

MINUTES
MEETING OF THE NEW MEXICO/TEXAS WATER COMMISSION
MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE (MAC) AND
THE REGIONAL SUSTAINABLE WATER PROJECT
STEERING COMMITTEE (SC)
EL PASO WATER UTILITIES-PUBLIC SERVICE BOARD
1154 HAWKINS
EL PASO, TEXAS 79961
FEBRUARY 21, 2003
9:00 A.M.

Welcome

Mike P. Fahy chaired and opened the meeting on behalf of Mr. Archuleta, who was not able to attend. A copy of the sign-in sheet is attached as **Exhibit "A"**. Those members attending from the Commission's MAC/SC were as follows:

Karl Wood – NMSU	Mike P. Fahy – EPWU, for Ed Archuleta
Ari Michelsen – Texas A&M	Doug Echlin – IBWC
Conrad Keyes – PdNWC	Tony Tarquin – UTEP
Dan Santantonio – City of Las Cruces	

I. Review and Approval of Minutes from MAC/SC Meeting on 1/17/03 (MAC/SC).

Bobby Creel reported an error in the web site address and other minor grammatical corrections in the January 17 minutes. He noted the corrections on a copy of the minutes and handed these to Ed Fierro for him to make the corrections. The meeting minutes were approved pending the revisions.

**II. Progress Report by the Paso del Norte Watershed Council
(Sue Watts, Watershed Council Chair)**

Sue Watts summarized the Council's activities:

- The last Council meeting was held on January 9th and the Council's Coordinator, Ed Kosak, resigned effective February 3. An advertisement for a new Coordinator was published three weeks ago and the Council is in the process of selecting a replacement. The salary for the Coordinator is partially paid through a grant from RiverNetwork, which has granted the Council an extension on the expenditure deadline.
- The Council has also obtained a grant extension from the World Wildlife Fund (WWF). Proceeds from this grant are for developing educational material. The extension was requested because more time was needed to make the outreach materials more effective and better suited for its intended audience.
- The EPA Watershed Initiative Grant has been received by EPA, but the selection process for award of these grants is currently on hold pending passage of the Congressional Budget.
- The PdNWSC brochure is in its final phase and work is being done on finalizing the logo. Mr. Creel is looking into obtaining a separate domain name for the website rather than having it reside within NMWRRI's website domain.
- The Corps of Engineers, Albuquerque Regional Office, has agreed to provide funding to support the coordinated database project, and had requested that the Council sign the URGWOM MOU. The funding would be routed through the NMWRRI and NMSU.

- Valerie Provencio gave a presentation in Albuquerque in January at the AWWA Source Water Protection Symposium in January regarding the Watershed Council and she received very good feedback. After the presentation, there were some questions concerning how the Council had been able to obtain the participation of so many agencies, universities and professionals.
- Jim Stefano will give a presentation in Spokane this summer about the Watershed Council and its structure.
- Inquiries have been made to Senator Bingaman's office about obtaining Congressional funding to develop the Biological Management plan for this stretch of the river. Sue noted that there may be some funding available from this source.
- One of the goals of the Watershed Council was to make it a bi-national group. To date, the Council has not made a strong enough effort to obtain Mexican participation. Dr. Carlos A. Rincón has identified some people in Mexico who would be valuable Council members and he will invite them to attend future Council meetings via e-mail. Mr. Michelsen stated that they have an agreement in effect with the University of Juarez that allows for their assistance with the Coordinate Database Project, so there should be some Mexican involvement there as well. Mike Fahy related that EPWU's Strategic Business Manager and Public Affairs Manager also have mailing lists for contacts in Cd. Juarez.
- The next PdNWSC meeting will be held at 10:00am on Friday, March 28 at the New Mexico Department of Agriculture offices in Las Cruces.
- Mike Fahy asked how many applications were received for the Council's Coordinator position. Ari replied that there had been between 15 and 18 applications submitted.

III. Demonstration of the Coordinated Database Project Website (Chris Brown, NMSU/Bobby Creel, NMWRRI)

Chris Brown gave a live demonstration of the website for the Coordinated Database Project developed by NMSU and NMWRRI staff. He explained the links, layers and tiles developed for the region. The regional watershed map is an ArcIMS layer imported from the Hewlett GIS project. This watershed map includes the entire watershed with the river defined by parallel red borders, although at this point it doesn't extend to the northern and southern reaches of the watershed. Mr. Brown explained that the river outline is broken into segments and by double clicking on a segment; a new larger scale tile map is shown for that segment. These tiles are static images that contain icons representing gauges or sampling points, and when these icons are selected they activate links to other websites which contain data for those locations. Additional tiles still need to be added to cover the northern and southern sections of the watershed. Mr. Brown demonstrated two icons that have links to the EBID website and to the City of Las Cruces website. By the end of the first year of the project they should have a fully functional prototype. Mr. Brown and Mr. Creel discussed the need to adjust the programming code for the website to allow the site to query for the resolution setting of each user's browser, and in this way allow the website to serve the maps to each user in the proper resolution.

At this point, Mr. Brown displayed the latest logo design on the projector. Dan Santantonio explained the logo design process, and then explained what the logo represents. The rationale behind the logo is to correctly identify the Council in its geographic location, and to stress the river as the unifying theme. It also helps to explain the purpose of the Council. Mr. Brown mentioned that his brother-in-law had worked on the design and that the logo is currently displayed on the Council's website. Conrad Keyes stated that he would like to use the logo for stationary letterhead and had recommended finalizing the design.

Mr. Brown mentioned the need to coordinate with URGWOM with respect to adopting their data and

data format requirements. Mr. Michelsen asked where additional monitoring and gauges may be needed. By the end of the first year he would like to consider looking for funds for installing additional monitoring stations. Chris summarized a list of tasks that need to be performed next:

- 1) Resolve the resolution issue on the map sizes.
- 2) A River Icon is needed. Many of the EBID gauge sites are on the river and an icon is needed to make the site work cognitively
- 3) Additional data and gauge names from EBID are needed so the website will use the same labels as the EBID sites.
- 4) Additional water quality data is needed from EBID.
- 5) As the project starts including the southern portions of the watershed in Texas, the IBWC data set needs to be included on the website and more maps tiles covering that region will be needed. EPWU data will also be acquired at that time. Zhuping Sheng offered to assist in assessing EPWU data. Mr. Brown advised that the first thing he will need are the latitude and longitude of the gauging and sampling stations.

Mr. Brown emphasized that building the map is only the first phase of the project and that this is a very labor intensive process. The second phase is building the tables. A discussion followed concerning the use of icon labels and site specific icons, and also of potential future ArcIMS applications on the website, such as giving the user the ability to compute and display the watershed boundaries which contribute drainage to any selected gauge site.

IV. Discussion on Establishing a Committee to Assist with Updating and Maintenance of the Commission's Website (MAC/SC).

Mike Fahy asked whether there were any suggestions regarding providing assistance with the updating and maintenance of the Commission's Website. Bobby Creel replied that the item came about after the demonstration that Chris Brown made at the last meeting of the prototype demo for the MAC website. Bobby had received comments and suggestions from various individuals about the website and he has already incorporated them into the website. However, Bobby feels uncomfortable working alone on this and he suggested that a committee be established to assist him in updating and maintaining the website. He asked for assistance from persons who have had experience with web pages or can advise or assist in any way.

Conrad Keyes suggested an advisory committee. Mr. Creel stated that the committee should be willing to review and help improve on the site in various ways and mentioned the coordinated database project as an example where this type of cooperative effort had been completed successfully. A consensus decision was made to assemble an advisory committee by having the agencies or groups involved with the MAC designate individuals from these respective organizations with the appropriate skills and to name it the "Information Transfer (IT)" Committee. Mr. Creel then explained the web site and invited everyone to examine it. He also requested that only final documents be submitted for posting. He mentioned that he planned to include links to the IBWC website that has the technical memorandums and other reports that were prepared for the Sustainable Water Project EIS.

V. Update on Rio Grande Project 2003 Water Supply and Allocation Process (Wayne Treers, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation)

Wayne Treers distributed the same handouts that were distributed at the January 17, 2003 meeting, but updated to show the February 1 USBR forecast (copy attached as **Exhibit "B"**). Following are

the highlights from his presentation:

- January had some of the warmest weather in quite some time. Consequently, there was virtually no snow in the upper basin during January and snowpack levels continued to deteriorate during that month. Since February 10th, the average snowpack levels have increased somewhat.
- The Spring Runoff Forecast at San Marcial has decreased from 65% of average as of January 1 to 45% of average as of February 1. Mr. Treers expects that the February 15 forecast will be lower than the February 1 forecast. However, since February 15, a couple of storms have passed through and increased the snowpack, so he expects the March 1 forecast to improve.
- The basin has been experiencing the El Nino effect over the last two weeks or so. The southern portion of the jet stream has recently moved north over the basin region. This has caused the precipitation forecasts for February through April to increase by 10 to 20%.
- The unregulated and regulated forecast at San Marcial is 45% and 36% respectively. Projected end of year Elephant Butte reservoir content is 357,000 AF, based on 400,000 AF of releases. Elephant Butte content should bottom out at about 240,000 AF and Caballo Dam at around 10,000 AF in mid-September.
- Final credit water figures for the Year 2002 are 42,800 for Colorado, 265,000 AF for New Mexico, and 8,207 AF of San Juan Chama Water in storage. Conrad asked if it was likely the any credit water would be released. Mr. Treers replied that they had met recently with the Engineer Advisors. Colorado advised that they were projecting no more than 50% runoff, which is not enough water for them to store any water. As a result, they now had a call on the river. What this signifies is that Colorado doesn't anticipate storing any water, and therefore they are not likely to relinquish any credits. With New Mexico, there is a possibility they may relinquish some credits. New Mexico is in the last year of the Silvery Minnow agreement, and there is room in El Vado Reservoir to store some water for this purpose. Therefore, New Mexico may decide to relinquish some credits, although they have not indicated this possibility to USBR.
- The updated allocation as of the end of January, 2003 is 101,562 AF, or 10.90% of a full supply. Mr. Treers doesn't see a significant change in the allocation until the run-off starts in April or May.
- Both Districts have agreed to a release date of March 10th. Both of the Districts and Mexico are looking to shut off releases in mid-April. They don't anticipate asking for another release until the third week of May at the earliest. Depending on the run-off up to that point, EBID has indicated that they may stop their releases by July 1. Dave Brosman advised that he planned to take in some water into the Jonathan Rogers WTP ponds in March – not to distribute but just enough to use to ripen the filters. He predicts he would need to start diverting some surface water in late April or early May to be able to meet demand, and wants to save his water for that period of time when he will need to meet demand. Mr. Brosman advised that once EPWU commits to operating the water plants, there will be pressure to go back to a Stage I drought response plan. Also, he advised that he has received a TDS variance from TCEQ to produce up to 1,500 ppm water. However, because of expected water quality complaints, Mr. Brosman will try to stay under 1,200 ppm under normal circumstances.
- Dave Brosman asked Mr. Treers about his estimate for river flows in July. Mr. Treers replied that in 1978, which was a drought year as well, he didn't believe flows during July had gotten much above 500 cfs, and possibly may have been lower than 500 cfs. He added that another potential problem he sees for EPWU is that currently the Districts are looking at ending their water orders between September 1 and September 15. Mr. Brosman agreed, and stated that he anticipated going into Stage II drought restrictions by September 1.
- Mr. Treers stated that the "Summary Table of Projected Allotments for 2003" now show a narrower range of estimates varying from 15% to 50% of average runoff at San Marcial. The National Weather Service has stated that, in order to get 100% run-off at San Marcial, it would take maybe 150% of average snowpack levels because the ground is so dry in the basins. The

handout shows that USBR's best estimate of runoff is 36% of average, which results in an end of September estimated allocation of 50.9% of average. Dave Brosman suggested, as he did at the prior MAC/SC meeting, that USBR make a final allocation for the year by the end of May. Mr. Treers replied that most of the runoff would have occurred by the end of May, so the June 1 projection should be a good indicator of the final allocation. Dave Brosman advised that the first of May is the date he requires a definite projection. Mr. Treers replied that by May 1 the allocation projections should be down to two lines of projections within a narrower range. Ari Michelsen asked Mr. Treers if he could assign a confidence interval to his projections. Mr. Treers answered that their projections were based on too many variables that he has no control over, so he could not provide such an estimate of confidence levels.

- Mr. Treers advised that a big unknown right now that could affect the allocation is a release of credits. For example, if 100,000 AF worth of credits are released, that could immediately increase the allocation by 10 to 15%.
- A problem that farmers may face if an extended drought is experienced (a 5 year drought for example) is salt build up on their lands caused by the higher salinity of the surface water and groundwater used during drought years. Once the drought is over, farmers may have to allocate some of their surface water simply to leach the salts from their fields.

VI. Other Business

Mike asked if there was any new or old business. The following items were volunteered:

- Doug Echlin asked whether there was a report on the Forgotten River meeting that was held earlier this month. Carlos Rincón replied that this meeting was a preparatory meeting for an upcoming meeting on the Forgotten River to be held in Ojinaga. He suggested that Karen Chapman from Environmental Defense be put on the next agenda and update the committee on the proceedings of this meeting.
- Bert Cortez advised that the Rio Grande Compact Commission meeting will be held at the Hilton in El Paso. March 26 is the day for the reception and March 27 is the day of the meeting.
- The F & W Service has distributed a Biological Opinion on the Middle Rio Grande water operations and flood control for years 2003-2005. The comments will be out by February 28, which is the day before the appellate judges make a decision on the Silvery Minnow.
- Ari mentioned that there is a "Drought & Water on the Border" conference being planned. This conference was initiated by the Paso del Norte Water Task Force and organized by Dr. Andy Swift. The conference is scheduled for March 20 and will be an afternoon/early evening event. The conference will focus on increasing public awareness of the river drought.
- Texas A&M will be holding a Groundwater Education Conference for ground water conservation districts in Austin on March 7th. Ari will distribute the information through Ed Fierro or Mike Fahy as soon as he gets the meeting announcements.
- Carlos Rincón added that Paso del Norte Water Task Force is looking for any informational/public outreach type material that any of the agencies represented in the MAC may have available. They plan to use these material for distribution at the "Drought & Water on the Border" conference in March.

VII. Schedule Next Meeting/Location

The next MAC/SC meeting is scheduled for March 27, 2003 in the EPWU Boardroom at 2:00pm. Six agenda items were suggested for the next meeting:

- 1) Progress Report by Paso del Norte Watershed Council.
- 2) Announcement of representatives from each agency who will be on the Information Transfer (IT) Committee.
- 3) Presentation by EPWU on their Stage II water conservation measures.
- 4) Update on Rio Grande Project 2003 Water Supply and Water Allocation.
- 5) Presentation on the "Forgotten River" by Karen Chapman.
- 6) Presentation on EBID's Drought Management Plan by Gary Esslinger.