris)

Steve Harris was not in attendance. This item was postponed. Nancy will call Steve to determine when he is available.

8. Other Business

Regarding the New Mexico Surface Water Quality Bureau, Conrad announced that Gilbert Anaya (Texas Clean Rivers Program) has provided the New Mexico Environment Department with his water data. He also announced that the new hearing guidelines have been released for triennial review and a new hearing officer has been selected. Also, the New Mexico Environment Department has been reorganized. [Details of this information were sent to the Council via email.]

Conrad asked Dan about a recent article on the City of Las Cruces water projects. Dan reported on four projects: (1) a feasibility study on the East Mesa for a water reclamation facility; (2) a river crossing for a drinking water line connecting a well field on the West Mesa; and (3 and 4) infrastructure for East and West Mesas. Dan said the overall goal was to try to interlink water production capacity with demand in order to move water as needed. Other projects in Las Cruces include a downtown parking structure and a new federal building that will take up the whole parking lot by the existing federal building and City Hall. Kevin asked if the East Mesa project would involve water reclamation. Dan replied that there was a concern about the use of potable water for the Sonoma Ranch Golf Course, and the City hopes to reclaim water from the East Mesa and reuse that water there. The first phase will be a pilot project to demonstrate the reclamation, with no sludge treatment on site in an effort to be as neighbor-friendly as possible. A gravity-feed line will deliver reclaimed water to Sonoma Ranch. The City hopes to incorporate a water reuse distribution system while the East Mesa is still being planned and developed.

Beth asked if the Council wanted to purchase copies of the report prepared by the Alliance for Rio Grande Heritage. Hard copy costs are \$14.82 each, although CDs would be cheaper. She is leaving a copy with the Executive Committee for review. Ari asked if an acknowledgement could be added if the material is acceptable to watershed council, and Beth said yes. Ari stated that the BOR had contributed another \$10,000 without increasing matching. Conrad asked Ari and Nancy to see if there is funding available in our budget to purchase this report. Dan moved to let officers decide who will decide and Chris seconds. The motion passed unanimously.

Rosemary stated that she brought the Rio Grande Trail brochure for the Council. Ari asked if the Council was taking a proposal to the MAC/SC on July 18 or August 15. Conrad stated that this would be the topic of a discussion to be held after the Executive Committee meeting.

9. Date and Place of Next Annual Meeting

There was a discussion of when and where to have the next annual Paso del Norte Watershed Council meeting. It was determined that it would be desirable to have it in conjunction with a MAC/SC meeting and/or the Coordinated Database workshop. Possible locations mentioned were the Farm and Ranch Heritage Museum, the Branigan Cultural Center, SWEC, and the senate chambers at NMSU. Dan moved that the officers select the date and place of the annual meeting. Rosemary seconded and the vote was unanimous to do so. Conrad asked Ari, Ed Fierro, and Bobby to contact the appropriate irrigation districts to determine what dates would be good for them. A deadline of July 15 was established. [This deadline was a response to the need to announce

the annual meeting at the next MAC/SC meeting, which was to be on July 18, 2003. That July MAC/SC meeting has been rescheduled to August 15.] Conrad directed the Program Coordinator to look at what was done last year to see how we get people involved in getting on or off the Executive Committee. Nominations have to go out to the Council about 30 days before the date of the annual meeting.

10. Date and Place of Next Executive Committee Meeting

The next Executive Committee meeting was set for August 11, 2003, 9am, at the New Mexico Water Resources Research Institute, Stucky Hall, 3170 S. Espina St., New Mexico State University, Las Cruces, NM 88003.

11. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 2:25pm with a motion by Zhuping, a second by Ed, and a unanimous vote. Minutes recorded and written by Nancy N. Hanks