

Pecos River Ecosystem Advisory Committee

January 19, 2006

*Monahans Convention Center
400 East 4th Street
Monahans, Texas
1:30 PM*

Attendance:

Cindy Breiten	Upper Pecos SWCD #213
Michael McCulloch	Pecos County WID #3
Alan Zeman	Reeves County WID #2
Greg Huber	Pecos Valley RC&D
J.W. Thrasher	Pecos River Compact Commissioner
Bill Roberts	Trans Pecos Water Trust
Tina Hagy	Senator Madla's Representative
Charlie Hart	Texas Cooperative Extension
Greg Larson	TCEQ
Ronnie Cooper	Pecos County WID #3

The meeting was called to order by Dr. Michael McCulloch.

Last year, the Upper Pecos SWCD #213 submitted a grant application to the EPA Grant Watershed Program. New Mexico also submitted an application. Neither of the projects was approved, so this year both Texas and New Mexico are discussing submitting a joint proposal. A meeting has been scheduled for the 23rd of this month at 10:00 AM at the Carlsbad SWCD office. Charlie Hart, Alan Zeman, Cindy Breiten, Michael McCulloch, and Larry Brown will be attending this meeting and will be joining Aaron Curbello and Judy Bock. The joint application and what steps need to be taken and what work will need to be done will be discussed. The outcome of this meeting will be discussed further at the next advisory meeting.

The Intrastate Stream Commission Special Hearing is going to be held March 9, 2006 at 6:00 PM in Pecos at the reeves County Civic Center. J.W. Thrasher will find out what the

name of the presentation will be and invitations will be sent out to all of the irrigation districts, the Upper Pecos Board members, the Trans Pecos SWCD, and all on the mailing list for the advisory committee. Notices will be put in the Monahans, Pecos, and Ft. Stockton papers and Charlie Hart knows of a contact with Livestock Weekly he can communicate with. The presentation will be regarding plans and resolutions and how they are going to implement these plans having to do with surface water and acre feet, water deliveries, water storage, reservoirs and releases and when releases are required to be made to Texas.

On the monitoring planning topic, Red Bluff is not renewing their USGS contract since Malaga Bend project is not going on. We would have to supply our own housing and would need estimates from Greg on installation and grab samples. On the yearly maintenance, we have an estimate of approximately \$30,000.00 per year for one station. A logical place to have the station is where the Red Bluff gauges are. If we were to operate it ourselves, we would need to get a New Mexico Permit. Possibly the best way to go about it would be to tie in with the USGS gauge. Further discussion will be held regarding this subject later on.

On the Corps of Engineers Request for Study, there has been no further response from the first contact made, so J.W. Thrasher suggested calling Deb Foley with the Corps. She would be the person to contact about this request anyway.

On the Pecos River burn, the Forest Service is still fighting fires and there are burn bans all over the State of Texas. This test burn will probably be put on hold for quite a while. It may be spring before this can be planned again.

On the Plan of Action and the Long Term Management, Larry Brown is still working on this. Charlie Hart has sent him the information he needs to get this completed. This needs to be a step by step management plan similar to the one that the New Mexico project has. Larry has indicated that he will not be quite ready for the Upper Pecos SWCD Feb meeting. He will be contacted for an estimate of a completion date.

The Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) are small grants with the NRCS that we may apply for to develop strategies for prescription for burning. It will help to burn five or six miles and develop techniques. It would be a good start on the burn plan anyway if scaled down and orient it to research. The deadline is March 6, 2006. The grant specifics are being reviewed and it would be a good one to get if it is written correctly. The grants are for up to \$75,000.00. Charlie Hart and Larry Brown will visit about the grant application. This grant would be a good one for funding to do the burn and to develop a prescription. Also, we could do surveys on regrowth and what biomass is the best fuel component, etc. Other grant opportunities discussed are foundations the Greg Huber located for us. These applications require the 501(C)3, so we will start working

on these when we get the filings complete. Another grant that has been discussed is a 319 grant, but the Pecos Basin Watershed is already receiving 319 Money.

A prescribed burn meeting is still scheduled for March 1, 2006 in Fort Stockton. Details will be provided.

The Pecos Basin Symposium that was previously scheduled for March has been postponed until June. It has been suggested that the symposium be more targeted toward landowners instead of technical topics. At this point, it has been put on hold to have more time to prepare. It would be a better idea to have half day meetings in more areas for smaller target groups and then have a bigger, more technical symposium later. TCEQ can get money for advertising a project like this. Members of this committee can approach Mike Mecke regarding more landowner involvement. This way, we could find out what their issues are and what they would like to see happen. All of these smaller meetings could be followed up with a symposium. These smaller meetings can be held in Pecos, Imperial, Iraan, Sheffield and others. The purpose could be for landowner opinion for the river and the watershed as a whole. A good time would be in September or October before the legislature meets in November. Mike Mecke could start coming to the advisory committee meetings and work on finding co-sponsors. Tina Hagy said that Senator Madla may be a co-sponsor and Bill Roberts said that the Trans Pecos Trust could be a sponsor also.

On biological control, a spring release is being planned. The entomologist is still checking into sites. Mark Muegge will be invited to a meeting soon, so sites can be discussed further.

Alan Zeman, Michael McCulloch, Ronnie Cooper, J.W. Thrasher, and Cindy Breiten met with Rocky Rives this morning at his office to discuss the filing of the 501(C)3. He has agreed to do the filing for us with the Internal Revenue Service and the State. The main purpose of this is to broaden the funding resources. All of the foundations that offer grant opportunities require the 501(C)3. Bill Roberts offered his experiences since he is the Executive Director with the Trans Pecos Trust. He said that there has been nothing negative about his experiences. Discussion was held on who could not be on the board which would be state or federal employees. Bill said that the two corporations could compliment each other and should be able to work together. The name that has been decided is the Pecos River Watershed Restoration, Inc. The steps were reviewed and Rocky Rives will be the registered agent. Also, the organization of the 501(C)3 will be a good start for the symposium. There are a lot of good reasons to take these steps which are grant opportunities, donations are tax deductible, and will be helpful for other agencies to work with as a 501(C)3. The by-laws are being worked on by Ronnie, Alan, Michael, and Cindy. The New Mexico Alliance and the Trans Pecos Trust by-laws will be good ones to go by. A suggestion was made that a board member be from each county

in the watershed. The cost of the filing fees will be approximately \$1,500.00, so discussion was held on where to get donations and administrative costs. Ronnie, Alan, and Michael are going to be checking on donations. Greg Huber is going to make appointments with the water districts to explain and discuss the 501(C)3. After the organization is filed, it would be a good idea to put out press releases. Also, the Upper Pecos will need to have a motion approving the forming of the 501(C)3. Also, the money that is in the Pecos River Ecosystem Project account will be discussed.

So, the main work right now needs to be the by-laws and the Articles of Incorporation. The purpose is for the IRS determination.

The meeting was adjourned. The next meeting will be on February 23, 2006.

Minutes Prepared by Cindy Breiten.