

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

**December 8, 2003
International Boundary and Water Commission
4171 N. Mesa, Building C, First Floor Conference Room
El Paso, Texas 79902**

In Attendance:

Sue Watts, Chair	Julie Maitland, Assistant Chair
Valerie Provencio, Secretary	Nancy Hanks, Program Coordinator
Kevin Bixby, Southwest Environmental Center	
Christopher Brown, Geography, New Mexico State University	
Tim Darden, New Mexico Department of Agriculture	
Doug Echlin, U. S. Section International Boundary & Water Commission	
Inga Groff, League of Women Voters	
Joe Groff, Chihuahuan Desert Wildlife Rescue	
Ed Hamlyn, Center for Environmental Resource Management	
Brian Hanson, U. S. Fish & Wildlife Service	
Conrad Keyes, Consultant	
Keith Landreth, U. S. Army, Fort Bliss	
Dan Santantonio, City of Las Cruces	
Zuping Sheng, Texas A&M University	
Rosemary Staley City of El Paso	
Jim Stefanov, U. S. Section International Boundary & Water Commission	
Beatriz Vera, Rio Grande/Rio Bravo Basin Coalition	

Pre-Meeting Regarding the Integrated Watershed Management Plan (IWMP) Proposal

The meeting to discuss the IWMP Proposal convened at 12:15 pm. Nancy distributed copies of the National Research Initiative Competitive Grants Program (NRI) and the Five-Star Restoration Matching Grants Program. Julie said she thought that the deadline for the NRI proposal (January 9, 2004) was too soon to meet. Brian stated that he thought that the IWMP would fall under the NRI grant guidelines and asked Nancy to find out what was required by the January 9 deadline.

Conrad said that he thought there would soon be a request for a pre-proposal for the EPA Clean Water Act Section 104(b)(3) Water Quality Cooperative Agreements/Grants Program, and that the usual January deadline had been extended because the money was not approved yet. He said he would track that funding deadline.

Regarding the IWMP, Conrad urged the committee to use the current proposal since it had already been approved by the MAC/SC and suggested that the Council send it out to various parties. Sue was concerned about sending the proposal out unsolicited. Brian agreed with Conrad, saying that the proposal would at least be available to them if they needed it. The following parties were suggested as recipients: New Mexico and Texas senators; the West Texas and Southern New Mexico congressional delegations; mayors of El Paso, Juarez, and Las Cruces; governors of New Mexico, Texas, and Chihuahua; county governments in Dona Ana and El Paso counties; New Mexico Groundwater Task Force; the FWTWPG; the LRGWUO; the NM Interstate Stream Commission; the NM Water Task Force; Jeffrey Jones of Mexico; and local sections of the American Water Works Association.

Conrad suggested that the proposal's cover letter include the names of all those to whom the proposal was sent and that the letter include a reference to the web page with MAC/SC minutes showing their approval of the proposal. He also suggested that members of the MAC/SC be copied on the letters. He suggested that Nancy send an email to the Committee with a list of names and addresses and that the letter and the proposal be sent by mail and faxed to Washington offices where appropriate. He requested that the cover letter also be sent to the Committee, as well as the proposal itself, so they make sure it is updated (particularly Kevin's section). Rosemary said she was meeting with Reyes staff and would take the proposal to them.

It was also suggested that the Council invite Sandia Labs to speak at a meeting. Julie said she would follow up on this. Further work on the IWMP will be done via email until the next Council meeting.

Paso del Norte Watershed Council Executive Committee Meeting

1. Convene Meeting

Sue convened the meeting 1:07 pm. The agenda was revised to postpone the first agenda item until Pablo Romero Ramos arrived.

2. Approval of Minutes from the October 29, 2003, meeting

Conrad provided corrected minutes. Julie moved to approve the minutes with those corrections, Beatriz seconded, and they were approved by a unanimous vote of the Committee.

3. Presentation Regarding the Parque del Rio Bravo

This item was postponed until the speaker arrived (after Item 4). At that time, Architect Pablo Romero Ramos of Romero Arquitectos presented information on the proposed river park in Juarez. He described the effort as a group of non-partisan citizens interested in restoring the Rio Bravo. They have developed a plan to be carried out by 2004 and they have presented it to local and federal authorities in Mexico. He said that some of the property along the river is privately owned, which adds to the challenges of creating a public park. He graciously agreed to allow the Council to put his Powerpoint presentation on its web site.

In response to a question, Pablo stated that there would be interpretation of the ecosystem and the history of the river, especially due to the park's location near the International Bridge, but that most of the park will be developed as a natural area. It is hoped that eventually it can expand to approximately 20 miles of riverfront as a park from the International Bridge to Zaragosa Bridge and then to Hudspeth County.

Chris added that the El Paso Community Foundation has become interested in historic tourism and they are making improvements around the American Dam. He suggested that perhaps the two groups could make it a bi-national effort. Pablo stated that the group was working with CILA and was applying for three different kinds of funding.

4. Funding Proposals in Process

Sue informed the Committee that the IWMP proposal would not be submitted under the NRI program due to the early deadline. She added that the IWMP (as approved by the MAC/SC) would be sent to designated parties in west Texas and southern New Mexico. She asked Kevin to update his project in the Plan. She reminded the Committee that it had decided at its October 29 meeting not to respond to the RFP for the EPA Watershed Initiative since it was focused on short-term projects and on market-based incentives. The Council's previous proposal to that program involved salinity issues in the watershed and had some flaws and it was deemed inadvisable to resubmit that same proposal.

Nancy distributed copies of the two Border 2012 pre-proposals (due by December 31, 2003) and the Draft Cooperative Agreement with El Paso Water Utilities (EPWU). The first Border 2012 pre-proposal involves the Watershed Council as a partner with the City of El Paso regarding illegal dumping into storm water drains. The second Border 2012 pre-proposal involves the Watershed Council as a partner with the Texas Agricultural Experiment Station regarding waterborne pathogens. Zuping added that it involved scientists at NMSU and data collection for GIS coverage. Sue mentioned a possible future grant proposal idea regarding groundwater and environmental education.

A draft of the new Cooperative Agreement with EPWU was reviewed, but there was no budget attached. Dan moved to approve the agreement, provided it was for at least \$50,000 and that Burkstaller's name be removed. Ed Hamlyn seconded, adding that the budget could be negotiated by Council officers. The motion passed unanimously. Chris moved that the Committee approve continuing with the two Border 2012 proposals. Beatriz seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

5. Comments on the IBWC Draft EIS

Kevin explained that he wanted to be sure that the Council submitted comments to IBWC about the Draft EIS in a timely manner. Doug stated that there would be enough time to review the document after its notice is published by EPA in the Federal Register. He reassured the Committee that it would receive its copies prior to that and that the length of review time not based on length of document. Conrad asked who was on the list to receive the document. Doug estimated that most of the Committee was on the list. He said that most people would probably download it from the IBWC web site. The following Committee members were designated to review the EIS and prepare comments for review at the next Executive Committee meeting: Bea, Kevin (chair), Brian, Dan, and Sue. At that meeting it will be determined whether to comment as the Council as a group, or whether to include a note to the effect that "the following members are in concurrence with these comments..." in order to avoid conflicts of interest.

6. Phase II of the Coordinated Database/GIS

Chris has developed the Scope of Work (SOW) for Phase II of the Coordinated Database/GIS project. At this date, it includes importing the project into ARCIMS, using GPS field verification, exploring automated ftp routines that could automatically ship data to a receiving server, identifying groundwater data sources, and preparing a Phase II final report and workshop. He said that the Technical Committee had a conference call on November 14, 2003, during which it was determined not to pursue a modeling component in Phase II. Chris added that he had agreed to present the SOW to the New Mexico/Texas Water Commission Management Advisory Committee and the Regional Sustainable Water Project Steering Committee (MAC/SC) at its meeting on December 18. He requested that Ari help to clarify the degree of commitment of EPWU and that Nancy help revise the original cooperative working agreement and then incorporate the SOW.

Conrad suggested the Technical Committee present the SOW and its budget to the PdNWC Executive Committee for approval prior to presenting the complete proposal to the MAC. It was established that the Technical Committee will provide input and revise the SOW for Phase II and that the revised SOW and its budget will be presented to the PdNWC officers for approval.

7. Council Activities

Nancy offered a Membership Form to Pablo Romero before he left the meeting. She reported the Executive Committee that she would be visiting several groups to establish contacts for the Council. It was decided that the PdNWC officers would first approve any letters to be sent. Nancy provided copies of the list of current members of the PdNWC that will be posted on the Council's website. It was requested that she denote members of the Executive Committee with an asterisk. She also provided copies of the current letterhead for review.

8. Budget

Nancy presented the budget as of November 30, 2003.

9. Meetings Recently Attended

Nancy attended the American Heritage River Initiative Conference (EPA) in El Paso on November 3 and 4 and announced that information on the Coordinated GIS/Database was highlighted in the EPA's "State of the River 2003" report. She also attended the New Mexico Water Planning 2003 Conference (WRR) in Albuquerque on November 5 and 6 and learned about the Santa Fe Community College Water Technology certificate program.

Ping announced that he had attended the Far West Texas Water Planning Group meeting in Alpine on December 2, where over 400 people met to protest the water leasing program proposed by the General Land Office (GLO). He said the topic involved water beneath land near the Rio Grande and that there were concerns about restoration of the "Forgotten River," which could be affected by the potential pumping of groundwater. Kevin asked about the public hearings dates and requested that he be informed of any subsequent meetings with the GLO. Ping also announced that URGWOM met on November 13 to work on the new model for water planning.

Valerie announced that she gave a presentation at the American Heritage River Conference and at the Groundwater Institute for Teachers, which wants to have the PdNWC present again next year. Rosemary announced the grand opening of 4.6 miles of the new Rio Grande Riverpark.

10. Upcoming Meetings that will be Attended

Conrad will be attending the URGWOM meeting on December 11. He will let Nancy know when the minutes are available and she will notify the Executive Committee.

11. Date and Location of the Next Executive Committee meeting

It was determined that the next Executive Committee meeting would be on January 26, 2004, at 1:00 pm at SWEC offices.

12. Other Business

Valerie informed the Committee that the New Mexico-Texas Water Commission has a new domain name, <http://www.nm-txwatercomm.org/>, and is providing a link to the PdNWC website and to the Coordinated Database. She added that there is a visitor tracker at the Commission's website.

Doug informed the Council that, regarding development of Resler Arroyo, the City Plan Commission (CPC) denied the developer a variance, but that the issue may be on their agenda for January 29, 2004. He added that the developer will be required to do 404 permitting through the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers. Doug invited Committee members to the Coronado Neighborhood Association meetings on January 20 and 27 at the clubhouse right off of Resler.

13. Adjournment

Julie moved for adjournment, Chris seconded, and the group voted unanimously to adjourn.