

MINUTES
MEETING OF THE NEW MEXICO/TEXAS WATER COMMISSION
MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE (MAC) AND
THE REGIONAL SUSTAINABLE WATER PROJECT
STEERING COMMITTEE (SC)
El Paso Agricultural Research & Extension Center
1380 A&M Circle
El Paso, TX 79927
July 11, 2002
9:00 a.m.

Welcome

Ari Michelsen opened the meeting and had everyone present introduce themselves. A copy of the sign-in sheet is attached as **Exhibit "A"**. Those members attending from the Commission's MAC/SC were as follows:

Doug Echlin – IBWC

Gene Paulk – City of Las Cruces

Garry Esslinger – EBID

Anthony Tarquin – UTEP

Jerry Leyendecker – Dona Ana County

John Burkstaller for Ed Archuleta, EPWU

Karl Wood – NMSU

Dr. Ari Michelsen – Texas A&M

I. Review and Approval of Minutes from MAC/SC Meeting on 6/11/02 (MAC/SC).

Ed Fierro advised that he couldn't include a copy of the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation presentation with the MAC Minutes posted on the website due to its large size. However, he has a copy of the presentation available for anyone who requests it.

Tony Tarquin read the third bullet from Section III of the June 11th MAC Minutes and asked if it read correctly. This bullet reads "Assuming 100% average runoff for the remainder of this year and all of next year, USBR projects a 33.8% reduction in full supply by the end of April of 2003, and 0% reduction in full supply by the end of May 2003." Mike Landis explained that the bullet read correctly and explained that, if 100% of average inflow is assumed, the inflows to the reservoir will exceed the irrigation releases during the spring time period, thereby allowing Reclamation to raise their allotment as the year progresses. Mike also added that this scenario is very optimistic. The June 11th MAC Minutes were subsequently approved as written.

II. Progress Report by the Paso del Norte Watershed Council (PdNWC)
(Ed Kosak, Sue Watts, and/or Ari Michelsen)

Ed Kosak gave an update on the Watershed Council activities:

- He received a few recommendations for Watershed Council field trips and presentations to the Watershed Council. One field trip suggestion was a trip to tour the upper watershed region (i.e. north of Elephant Butte Reservoir) of the Rio Grande. Another one was to take a two day field trip to visit potential Rio Grande restoration sites that have been suggested. Presentations suggested include one to explain the reasons for the large variations in Rio Grande salinity as you proceed south along the river. Also suggested was a presentation on past restoration projects. Mr. Dan Santantonio offered to ask Greg Cunningham, who works for the New Mexico Natural Resource Conservation Service in Albuquerque, to give a presentation on this topic.
- At its last meeting, the Watershed Council Executive Committee voted to add two new members to its Executive Committee – Marilyn Taylor, nominated by Sue Watts, and Carlos Rincon, nominated by

Ed Fierro.

- Doug Echlin of IBWC advised that IBWC had set a target date for publication and distribution of the Canalization EIS between November 12th and the 14th. It will be out for a 45 day public review which will end on December 31st. Public meetings are to be held between December 10th and 12th.
- Ari Michelsen and Bobby Creel are working together on drafting the Coordinated Database Cooperative Agreement and Scope of Work. They plan to have the Agreement ready to present to EPWU within the next 2 weeks. Ari Michelsen corrected this and advised the Agreement will be submitted to EPWU in the next couple of days.
- The Hewlett mapping project has been completed. Bobby Creel had furnished copies of Water Task Force Mapping Project deliverables to all Council meeting attendees. The project was undertaken by New Mexico Water Resources Research Institute (NMWRRI), the Geographical Information Center, the Universidad Autonoma De Juarez, and UTEP. The basic objective of the project was to produce a contiguous map of the Paso Del Norte regions, to include Texas, New Mexico, and Mexico. The scope of work focused on basic “framework data” and water resources data.
- Wetlands Project update - the project is being proposed by four different groups that are pursuing funds from the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) for wetland development and land acquisition. Despite the Council’s vote to support the overall project objectives, it has been determined after numerous conference calls and electronic correspondence that the required proposal materials had not been adequately compiled into one proposal. Also, the budget asked for approximately \$1 million over a three year period, of which only about \$23,000 was designated for project management and indirect costs. The Council felt that this was not sufficient money to pay for the time required to track these projects, handle subcontracts, and generate monthly invoices and reports. Also, because the four projects had not yet been written up as one project, it would be difficult to do so by the July 26th submittal deadline. Ari Michelsen also cited a couple of other problem issues. For example, the support letters from the project proponents still had not been completed, and the sources of water for the wetland projects had not been secured. Therefore, the four proposals were deemed to be incomplete and the Watershed Council determined it could not undertake the role as the sponsor.
- Ed Kosak, with assistance from the Council’s Executive Committee, will be presenting a short report at the Council’s annual meeting on attaining 501(c)(3) status. Carlos Rincon has graciously offered to assist him in this effort.
- The Brochure Committee is continuing work on producing a brochure for the Council. The brochure will be educational in nature, and will not necessarily offer information about the watershed itself. Chris Brown added a suggestion to producing a separate insert that can be placed inside the brochure which would provide contact information on the Council members and not take up space in the brochure itself. A local design contest was also suggested to design the Council’s logo for the brochure. Money from the World Wildlife Fund grant will be used to translate the brochure into Spanish. .
- The annual meeting of the Watershed Council has been scheduled for the 27th and 28th of September. It will coincide with the Mission Possible 2000 conference sponsored by the Paso del Norte Water Task Force. The Watershed Council voted to be a co-sponsor of that conference.
- Ed Kosak announced two upcoming water related meetings-the National Water Policy Summit being held in Washington D.C. on September 17th -18th , and the U.S./Mexico Water Conference being held on September 19th in Santa Fe, New Mexico.
- The next meeting of the Watershed Council Executive Committee will be held on August 16 at TAES in El Paso.

III. Update on the PdNWC-Coordinated Database Project (Ed Fierro, et al.)

Ari Michelsen stated that Ed Kosak and himself had previously touched on this subject. He added that the project will be undertaken by NMSU, NMWRRI, and Texas A&M. These three entities will be

taking the lead roles on this project, and will be seeking additional involvement from both UTEP and Universidad Autonoma de Juarez. The first task will be the creation of a website and the initiation of a coordinated database to make flow data available on that website. The website will be expanded from that point on as data is brought in from a number of federal agencies and other organizations. First year seed money is being provided by EPWU, and the Council is seeking matching funds from the U.S. Corp of Engineers, which has indicated strong interest in providing support for the project. They will also be submitting the Scope of Work for the project to the COE.

IV. Briefing on Draft Strategic Plan of Paso del Norte Water Task Force (PdNWTF) (Karl Wood)

Karl Woods stated that the Paso Del Norte Water Task Force had put together a committee, headed by him, to draft a Strategic Plan. The committee has had two working sessions, on June 11th and June 27th. They have had difficulty including Mexican players. Cd. Juarez hasn't settled on a mayor yet, so a Juarez utility representative hasn't been designated to attend the committee meetings. There has also been a problem with attracting a representative from the Juarez Irrigation District. However, Mr. Oscar Ibanez, representing the Universidad Autonoma de Juarez (UAJ), has attended the meetings. They plan to meet with the Hewlett Foundation leaders on August 12th and 13th, and will have a draft of the Strategic Plan ready to present to them. They plan to finalize the Strategic Plan and Bylaws in August or September.

V. Distribution and Discussion of the New GIS Map of the PdNWTF (NMWRRI)

Bobby Creel gave some background information on the Hewlett GIS mapping project. About a year ago, the PdNWTF had a workshop, and one of the impediments to proper water planning identified at this workshop was the lack of a map with common data linkages that covered both sides of the international border in this region. Therefore, PdNWTF, UTEP, NMSU, and the UAJ put together a proposal to address this issue. The Hewlett Foundation was interested in this proposal and funded the project. The project started in May or June of last year, and finished in May of this year. WRRI now has copies of the product resulting from the project available (basically a report describing the GIS layers as assembled by the project, and copies of the layers themselves on CD-ROM). These layers are also available on NMWRRI's web page. John Kennedy from NMSU was the lead for the project. The other people involved were Alfredo Granados from UAJ and Raed Aldouri from UTEP.

John Kennedy gave a PowerPoint presentation on the Hewlett GIS mapping project (copy attached as **Exhibit "B"**). Bobby Creel passed out copies of the product during the presentation.

During the presentation, Karl Wood asked if a license was required to use the Arc/Info software that is used to view the GIS layers. Mr. Kennedy replied that this Arc/Info software is distributed to the public free of charge and requires no license. However, it only allows viewing of the layer, and cannot be used to do any layer editing or creation of new layers. Ed Fierro asked if the GIS layers had data tables associated with them. Mr. Kennedy answered that they did, but the tables only had very basic data. For example, the layer showing the wells had data on the well locations, but do not have period of record for those wells. Karl Wood asked how old the transportation layer was. Mr. Kennedy advised that the transportation layer only shows major roads, and this data is a little out of date. Plans are to eventually get this layer updated with cooperation from transportation officials. John Burkstaller asked if the project authors had an agenda for performing periodic updates to the GIS layers. Mr. Kennedy replied that this is something that they have proposed but have not yet implemented. This would be a big undertaking but is definitely something that should be done.

After the presentation concluded, Ed Fierro asked if some of the Hewlett Map layers would be utilized for the Watershed Council's Coordinated Database/GIS Project. Mr. Kennedy replied in the affirmative, adding that doing so would save from having to recreate the map layers required.

Jurgen Schmandt asked if this type of mapping project had been done in other parts of the Rio Grande region. Mr. Kennedy answered that he wasn't aware of any other regions that had mapping done to this level of detail for any other sections of the Rio Grande, north or south. Bobby Creel mentioned a watershed mapping project in the San Diego area. The sponsors of this project had expressed an interest in the Hewlett Project and had requested information on how it was being implemented.

Mike Landis stated that Mexico's maps were at a 1:50,000 scale, and wanted to know how the transformation from the 1:100,000 current scale to the proposed 1:24,000 scale would be accomplished. Mr. Kennedy replied that the 1:24,000 scale was just a benchmark. If the proposal to change the scaling does go forward, they may have to settle on a 1:50,000 scale for both sides of the border. However, he is aware that the Cd. Juarez is working on a hydrograph layer within the City limits at a 1 meter resolution. This could result in having El Paso and Cd. Juarez shown at a higher resolution, and the less populated, outer regions of the map shown at a lower resolution. Mike Landis advised that the USGS was getting ready to re-fly the border zone and was trying to get permission from Mexico to include areas further south of the border. Mr. Kennedy stated that they may try to get access to that data when it becomes available, since the data they have now is from 1996. This would help in updating some of their layers, such as the transportation layer which is missing some of the newer roads. Another step in the project is to incorporate layers showing stream flow and water quality.

VI. Report on Potential Impacts of Climate Change on the Paso del Norte Region (Jurgen Schmandt of HARC, or Jerald North of TAMU).

Jurgen Schmandt gave a presentation on long term climatic trends. A copy of the presentation slides is attached as **Exhibit "C"**).

After the presentation, John Burkstaller asked that, given the predictions of more rainfall in the long term, and even though less snow pack is predicted, would the increased rainfall result in an overall increase in run-off? Mr. Schmandt replied that he didn't know the answer to that question. Edd Fifer asked if there had been any work done to determine the relationship between the reduction in the ozone layer and its effect on climatic trends. Mr. Schmandt replied that he didn't think there was a relationship. John Burkstaller stated that Mr. Schmandt had mentioned that the Rio Conchos region below the Rio Grande had not been included in the long term analysis of climatic trends. He asked if, on a qualitative basis, whether rainfall in northern Mexico was predicted to increase also. Mr. Schmandt replied that, from what he had seen, the closer you get to the tropical region, the less likely it is that a precipitation increase will occur.

Ari Michelsen mentioned that there would be a special session at the Integrated Trans-boundary Water Management Conference in Traverse City, Michigan covering a mix of topics on climate change and day-to-day water resources management. This session would be sponsored by the National Science Foundation. One objective of this session will be to look at how to translate the climate change information into useful methods to manage river systems.

VII. Update on Current Water Plans involving Texas A&M, and the Texas and New Mexico Water Resources Research Institutes (Ari Michelsen).

Ari Michelsen started by describing the Rio Grande Basin Irrigation Initiative Project. It is a USDA funded program which has entered its second year of activity. There was an overall project meeting on April 16th and 17th to discuss the current status of the program areas. Program areas range from irrigation system improvements all the way down to farm level improvements, and also look at water quality aspects, institutional aspects, and incentives for irrigation efficiency.

Texas A&M has five scientists receiving funding support from this program and they are working on

several research topics, such as salinity management, water-borne pathogens, bio-remediation, and seepage loss studies. NMSU is currently working on their second year funding, but have not yet allocated their funds to specific research topics. He will hold off on giving a more detailed description of the program pending NMSU funding allocation. Several of these projects are joint projects between the Texas A&M Research Center and NMSU, primarily through their agricultural program. However, they are working to expand the program to include the NMWRRRI. Ari Michelsen also mentioned the groundwater data and modeling initiative being sponsored by the USGS and the three Water Resource Institutes in New Mexico, Texas, and Arizona. Project funding was requested under the Department of the Interior budget, but they have not yet heard if the funding was authorized. The funding request was for five million dollars to be split among the Texas and New Mexico USGS and the three Water Resource Institutes. He should be able to report on the progress of this funding at the next meeting. Edd Fifer asked for verification that this project had nothing to do with a potential groundwater compact between the U.S. and Mexico. Dr. Michelsen affirmed that it had absolutely nothing to do with any ground water compact and was not intended in any way to be used for that purpose. He thanked Mr. Fifer for clarifying that point.

VIII. Other Business

No other business was brought out for discussion.

IX. Schedule Next Meeting/Location

The next meeting was scheduled for 9:30 am, September 10th, at the Las Cruces City Council Chambers. Several agenda items were suggested for the next meeting:

- 1) A report on the Tri-Regional Planning Group Feasibility Study.
- 2) A status report on the Coordinated Database Project.
- 3) An update by the USBR on Rio Grande Project status.
- 4) A report by USBR on the status of its Congressional funding initiatives.
- 6) An update on EPWU's desalination project.
- 7) An update on the Tularosa Basin Desalination Feasibility Study.