

MINUTES

MEETING OF THE NEW MEXICO/TEXAS WATER COMMISSION
MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE (MAC) AND
THE REGIONAL SUSTAINABLE WATER PROJECT
STEERING COMMITTEE (SC)

University of Texas at El Paso
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9:00 A.M.

Welcome

Mr. Archuleta opened and chaired the meeting. 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 – NMWRRI
Tom Bahr – NMWRRI (Retired)
Conrad Keyes – PdNWC
A. Tarquin – UTEP

Ed Archuleta– EPWU
Dr. Ari Michelsen – Texas A&M
Doug Echlin – IBWC
Dan Santantonio – City of Las Cruces

I. Review and Approval of Minutes from MAC/SC Meeting on 6/13/03 (MAC/SC).

Mr. Archuleta asked if anyone had comments on the June 13th MAC/SC meeting minutes. Tony Tarquin noted that there were a few minor typographical revisions required in the minutes. The MAC/SC approved the minutes as corrected.

II. Update on Rio Grande Project 2003 Water Supply and Allocation Forecast (Wayne Treers, BuRec).

Wayne Treers provided a Power Point presentation of the current water supply and allocation forecast (attached as **Exhibit “B”**). Following are some major highlights from his presentation:

- Mr. Treers reviewed the total precipitation charts. The upper Rio Grande portion of the basin in Southern Colorado and the Rio Chama plot are below normal this year. The Southern Colorado portion of the basin is 79% of average precipitation since October 1 and the Chama Basin is running about 69% of average. This time last year the precipitation was much lower with the upper part of the basin running about 47% which was better as far as precipitation. The Cristo Mountain Range Basins are averaging 88% of normal, and the Jemez River Basin was running 85% of normal. Last year the Sangre de Cristo Mountain Range was at 59% at this time, and Jemez was at 46%. Although precipitation has improved over last year, it is still below average. Locally, Elephant Butte Dam has recorded only 2.7 inches of precipitation for the year, when typically the normal precipitation is running 5 to 6 inches. Caballo Dam is running at about 2.8 inches this year, whereas Las Cruces has reported a little over 3". Overall, precipitation is now running at about 55% of normal.
- The monsoon has not really started yet. There has not been any rainfall runoff since July, and it is the same with the upper part of the Rio Grande basin.
- March through July runoff at the San Marcial gauge shows approximately the same as last year (11% of the long term average) except for the month of July. July's runoff from last year was almost 11,000 AF, whereas this year it was about 2,500 AF. Wayne says this is due primarily as a result of biological opinion for the silvery minnow, which shifts the operating point from the San Marcial gauge to the Albuquerque gauge. The Albuquerque gage is located five or ten miles upstream from the Ysleta diversion dam. The biological opinion calls for a minimum is 100 CFS for the minnow. Because of the shift in the gauging point and tighter operation by MRGCD, the whole reach below Ysleta dam has mostly dried up now.
- The runoff this year, like last year, was among the lowest on record. There has not been a good runoff to Elephant Butte since before 1996. Over the past 8 years, runoff for all but one of those years has been below normal and four of those years have been near record lows. Indications are that we are definitely in a severe drought.
- Mr. Treers reviewed the reservoir operations plan. Because of the minnow operations, USBR is not showing much inflow for Elephant Butte through October. Runoff projections for August are for 7,000 AF, as opposed to the long term average of 50,000 AF. September is not much better. Projections show flows closer to 50% of normal for October and 50% in November and December.
- The Butte will bottom out Sept 17th at 161,000 AF, and that will literally change because EPCWID #1 will be calling for more water in September to finish out their allotment. The reservoir will probably be down to a volume of about 150,000 AF in September, which will be the lowest level since December of 1978. Caballo Reservoir will drop down to 10,000 AF by the 3rd week in September. A new record was set for evaporation at Elephant Butte in June and July. July was the hottest on record for New Mexico.
- Mr. Treers reviewed the projections for 2004 which were based on 100% runoff. Even at 100% runoff at Cochiti, USBR projects that only 73% of average flow will arrive at Elephant Butte, mainly because 150,000 AF will be held upstream for relinquishment of credits. Also, by March 1 of next year all of the water in Elephant Butte will be available for allocation. The projections show 725,000 AF of releases from Caballo, which would take the Elephant Butte reservoir content down to 69,000 AF. The

UBBR has advised the residents of Truth or Consequences of the possibility of such a low reservoir content. If a 50% runoff pro is done for next year, it will show similar numbers as this year's water supply, or about one third of a full supply.

- Mr. Treers reviewed the allocation history to date for this year. The allocation reached a maximum of 34.07% of a full supply for the end of June allocation. Additional inflows after that time have been more than offset by evaporation and conveyance losses.
- Looking ahead, Mexico will stop ordering next Thursday, (8/21) and EBID will use all of their allocation by the end of August. EPCWID #1 is planning to order water through September 22. Because of this, Reclamation may be able to increase the allocation in August, but probably by no more than ½ a percent or so. Karl Wood asked how the city of El Paso was dealing with the block releases. Mr. Archuleta replied that the city's allotment had started out very low, but that the allotment from EPCWID had been significantly increased over the last two weeks. As a result, the City is in good shape until the end of the year because EPWU is able to produce 80 to 90# mgd of surface water at this point until the end of the irrigation season. This is assuming that the water quality remains acceptable. Another factor that helps EPWU is that EPWU is not experiencing the same high peaks in demand that it has experienced in previous summers.
- Wayne closed by stating that that the upcoming winter snow pack will be critical for next season, and that we will need to have a good snow pack to get us through next year. If next year's runoff is similar to this year's, the farmers will not have very much water at all to work with.

III. Progress Report by the Paso del Norte Watershed Council (PdNWC) (Nancy Hanks, Watershed Council Coordinator)

Nancy announced that the Watershed Council voted on new members on August 11th. They are Beatrice Vera from the Rio Grande/Rio Bravo, Coalition and, Jacob Massoud, pending approval from the Tigua tribe. Other announcements included:

- The Watershed Council will be participating in the American Heritage River Binational Conference on November 3 and 4th at UTEP.
- Nancy attended the URGWOM in Albuquerque on July 14th.
- There is a new domain name of the Council Website. It is www.pdnwc.org.
- The Executive Committee is forming a response to send to the City Council regarding the 200 homes slated to be built in the Resler Arroyo. There is concern about the Keystone Wetlands not receiving water if this project is allowed to develop.
- Nancy related that funding for her position comes from an EPWU funding agreement coming up for renewal in December 31st.
- Progress is being made on the Watershed brochures and the final editing is now being done.
- There will be an Annual Watershed Council meeting on September 15 at the Texas A&M Extension Center. Chris Brown will be offering a workshop on the GIS Coordinated Database following the meeting from 3 – 5 pm.
- The annual meeting will include the nominations of 14 members of the Executive Committee. Conrad Keyes and Ed Fierro are stepping down

- On June 13, a draft of the proposal for the Integrated Watershed planning was presented to Senator Bingaman for his review and general comments.

IV. Progress of the Integrated Watershed Planning Proposal to Senator Bingaman (Conrad Keyes, Jr., PdNWC).

Conrad announced that he and Ed Fierro are stepping down as members of the executive committee. Conrad will be involved with several organizations on a number of other projects, but will still be a member of the Council. On November 15, Conrad is receiving an honorary membership award from the American Society of Civil Engineers, and will be the only New Mexican to receive this honor. Conrad is also running for President Elect of AFCE.

Conrad related the names of the people who participated in the Intergraded Watershed Proposal. He named Brian Hanson, Kevin Bixby, John Sproul, Sue Watts, Jennifer Ashley and Tim Darden and Julie Maitland. Brian was given the responsibility of revising the proposal. The proposal included the plans for implementation of the following programs (**Exhibit “C”**):

1. Mesilla Valley Bosque Park
2. Rio Bosque Wetlands Park
3. Elephant Butte Irrigation District flood control dams.

Other parts of the plan include:

1. Opportunities for integrated watershed management to better meet the future needs of agriculture, economic development, and environmental concerns.
2. Develop a science-based and peer-reviewed comprehensive biological management plan to enhance the Rio Grande ecosystem and meet the interests of all watershed stakeholders.

Conrad hoped to receive approximately \$2 million over a three-year period from the New Mexico delegation to start the above mentioned projects. He briefly summarized the plans which will include public participation.

Karl Wood commended the Council for putting together the improved proposal. He received the document yesterday and was surprised at how short the document actually was. However, Karl mentioned he was not ready to comment yet on the proposal. He did compile a list of other potential projects. Among these were:

- the development of Leasburg State Park
- improvements in the agricultural drains
- Burn Lake needs more enhancements
- improved river habitats
- research of dairy solids
- opportunities behind flood control dams
- a monitoring and research component
- no mention of Mexico working with the Council

- invasive plants in the flood plain

Conrad answered that Karl's "wish list" will probably be considered in Program "C". Mr. Archuleta asked for a time frame, and Conrad replied it will be for fiscal year 2005. Mr. Archuleta noticed that help came from the New Mexico delegation and was wondering about the Texas delegation. Conrad replied that it was originally developed for Senator Bingaman of New Mexico and the New Mexico delegation. Mr. Archuleta gave compliments to the group for their efforts. Mr. Archuleta added that input is needed from both irrigation districts. Conrad would appreciate if the comments were given to Nancy, Ari, or himself before September 15.

**V. Description of the Multi-State Salinity Coalition Initiative
(Ed Archuleta, General Manager of EPWU).**

Mr. Archuleta discussed how EPWU has been involved in a Multi-State Salinity Coalition (MSSC) (**Exhibit "D"**) which includes Tucson, Phoenix and Las Vegas, Nevada, Southern California and other areas. El Paso is the only Texas member organization of the MSSC. The Bureau of Reclamation has been heavily involved in the Road Map on salinity management. This road map has been used as a guiding document. Mr. Archuleta related that he attended a meeting in Los Angeles with other collations a few months ago. Mr. Archuleta stressed the need for salinity management in this area. Pressure on freshwater supplies in many areas of the country are expected to intensify due to rapid growth. He mentioned that the TDS in the river is currently approximately 900 parts per million due to reduced flows in the stream, the impact of agricultural drainages, and other things which need to be looked at. Mr. Archuleta concluded by saying that El Paso will remain involved with this organization and will keep the MAC/SC updated.

Tom Bahr mentioned the need for a comprehensive salt balance for the watershed.

Mr. Archuleta referenced the lower Colorado River area, where the various water user organizations receive millions of dollars from the federal government just to deal with irrigation and salinity issues.

Conrad mentioned that this topic was part of the PdNWC EPA's Watershed Initiative Proposal which was turned down.

**VI. Presentation on the Ciudad Juarez Water Master Plan: Priority Projects for Junta Municipal de Agua y Saneamiento (JMAS)
(Rene Franco and Manuel Herrera, JMAS).**

Mr. Manuel Herrera and Mr. Rene Franco gave a PowerPoint presentation (**copy attached as Exhibit “E”**). Mr. Herrera presented the first 11 slides showing various historical water demand and per capita use data, as well as slides showing the location of their groundwater wells. Their total pumping has stayed fairly constant since the year 2000 despite continuing population growth. Their average daily per capita use has dropped steadily since 2000. Some meeting attendees asked about the reasons for the decrease in the per capita consumption. Mr. Herrera replied that one reason was the increase in the number of water meters. A second reason is an educational program promoting water conservation. This program has been instituted at the numerous manufacturing assembly plants and in their public schools.

Mr. Franco continued the presentation on the Cd. Juarez Master Plan starting on slide number twelve. The Master Plan is based on a projected population of 2.5 million by 2020. Everything that JMAS is doing is based on this Master Plan. The population of Cd. Juarez ranks second compared to other border cities. They are contemplating the possibility of tapping the Mesilla Bolson and are also looking at a couple of offers from people who want to sell water from distant aquifers. One of these distant sources is the Bismark Mine near the town of Ascension. Regardless of the composition of their future water sources, by the year 2020 Cd. Juarez will need 12 cubic meters per second of water. The conversion of Rio Grande Project water to municipal use over the next 4 or 5 years would be a very good option for JMAS. However, they still need to upgrade their two wastewater treatment plants to secondary treatment before they can negotiate this with the farmers. Mr. Franco presented a few slides showing the location, projected supply volumes, and estimated costs of their future potential water sources – namely the deep and shallow Hueco Bolson aquifer, Rio Grande Surface Water, the north and south Mesilla Bolson wellfields, and the Bismark Mines aquifer. The cost for implementing the Master Plan is estimated at 800 million U.S. dollars.

With regards to Wastewater Treatment, the JMAS has to upgrade both the north and south plants before they can take water from farmers. Mr. Franco presented a few slides showing future upgrades and required expansions to their wastewater treatment system. Aside from upgrading their two existing plants (the North and South Plants), three new plants are planned – the Anapra Plant in Anapra, the Laguna Plant near the airport, and the Southeast Plant near Sausal across from Fabens.

Mr. Archuleta asked if the \$800 U.S million included both the potable water and wastewater program costs. Mr. Franco confirmed that it did. Mr. Archuleta suggested that this cost would have huge implications on the rates. Mr. Franco stated that JMAS has just increased rates by 15%, but they are not even close to where they should be yet. He added that if there is another devaluation of the peso, this will create even bigger problems in funding the Master Plan costs. Karl Wood asked whether the funding sources would all have to be local in nature. Mr. Franco replied that they were hoping to tap into the NADBANK BEIF funds, but that there were no funds available there. They are checking into the CNA State funds for grant money. Mr.

Archuleta asked about using the bond market to raise funds. Mr. Franco advised that they cannot issue bonds, but that they were also looking at BECC funding and the World Bank.

A question was asked about the odors from the wastewater plants. Rene replied that ultra violet lamps have been installed to eliminate some of the odors from inside the plant, but that some of the odor comes from the sludge which must be temporarily stored outside. The city of Juarez requires a test report from the lab to make sure the sludge is not toxic before they can remove it to the landfill.

VII. Presentation of the Canalization Project Reformulation of USIBWC River Management Alternatives for the EIS (Parsons Corp.)

Doug Echlin introduced the update on the recent Canalization Project EIS. (**Exhibit “F”**) He stated that they mailed the reformulation of management alternatives to stakeholders that provided commentary on an earlier report. The report is available on their website which is www.ibwc.state.gov. Doug then introduced R.C Wooten, Jr., Ph.D. and Carlos Victoria-Rueda, Ph.D. from Parsons Corporation.

- Dr. Wooten then spoke first on the Canalization Project. The project extends from Percha Dam to the American Dam, a distance of approximately 150 miles.
- He provided background information on the construction and operation and a brief summary of management strategies and management alternatives with respect to environmental improvement with certain types of measures that will enhance ecosystem restoration, aquatic habitat and water quality.
- IBWC’s primary responsibilities to continue flood control and water delivery are of paramount importance.
- With regards to the EIS, IBWC is now at the scoping and formulation of alternatives phase which has been going on for a while in terms of formulating and revising the alternatives. Input has been received from a wide assortment of stakeholders.
- A draft EIS is expected June.

Next, Dr. Carlos Victoria-Rueda made a brief presentation on the report from the web site. He described the following four Management Alternatives in detail in the EIS:

- Continue current O&M practice
- Modified O& M and flood control improvements
- Integrated USIBWC land management
- Targeted river restoration

Mr. Rueda described the actions to be implemented under each of the alternatives. These actions include levee rehabilitation and/or construction, modification of grazing leases, managed grassland and reduced mowing, tree plantings at floodable locations, streambank shavedowns, modified sediment management, planting of riparian vegetation, reopening of channel meanders,

and modified arroyo dredging. Most of the habitat improvement features provided in Alternatives 3 and 4 are located in the Rincon Valley segment of the river, because this segment presents the most opportunities for easy implementation of such enhancements. These enhancements involve some decrease in the delivery efficiency of the river. If implemented, USIBWC would have to compensate the irrigation districts for the water use and loss of delivery efficiency. Water for the projects could be secured by implementing irrigation district water conservation programs and through water banking. The emphasis is on not retiring farmlands in order to secure water for the enhancement projects.

After the presentation, Mr. Archuleta asked about the total cost of the proposed environmental enhancements and about the amount of water that they would require. Dr. Rueda stated that he estimated a capital cost of approximately \$50 million. Based on the 1,000 acres of enhancements called for in the EIS, and a water requirement of 3 AF/acre, approximately 3,000 AF per year would be required for this scenario.

Beatriz Vera wanted to know when the 45 day comment period starts. Dr Rueda informed her that the document will be available for public review by the first of November.

VIII. Other Business: EPWU-Sponsored Web Site for the Commission

Mike Fahy presented sample of choices for new domain names for the EPWU-Sponsored Web Site. The potential domain names were:

- NM-TXWATERCOMMISSION.ORG
- NM-TXWATERCOMM.ORG
- NM-TXWC.ORG

The middle domain name was chosen for the EPWU-sponsored web site.

IX. Schedule Next Meeting

The next MAC meeting will be on September 15 at 1:30 at the Texas A&M Extension Center in El Paso.