

*Pecos River Ecosystem Advisory Committee
Minutes for the Meeting of June 16, 2005*

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

Attendance:

Cindy Breiten	Upper Pecos SWCD #213
Bill Davis	Texas Forest Service
Michael McCulloch	Pecos County WID #3
Charles Hart	Texas Cooperative Extension
Calvin Gerke	Upper Pecos SWCD #213 and Ward County WID #1
Alan Zeman	Reeves County WID #2
Larry & Charlotte Brown	Grant Writer and Consultant
Woody Irving	Bureau of Reclamation
Si Miyamoto	Texas Agricultural Extension Service
Tom Nance	Ward County WID #1
Tina Hagy	Senator Madla's Office
Ethel G. Allgood	Ward County WID #3
Will Hadler	Texas Cooperative Extension
Harlan Hopper	Loving County
Schuyler Wight	Concerned Citizen
Greg Larson	TCEQ

Available for the meeting are copies of the agenda, the financial statement and the minutes from the May meeting.

The meeting was called to order by Dr. Michael McCulloch

- **Burn Report**

Bill Davis reported that due to the wild fires, they have not been able to work on the test plot burn. He is hoping for next week, approximately the 23rd or 24th. He will notify whenever he is ready to begin the burn.

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

The funding for the spraying will provide the match for the EPA Grant if funded. The money that had been set aside for the burning did not go through. Before the session was over, this money was cut. Just a note: This funding would have provided all of the in-kind for the EPA Grant, if funded and it would have allowed all of the dead salt cedar that is ready for burning to be eliminated. It is crucial that the dead salt cedar be removed as soon as possible, since this is going to become a major problem in the case of a flood.

- **Clean Rivers Program – Red Bluff Continuous Monitoring Station**

Last month, a request was made for TCEQ to install a water quality monitoring station at the state line. They have agreed to do since the funding is available. Monthly maintenance will be needed and Charlie Hart has agreed to take care of. Also, Charlie will be attending a Red Bluff board meeting to discuss this with them. Also, Ronnie Cooper and Upper Pecos SWCD have offered assistance. The equipment has been ordered and will be installed on the state line or slightly above the lake. This station will provide a beneficial source of data and this data will be available on the website. If testing needs to be done for specific nitrates, metals, herbicides, etc., they will need to know ahead of time.

- **Salinity Issues in the Upper Pecos River in Texas**
- **Seichii Miyamoto – Researcher with the Texas Agricultural Experiment Station – El Paso Research Center**

Charlie Hart introduced Mr. Miyamoto and he gave his presentation on the preliminary results of his work on the Pecos River. He has also done extensive work on the Rio Grande. Some of the questions that resulted from his Pecos River work are:

- * Why is the river so salty?
- * Types of salts involved and where?
- * What to do about it?

Studies can be divided into two different phases:

- * Phase I: Identify Salt Sources
- * Phase II: Identify Specific Sources and Locations of Salt

Studies consist of reviewing the geology and geohydrology, analyzing the stream flow and the salinity records, and conducting sampling. An informative publication on the Pecos River is by E.R. Harrington published in 1957, which is titled “ Sinkholes, Bottomless Lakes on the Pecos River”. Analysis of USGS Data has been taken from eleven different gauging stations to provide data on the sources of salt and the seasonal changes in the flow. Salt comes in during the irrigation season, but salt coming into Red Bluff has decreased since 1961. Water quality data is taken from eleven different sites: Malaga, Delaware Creek, Red Bluff Inlet Red Bluff Outlet, Salt Creek, Orla, Mentone, Pecos, Monahans, Girvin, and Sheffield. Bank salinity is critical for the maintenance of bank vegetation. Mr. Miyamoto provided a chart showing the salinity of stream flow and soil saturation extract of the soil samples collected on March 8, 2005 at the Texas Clean Rivers Program monitoring stations. Impacts of irrigation (reduced streamflow), salinity of the river flow, and the impact on Amistad International Reservoir are studied. Potential solutions in theory are water flow from the Rio Grande to the Red Bluff and beyond, minimize salt dissolution, and to maintain the bank overflow to keep the Pecos River alive.

Monitoring stations were discussed and active monitoring stations are Coyanosa and Pecos. Michael McCulloch requested that Imperial Reservoir be included.

- **Larry Brown – Long Range Plan/Plan of Action
EPA Grant Update**

The last word from the Governor's office is that there were ten applications submitted. Three of these will be sent to regional level. Our project is not exactly what the EPA was looking for, but it is still in the running. Our application did have more letters of support than any other application and it is just a matter of process from here on out. We probably won't hear anything about the regional level results until September and then those will go to the national level.

Larry has been working on the Plan of Action outline. This will include visions of things that need to be done and obstacles that are keeping these things from happening. Copies of the surveys that need to be distributed to the water district board members were given to Cindy Breiten and the results can be mailed to her. These surveys will assist Larry in ideas for the long term plan.

Also, the landowner surveys that can be taken on the website are coming in. So far, 40 surveys have been completed from Loving County to Val Verde counties. Charlie Hart reviewed the results that have been submitted and out of the farmers and ranchers that have participated, salt cedar is what is affecting the Pecos River more than anything else. The survey questionnaires also went to every newspaper in the basin and also were on radio spots. After July 1st, the total results can be seen on the website.

- **BOR Conservation Grants**

Water Districts that wish to submit a grant can contact Larry Brown if they would like for him to review their grant application.

- **Pecos River Ecosystem Workshop**

Ronnie Cooper and Charlie Hart met with Judge Shuster and Commissioner Kent from Iraan yesterday, the 15th to discuss planning the workshop. The purpose is to discuss with all of the county judges and commissioners along the Pecos River the past, present and the future of the Pecos River Ecosystem Project. Their ideas and opinions will be discussed to put towards the long range plan. Also, their support is needed to make this project a success. It is important for all of the county governments to come together. A list of questions will be sent out with the invitations and these questions with answers will be requested to return to Charlie Hart before a certain date, so that concerns are known before the workshop. There may be equipment and labor that the counties can assist with, their legislative and monetary support is needed and also how to improve communications needs to be known. A date and a proposed agenda for the day were discussed. Proposed dates are the 23rd, 25th or the 30th of August. The agenda will begin with an overview of the project: the assessment program, the burning, biological control, etc. There will be experts on hand to answer questions during the question and answer session, lunch and a golf tournament in the afternoon. Pecos County will sponsor the event. The final agenda and plans can be finalized and approved during the meeting July 21st and then the invitations can be mailed.

- **Pecos River Ecosystem Project Website**

Charlie Hart has put the minutes, the purpose and the mission, pictures, committee members involved, the EPA Grant Proposal, and prescribed burning information on the website. Mark Muegge is working on the biological control topic to be submitted also. In July, the results from the survey will also be available.

- **Biological Control Test Areas**

A site is ready to be established since the entomologist has the insects ready. Charlie Hart has suggested up river to set up the mesh tent cages for insect release. Populations will be built up and then the cages will be moved elsewhere. A spot will be selected between Business 20 and I-20. Road access will be needed for weekly checks. The landowner will need to be located using the maps.

- **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. Nothing had changed from last month's report. The first Upper Pecos meeting in August, Larry Brown will need a payment of \$1,500.00. Anyone that is interested in obtaining a copy of this report may contact Cindy Breiten at upperpecos213@hotmail.com.

The next meeting will be July 21, 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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