

MINUTES
MEETING OF THE NEW MEXICO\TEXAS WATER COMMISSION
MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE (MAC) AND
THE REGIONAL SUSTAINABLE WATER PROJECT
STEERING COMMITTEE (SC)
PSB 4TH FLOOR BOARDROOM
1154 HAWKINS, EL PASO, TEXAS
JANUARY 12, 2001
9:00 A.M.

Welcome

John Burkstaller, substituting for Mr. Archuleta, chaired the meeting and welcomed all the attendees. A copy of the sign-in sheet is attached as **Exhibit "A"**. Those members attending from the Commission Steering Committee were as follows:

John Burkstaller, for Ed Archuleta – EPWU
Robert Monday – City of Las Cruces
Art Coykendall – USBR
Brian Hanson – U.S. Fish and Wildlife
John Sproul – Audubon Society
Jerry Leyendecker – Dona Ana County

Tom Bahr – NMSU
Karl Wood – NMSU
Doug Echlin - IBWC
Tony Tarquin – UTEP
Gary Esslinger - EBID
Ari Michelsen – Texas A&M

I. Review and Approval of Minutes from MAC/SC Meeting on November 29, 2000 (MAC/SC)

John Burkstaller chaired the meeting and asked MAC/SC members if they had any comments on the November 29 MAC/SC minutes. John Sproul had one correction on page 3, first sentence of the last paragraph of Section IV. He suggested that the word "Environmentally" be inserted before the phrase "Preferred Alternative." No one else had comments.

II. Project Schedule and Planned Activities (CH2M Hill)

Tom Haislip presented a slide showing CH2M Hill's key activities performed as of the last MAC/SC Meeting:

- * The Record of Decision will be signed and released next Tuesday or Wednesday.
- * Tom Haislip related that on January 4th members of EPWU and IBWC met with Steve Hatch of the Southwest Environmental Center (SWEC) to explain the technical resolution to SWEC's letter expressing project concerns to several agencies. This presentation was given during a meeting set up strictly for this purpose among EPWU, IBWC, and SWEC representatives. The focus of this presentation was a flow analysis for the reach of the Rio Grande between Riverside Dam and Ft. Quitman.
- * Tom Haislip provided this presentation again at this meeting for the benefit of all MAC/SC members.
- * The initial draft of the Environmental Assessment for the Jonathon Rogers Third Party Implementing Contract was put on hold until further notice.

III. Report on the Potential for Sustainable Water Project (SWP) Impacts to Rio Grande Flows Downstream of Ft. Quitman (CH2M Hill/EPWU/IBWC/SWEC)

Tom Haislip gave the presentation prepared in response to the December 5th letter from Steve Hatch (attached as **Exhibit “B”**). Tom prefaced his presentation by saying that the presentation dealt mainly with an analysis of flows below Riverside Dam, and that Steve Hatch believed that the EIS showed a reduction in flows in this section of the river.

After giving the presentation, Tom requested any questions, and Steve Hatch asked why was the reach between Riverside Dam and Fort Quitman was not modeled. Tom Haislip answered that there was no reason to believe that any of the alternatives would cause a change in flow below Riverside Dam, because there was no mechanisms exhibited by the project alternative that would suggest such changes in flows. Mr. Hatch asked if doing additional modeling of the reach below Riverside Dam was anticipated. Tom answered that no, no additional modeling would be done as far as the SWP was concerned. Tom suggested, however, that the IBWC may be able to do some of this modeling as part of their rectification EIS. John Burkstaller then asked Doug Echlin if modeling this reach was envisioned as part of the rectification EIS. Doug answered that he believed that it would, but that he could not say for sure since none of the EIS activities had even been funded yet.

John Sproul asked why the estimated reach gain of 55 cfs between Riverside Dam and Fort Quitman was not projected to change in the future. Tom answered that there is no reason to believe that the flows will decrease, and that he feels that future flows may actually increase, because of increased M&I use and less agricultural use. Kevin Bixby stated that he was relieved that the best estimates showed no change in flows, but asked Tom how they could be so confident that this was correct. He asked if this was because of increased re-use of M&I water. Mr. Bixby also mentioned that he had brought up the idea of making effluent available for use by Cd. Juarez at every opportunity during previous MAC/SC meetings, and wondered why this scenario had not been modeled in the EIS. He asked if the EIS could be amended to include this scenario. Tom answered that it was not possible to do this, and that even if this scenario was modeled the same conclusions would be reached (concerning the selection of preferred alternative and associated environmental impacts). Bill Webster stated that the modeling had in fact included some assumptions of slight increases in re-use, and that the effects of selling effluent to Cd. Juarez would need to be analyzed when the right time comes. However, these was no basis for doing so at this time.

Mr. Bixby stated that the 55 cfs flow increase in the reach below Riverside Dam was not in the EIS. Tom Haislip answered that the data was in the EIS, but the analysis was not. Steve Hatch then asked Tom to show him where this was shown. At this point, Tom Haislip reconsidered his statement and agreed that the data showing the 55 cfs increase was not in the EIS either, but Tom added that Steve Hatch was advised of this increase through personal conversations with him and the EPWU and IBWC staff.

Zhuping Sheng mentioned that adding the sale of effluent to Cd. Juarez scenario to the model would entail adding a new feature to the model. John Burkstaller suggested that a separate EA may be required if this type of transfer were proposed.

Sue Watts asked how likely it was that the modeling assumption concerning imported Las Cruces water would actually occur. Tom Haislip explained that the assumption involved effluent flows from the Jornada area in Las Cruces, which obtains water from an aquifer external to the Rio Grande project. Buck Monday added that the assumption was that potentially up to 14,000 acre-feet per year would be obtained from this aquifer, with return flows of approximately 6,000 acre-feet to the river in the form of treated wastewater effluent.

IV. Discussion and Decision on Joint Commission Application for Border Environmental Cooperation Commission (BECC) Certification of the Sustainable Water Project (MAC)

Buck Monday stated that he had not yet gotten any direction (from New Mexico entities) on this issue. He added that he had talked to a few elected officials but hadn't talked to Fernando Macias of BECC yet. However, he did not see why pursuing joint BECC certification would not work. Mr. Monday said that this was his last meeting and that he would be leaving his employment with Las Cruces for a position in Gallup, New Mexico. He advised that Jorge Garcia would take his place.

V. Progress Report on the Adjudication of Water Rights for the Rio Grande Project Area in New Mexico (BuRec.)

John Burkstaller stated that Norm Guame could not make it for this update and that this agenda item would be carried forward into the next MAC/SC meeting.

VI. Winter Snow Pack and Runoff Projection for Rio Grande (Burec.)

Wayne Treers gave a slide presentation on the Rio Grande Project runoff and reservoir content projections (slide handouts attached as **Exhibit C**). Mr. Treers stated that it was likely that they would experience at least an average runoff this year, but that it was still too early to tell. The official forecast is released on February 1st. The current forecast is for end of year storage of 940,000 acre-feet at Elephant Butte reservoir and 42,000 acre-feet at Caballo Reservoir, assuming average runoff for the remainder of the year. The USBR allocated a full supply this year, but may have to allocate less than a full supply next year. There are a number of unknown factors that could affect next year's allocation, such as the whether the irrigation districts will use their full allocations this year, how much credit water will exist for Colorado and New Mexico under the Rio Grande Compact, and the actual runoff volume for this year.

VII. Status Report on the Watershed Council and Announcement of Jan. 12, 2001, Meeting and Guest Speaker (John Sproul)

John Sproul stated that they are continuing to gear up for the Council's first full meeting. The last Council meeting was held after the previous MAC/SC meeting. At this meeting, the participants quickly decided that they needed to have an initial council structure and bylaws, plus technical support services and some idea of the potential mitigation and enhancement measures that will be considered for evaluation. The council will meet again at 1:30 pm this afternoon at IBWC. He encouraged everyone's participation, and their input on potential candidates for membership in the council. John Burkstaller asked if the bylaws were in place. John Sproul answered that Steve had drafted some bylaws for consideration at this afternoon's meeting. John Burkstaller commented that there was plenty of grant money available and encouraged the Council to make an effort to apply for as much of these funds as possible. John Sproul added that he would be preparing a funding request for technical support services to submit to the Commission in the near future.

VIII. Other Business

Dr. Ari Michelsen mentioned that last fall Congress has approved \$3.1 million of funding for irrigation efficiency studies along the border with Mexico to be administered through the USDA Cooperative Research and Extension Program. Some of this money will be used by USDA and

NMSU, but Texas A&M will also apply for part of this money. Tom Haislip stated that Congress had also passed a bill called "CARA Light" to fund all types of environmental projects, and encouraged the Watershed Council to apply for some of these funds. Billions of dollars will be made available, and he believes that no local match funds will be required. The money will be controlled by State governors, so the Council should talk to Governor Perry about it.

John Burkstaller asked the meeting attendees if they had any suggestions on topics for the next meeting, besides the New Mexico adjudication update. Kevin Bixby suggested that Gary Esslinger give an update on the EBID lawsuit. Gary answered that the currently the lawsuit was "just sitting there". He added that they were waiting on a new Commissioner for the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation. John Burkstaller asked John Sproul to give another update on the status of the Watershed Council at the next meeting. John Sproul agreed to do so. Other topics for the next MAC/SC Meeting include a report on regional irrigation efficiency projects by Dr. Ari Michelsen, a status report on the IBWC Canalization Project by Doug Echlin, and Kevin Bixby's summary of the Mesilla Park project proposed by SWEC.

IX. Schedule Next Meeting/Location

The next meeting was scheduled for 10:00 am on Thursday, February 15th, 2001 at the EBID offices in Las Cruces.