

**Pecos River Ecosystem Advisory Committee
Minutes for the Meeting of May 19, 2005**

**Monahans Convention Center
400 East 4th Street
Monahans, Texas**

Attendance:

Cindy Breiten	Upper Pecos SWCD #213
Bill Davis	Texas Forest Service
Philip Dickerson	Texas Parks and Wildlife
Sam Massey	Ward County Judge
Wayne Belzer	IBWC
Ronnie Cooper	Pecos County WID #3
Peggy McCulloch	Concerned Citizen
Michael McCulloch	Pecos County WID #3
Charles Hart	Texas Cooperative Extension
Derek Scasta	TCE-Ward County
Calvin Gerke	Upper Pecos SWCD #213 and Ward County WID #1
Alan Zeman	Reeves County WID #2
Bill Thompson	Texas Cooperative Extension
Cory Horan	TCEQ

Copies of the final version of the EPA Grant Application were distributed. Additional copies are available and can be requested from Cindy Breiten at 432-445-3196 Ext. #3. Also available for the meeting were copies of the agenda, the financial statement and the minutes from the April meeting. Copies of any of this information may also be requested.

The meeting was called to order by Dr. Michael McCulloch

• **Clean Rivers Program.**

Dr. Charles Hart introduced Wayne Belzer. He is an Environmental Protection Specialist for the IBWC and is present for this meeting today to discuss the Clean Rivers Program. The Clean Rivers Act was passed in 1991 in Senate Bill 818. TCEQ and IBWC work together on this program. They take a watershed approach by basin and testing is done to determine impacts on the river. There are monitoring stations at Red Bluff, Orla, Mentone, Pecos, Girvin and Sheffield. There are also continuous monitoring stations at several sites.

Testing Parameters

- Conventional – anions and cations, PH, temperature, flow, & weather
- Bacteria – E Coli and fecal coliform
- Metals – total and dissolved
- Toxicity
- Sediment Metals and Organics
- Fish Tissue

Impairments and concerns at Red Bluff are nitrates and salinity and on the Pecos River - high salinity.

A website is available for information on the study area, water quality data, basin summary, highlights reports, planning agencies, and partners. Also available on the website is Mr. Belzer's contact information. The website address is www.ibwc.state.gov/CRP/Welcome.html.

Discussion Session:

Mr. Belzer was asked if there is any data taken from the Pecos River in New Mexico. He said that one location is included in the testing. Another topic for discussion was how often samples are taken at Red Bluff. They are taken four to six times per year. The members of this committee believe that they need to be taken more frequently in this area, preferably monthly. Alan Zeman asked if continuous monitoring stations could be installed. Three things are needed in order to get stations installed which are:

1. Available Funds
2. Desire of Input
3. Maintenance Personnel

This is an important request since we need to know about the quality of the water we are receiving from New Mexico. Samples also need to be taken at the state line. Mr. Belzer will take this request to TCEQ to see what can be done. Also, Mr. Belzer discussed the herbicide and pesticide data that will be taken from the river at the beginning of the new fiscal year in September of 2005.

- **Pecos Basin Assessment Program**

Charlie introduced Bill Thompson. The funding for this program is provided by the Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board through the EPA – Clean Waters Act. The agencies involved are the Texas Cooperative Extension, Texas Agricultural Experiment Station, Texas Water Resources Institute and IBWC. The need is that the Pecos River is the largest U. S. river sub-basin flowing into the Rio Grande and accounts for 11% of stream flow and contributes 29.5% of salt. The program objectives are:

1. Assess Physical Features of the Pecos River Basin
2. Communications
3. Monitoring
4. Long term assessments

Three segments that are being looked into are:

- 1) Task 1 – Basin Assessment
 - a) Identify Physical Features
 - b) Aspects
 - c) Environment, Social, Economic Inventories
- 2) Task 2 – Educational Programming
 - a) Publications
 - b) Summary of Approach to Monitoring

- c) Detailed Summary
 - d) Educational Meeting
 - 1. Information Manual
 - 2. Skill Developing
 - 3. Discovery
 - 4. Public Comment
- 3) Task 3 – Monitoring Program
- a) Develop a Quality Assurance Project Plan
 - b) Water Quality Monitoring (Quantity and fate of water salvage due to control)
- 4) Task 4 – Watershed Management Plan
- a) Develop Plan
 - b) Modify
 - c) Final Plan
 - d) Submit to Water Board

The website for more information on this program is <http://pecosbasin.tamu.edu>.

Currently being worked on is a mail out that will go to landowners which is a survey requesting opinions of various issues regarding the Pecos River. This website will be provided and the landowner will be asked to go to the survey and complete. The survey will be targeting primarily Texas landowners as their input is needed. The survey will be asking for their county, occupation (farmer or rancher), practices, salt sources ranking, and ranking their use of water (where the value of water lies).

The cutoff for the surveys will be the end of June and an assessment of opinions and numbers will be gathered. The results will be provided by county agent, press release, and direct mailing. Landowner information was provided by Cindy Breiten and will be put into a data base and sent back to her. This data base can be used for any other landowner contacts that may be needed, such as notification dates for the burn of the dead salt cedar. Survey results will be published and summarized sometime in July. There will be a link on the website to obtain the results.

Contact Information regarding this program may be directed to:

Will Hatler, Project Coordinator
P.O. Box 1298
Ft. Stockton, Texas 79745
Phone – 432-336-8585
Fax – 432-336-3813
E-mail – whatler@ag.tamu.edu

Historical data is another project that is coming soon. Information will be requested from the water districts such as the amount of irrigated acres in each year and how these acres were irrigated. They will be interested in obtaining this information as far back as it is available.

- **Burn Report by Bill Davis**

Bill Davis is planning on having the two acre test area complete before the June meeting. He will notify Cindy Breiten of the date so that she can make the proper notifications.

- **BOR Easement Update by Alan Zeman**

Neither Alan Zeman nor Bill Davis has heard an update on this matter. Alan will make contact with BOR.

- **Soil and Water Conservation Board Brush Program Funding Texas Legislative Session**

Charlie has been talking with Denise Gentsh regarding this funding. There is supposed to be 1.7 million dollars set up for the next two years for brush funding. \$300,000.00 has been added and ear tagged for the burn project. This funding has been looking doubtful, but it seems that the letters that we have all sent to the Legislature may have done some good because it is looking better. If this money does come through, that would result in a total of 2 million dollars. The burn money which would go through the Texas Forest Service would take care of our cost share for the EPA Grant, if funded. We should know the decision on the \$300,000.00 in the next twelve days. The good thing about this funding is that it will be coming from the general revenue fund and will be available September 1st.

- **EPA Grant Update**

The final grant application has been submitted and copies are available. Larry Brown did a great job on this application and everyone that helped with the letters of support did a good job as well. We ended up with several really good support letters and we would not have received these without a lot of effort. Thanks to everyone that helped with this part of the application process. Also, the letters of commitment that we received were an important and vital part of the application. All of these letters are very much appreciated.

- **County Judges and Commissioners Courts**

During the last meeting, planning a workshop was discussed. Judge Shuster, from Pecos County is going to do some letter writing and some preliminary planning. We will need to consider what the main talking point will be. Presentations can be planned by Michael McCulloch, Charlie Hart, Larry Brown, Bill Davis and others. Charlie suggested consideration of what the main objective of the workshop will be and make plans from there. One reason for the workshop will be to get input from all of the counties that are along the river, so the county judges and commissioners will be invited, as well as cities and SWCDs. We will be conducting discussions and presentations in order to educate and update everyone on what is going on with the Pecos River Project. It is very important to have these counties support the Project when we need to have a legislative letter writing campaign and also when monetary support is needed. This Project is important to each of our counties and our citizens and we all need to be involved to do all we can to accomplish the goals for the Pecos River. The Pecos City Manager is interested in this project. He provided a letter of support for the grant application and has talked with Alan about the Project. Cindy Breiten will contact Judge Shuster about the status of his letters. Ronnie Cooper will talk with Judges Shuster, Massey and Henderson to ask their opinions and get feedback on planning the workshop. An educational presentation should be held first. After

further discussion, the tentative theme of the workshop will be “**The Future of the Pecos River**”. The workshop plans will be discussed further during next month’s meeting.

- **Long Range Plan/Plan of Action**

Larry Brown attended several of the water district meetings this month to meet with individual members to discuss and get feedback for the Project’s Long Range Plan and Plan of Action. He is currently working on this and will meet with this committee on June 16, 2005.

- **BOR Conservation Grants**

Information about these grants was distributed to the participants of this meeting. Larry Brown supplied this information and requested that it be forwarded to the water districts. This is an opportunity for water districts to apply for financial assistance for demonstration programs and pilot projects to promote and implement improved water management and conservation. Also for planning, designing, and constructing improvements that will conserve water, increase water use efficiency, or enhance water management through measurement or automation, at existing water supply projects within the 17 western states. The due date for applications is June 20, 2005. To access the full announcement, interested parties may go to:

<http://www.fedgrants.gov/Applicants/DOI/BOR/UC820/05-SF-40-2369/Grant.html>

Or contact: Lila Duffin, Grant Specialist, Phone 801-524-3647, Fax 801-524-3857 or e-mail lduffin@us.usbr.gov

Larry Brown has offered to assist with and/or proof any applications any of the water districts may wish to submit. Anyone that is interested in assistance may contact Cindy Breiten at 432-445-3196 Ext. #3 or upperpecos213@hotmail.com.

- **Carlsbad Project Vegetation Management Program**

Marsha Carra is the Project Coordinator for this program and it would be an advantage to our project to request information. Alan Zeman attended their last meeting and he will contact to request Cindy Breiten’s e-mail be added to her contact list. Philip Dickerson also requested the website be forwarded to him. The website address is:

<http://www.usbr.gov/uc/albuq/library/eaba/saltcedar/saltcedar.html>

Marsha Carra can be reached at 505-462-3602 or by e-mail: mcarra@uc.usbr.gov

Mailing address: Bureau of Reclamation
Attn: Marsha Carra
555 Broadway NE
Albuquerque, New Mexico 87102

- **Pecos River Ecosystem Project Website**

Michael McCulloch asked the group about the Project having a website and how beneficial it would be. Charlie Hart said that there is a separate link to the Pecos River Ecosystem Project on the <http://pecosbasin.tamu.edu> website. Additional information can be added to this link so that

there is a place to keep up to date with what is going on. Charlie will supply a brief history and Cindy Breiten can forward him the past meeting minutes so that they can be added. Also, the agenda can be posted every month for the meeting as well as upcoming events. Cindy also suggested that biological control information be posted. Charlie suggested that any ideas about the website be e-mailed to him.

- **Biological Control Test Areas**

Charlie Hart distributed information on “Biological Control Using a Leaf Feeding Beetle as a Management Tool for Control of Saltcedar”. This information was reviewed and will be posted on the website. Mark Muegge is the entomologist that is working on this program. There will be test areas on the Pecos River where cages will be set up with the insects. Charlie said that he will request that Mr. Muegge attend an advisory committee meeting periodically so that he can let us know what the status of the project is and test results. These areas will be parts of the river that have never been sprayed and other areas where there have been re-sprouts. He will decide where these cages will be set. Any concerns or ideas about the biological control program, please contact Charlie Hart or Mark Muegge.

Also discussed during this time were the Colorado and the Canadian Rivers and what the statuses of their projects are. The Colorado River did not spray last year because of premature yellowing. They have not been able to spray at all yet because of this problem. This same problem happened to the Pecos River in 2003. If the saltcedar begins to turn yellow before it is time, there is no need to spray chemical, because it would not be effective. Saltcedar has to be sprayed when it is green and healthy for the chemical to be able to do its job. The Canadian River has not yet been able to spray either for the same reason and their funding issues are up in the air right now. The Canadian River Authority is the sponsoring agency for the Canadian River Project.

J. W. Thrasher is on vacation, so any reports that he has will be discussed at the June meeting.

- **Financial Report by Cindy Breiten**

The report was available and was discussed. The report will be forwarded to the water districts that did not have a representative present at the meeting. The proposal for Larry Brown will be reviewed to check when the next payment is due to him. Anyone that is interested in obtaining a copy of this report may contact Cindy Breiten at upperpecos213@hotmail.com.

The next meeting will be June 16, 2005 at 1:00 PM at the Monahans Convention Center in Monahans, Texas. Anyone that is interested in the Pecos River Ecosystem Project is encouraged to attend. The Advisory Committee meets on a monthly basis the 3rd Thursday of the month.

The meeting was adjourned.

Minutes prepared by Cindy Breiten

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