

## MINUTES

### MEETING OF THE NEW MEXICO/TEXAS WATER COMMISSION

El Paso Water Utilities  
1154 Hawkins  
Board Room  
4<sup>th</sup> Floor

Telephone (915) 594-5634  
Fax (915) 564-5699

December 18, 2003  
9:00 a.m.

#### Welcome

Mike Fahy opened and chaired the meeting. Mr. Archuleta 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 – NMWRRI

Armando Cordero - Dona Ana County

Dr. Ari Michelsen – Texas A&M

Nancy Hanks - PdNWC

A. Tarquin – UTEP

Mike P. Fahy – EPWU

Dan Santantonio – City of Las Cruces

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

Mike Fahy asked if anyone had comments on the October 23rd MAC/SC meeting minutes. There were questions on page two of the minutes regarding the 2004 EPA Watershed Initiative Proposal. It should read "The PdNWC decided not to submit a proposal for funding by the 2004 EPA Watershed Initiative because the Council did not want to use the same proposal it had submitted in 2003, and there was not sufficient time to write a new proposal. The Council plans to submit a proposal for the 2005 funding cycle." Also noted was a typo on page 6 which will be corrected. Mike Fahy asked for the minutes to be approved and they were approved unanimously, as corrected.

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

- Nancy provided an update on the December 8, 2003 meeting of the PdNWC. The Executive Committee (EC) voted to send out the proposal for Integrated Watershed Planning (see attached as **Exhibit “B”**) to be reviewed for all potential sources of funding in the region. This proposal was approved at the September 15<sup>th</sup> meeting.

- The next meeting of the Watershed Council will be on Monday, January 26, 2004 at the Southwest Environmental Center (SWEC) in the Las Cruces Downtown Mall.

### **III. Review and Approval of EPA- Border 2012 grant proposals: “Pollution Prevention through a Storm Water Management Program” by El Paso Municipal Services Dept. partnering with PdNWC, and a second proposal by TAES/PdNWC entitled “Assessment of Wastewater Sources, Waterborne Pathogens, Salts, and Nutrients in the Rio Grande Basin” (Nancy Hanks, PdNWC)**

Nancy announced two Border 2012 pre-proposals which are due December 31<sup>st</sup>. The first is a joint effort by the City of El Paso Municipal Service Department and PdNWC (**see attached Exhibit “C”**). It proposes to enhance outreach awareness programs which will enable the city to work with other nonprofit and government agencies on environmental issues related to the prevention of pollution to municipal water supplies. In addition, PdNWC will provide support for education and outreach within the community. There is a maximum budget of \$100,000.00 for this proposal.

The second proposal is also for Border 2012 funding (**attached as Exhibit “D”**). The PdNWC is one of the lead organizations involved in this Border 2012 pre-proposal. This proposal was drafted by the staff of the Texas A&M Agricultural Experiment Station and its objective is to identify specific pathogen components of wastewater in the watershed, and assess their risk to human health and the environment. This in turn will provide data and recommendations to the Border 2012 Task Force for wastewater quality and reuse. Nancy will assist in contacting other agencies, including the University of Juarez which may also be interested in the proposal. The maximum budget for this proposal is also \$100,000.00.

Nancy is asking the Commission’s Management Advisory Committee (MAC) approval for both of these pre-proposals. These pre-proposals are being sent out on Monday or Tuesday. Mike asked whether there were local matching funds required, and Nancy advised that the EPA will be providing all funding. Nancy explained that a pre-proposal has to be submitted first, although there is no guarantee that any of the pre-proposals will be selected. If selected for the short-list, then a formal proposal must be submitted to the EPA.

A motion was made to approve both pre-proposals by the MAC. The motion was approved unanimously.

### **IV. Discussion of the Proposal by the PdNWC to the EPWU for Development of Phase Two of the Coordinated Water Resource Database Project (Chris Brown, NMSU and Zhuping Sheng, TAMU).**

Chris provided a draft of the Paso del Norte Watershed Council’s Coordinated Water Resources Database Project (**copy attached as Exhibit “E”**). He briefly went over the accomplishments under Phase I of the Project and thanked the project staff who hosted the PdNWC Coordinated Water Resources Database Project Workshop at Texas A&M Agricultural Research & Extension Center on September 15<sup>th</sup>, 2003 He thanked Nancy for

providing copious notes of comments suggested during the workshop and thanked EPWU staff for the assistance they provided. He also thanked the technical committee for identifying future tasks for the Phase II Scope of Work (SOW) for the Project.

Chris covered the main tasks that are in the draft Phase II Scope of Work. The original webpage was constructed as a combination of ArcIMS front end map followed by a series of static image maps. The Phase II scope of the work will completely migrate the user interface into a 100% ArcIMS application, which will make it more flexible. This will allow the GIS maps to be easily revised and could allow spatial queries of water resources data. Subtasks would include field checking of gauging station locations by using GPS equipment for the performance of quality control/quality assurance of the digital GIS maps and related data. This will be done by NMSU students. Another task would be integration of the datasets compiled in Phase I of the Project, and incorporation of historical data into the GIS-based web interface to link the EPWU funded portion of the project to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) supported database efforts. Also, Chris explained that by using the automated FTP routines, the website could provide a batch mode of data transfer. The proposers also plan to explore how to best include both historical data and current data being gathered. Lastly, they want to insure a more active participation by the local data providers. They plan to accomplish this by providing them with financial resources that would make it easier for them to free up staff time to assemble the requested data, as apposed to using a direct reimbursement approach.

Tony Tarquin asked how much money was involved in each task. Chris replied that they have a draft budget that is currently being review by the PdNWC. Ari stated that the budget for Phase II is actually being entirely funded by EPWU. Ari mentioned that he would like to see a reference shown in the proposal for the person responsible for each task. He suggested this would help in organization of the tasks.

Mike Fahy asked if the workshop provided at the close of Phase I was useful, and Karl replied that it was very useful. Mike suggested that another workshop be held for Phase II. Chris agreed to do so.

Ari suggested that the final coordinated database report for Phase II be published as a joint TAMU/NMSU technical report with peer review by unbiased/independent academic and governmental agencies.

Ari mentioned that last week they had completed an extension of the task order for the Corps of Engineer's funding portion. Conrad pointed out that Gail Stockton of the USACE wants a final report from the PdNWC on the status of the Corp's funding used for the Project. Chris wanted to know the time limits of the current COE funding. Ari replied that the initial grant funding period ended September 30<sup>th</sup> but that it was extended through September of 2004.

Mike asked if the Commission members agreed with the content of the Phase II SOW. The MAC agreed with the content of the proposal, but decided no formal vote was required to approve the proposal.

Ari stated that EPWU's time extension for administrative funding will allow Nancy to attend a grant writing workshop in early January to assist the watershed council in the preparation of grant proposals. The workshop is designed for academic faculty, research scientists, and so forth.

**V. Report on the Annual Salinity Management and Desalination Summit, December 8, and 9, 2003 (Mike Fahy, EPWU)**

Mike attended the Annual Salinity Management and Desalination Summit workshop in Las Vegas, Nevada on December 8 and 9, 2003. The theme was "Protecting and Enhancing Water Supplies". The agencies represented ranged from Florida to northern and southern California, and also included Nevada, Texas and Arizona. Mike provided a presentation on the Salinity Impacts on El Paso's Surface Water, and Mr. Archuleta presented the EPWU/Fort Bliss Joint Desalination Project. The Director of Corpus Christi Water discussed their combined desalination and ASR project.

The Southern California Salinity Coalition representative talked about their 11 member agency which includes the area containing the largest dairy complex in the world, at Chino-Corona. Another concern of the Southern California Coalition is the cumulative impact of residential water softeners. Wally Bishop, the General Manager of Contra Costa Water District, mentioned the four Guiding Forces of their coalition:

- Drought reliability
- Flood control
- Water supply
- Environmental Concerns

Jack Barnett, Director of the Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Forum described their goal, which is to prevent further deterioration of the water quality in the Colorado River. Approximately 9 million Tons per year (TPY) of salt are now estimated to be entering Lake Mead. In terms of origin, this salt content is approximately a 50-50 split between natural salinity and man-made salinity. As a comparison, the Phoenix Water Department estimates that approximately 1.5 million TYP of salt are entering central Arizona from several river sources.

The current California population is approximately 35 million people. By 2030, the population is anticipated to be 52 million. If the current demographic trend continues, 87% of the population will live near the coast, but desalination will not be the sole answer to meet growing water demands. There are now 16 proposed coastal desalination plants in northern and southern California combined. Lastly, Mike cited Mike Conner of the US Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee who referenced S-1957, which is the joint Senator Bingaman and Domenici draft bill for Trans-boundary Aquifer Modeling and testing along the US-Mexico border. This particular bill has been referenced at several prior MAC/SC and PdNWC meetings.

**VI. Presentation on Impacts of Salinity on El Paso's Surface Water (Mike Fahy, EPWU)**

Mike provided a Power Point presentation (**copy attached as Exhibit “F”**) at the Annual Salinity Management and Desalination Summit, and gave the same presentation to the Commission. He began by portraying the drainage basin from the Upper Rio Grande headwaters southward to Ft Quitman, Texas, including the various aquifers and reservoirs used by the agricultural, residential and business communities in the Las Cruces, El Paso and Juarez region. Mike informed the audience that the Elephant Butte Reservoir portion of the Rio Grande Project was completed by the Bureau of Reclamation in 1916. Approximately 90,500 irrigated acres now exist in EBID’s jurisdiction. Originally there were 69,010 irrigated acres in Texas.

Mike Fahy noted that at full allocation, the Bureau delivers 931,841 AF at canal headings with reservoir releases of only 790,000 AF. After a brief history of the construction of the agricultural drains, Mike showed a slide of the major drains in the Mesilla Valley, as well as the diversion points and locations of the Robertson/Umbenhauer and Jonathan Rogers water treatment plants. He then presented bar charts showing average TDS levels in the drains. These charts were obtained from the various Boyle-Parsons Reports of the Sustainable Water Project. The charts illustrate that TDS levels increase significantly during non-irrigation seasons and also progressively increase downstream of Caballo Reservoir. Mike next presented the following potential strategies for mitigating the impacts of drain flows. These were obtained from the Boyle/Parsons Drain Mitigations Strategies Report.

- Retire agricultural land/manage saline lands
- Treat drain flows
- Dilute flows with ground water
- Impound and release drain flows
- Relocate points of discharge for critical drains
- Relocate water plant diversion locations

Mike noted that the construction costs for these alternatives range from \$1.0 million to more than \$15.0 million, and that most require approval by agencies with jurisdictional authority.

## **VII. Update on the New Links posted to the Commission Web Page (Valerie Provencio, EPWU)**

Valerie provided an update on the Commission’s webpage. She informed the audience that a counter is currently posted on the bottom of the home page. She added that since October 9<sup>th</sup>, 462 people have opened the webpage. In January the counter will reset automatically and start a new count for the year 2004. Robert Guillen is designing some aesthetic improvements for the website, and is also creating elements to help navigate through the menu, such as the use of drop down menus. Bobby Creel has provided a direct link to the Commission’s web page from the PdNWC webpage, and the Commission’s webpage now has direct links not only to PdNWC, but also to the PdNWC’s GIS Coordinated DataBase web page.

## **VIII. Other Business**

Ari informed the audience of the Annual Conference of the Universities Council on Water

Resources in Portland, from Oregon July 20 – 22, 2004 entitled “Allocating Water: Economics and the Environment.”

Possible topics for the next meeting include:

1. Presentation on Region 11 of New Mexico’s State Water Plan for the Lower Rio Grande Planning Region, with focus on water supply and demand
2. Report by the NM Interstate Stream Commission on the status of the permit application to appropriate groundwater from the Otero Mesa/Salt Basin area
3. Rio Grande Project Water Allocation Projection (Wayne Treers, Bureau of Reclamation)
4. PdNWC progress report by Nancy Hanks
5. Possibly an update from the office of the NM State Engineer on the Adjudication of the Lower Rio Grande area

Armando Cordero will be attending the Commission meetings for Dona Ana County in place of Jerry Leyendecker, until a permanent replacement arrives.

#### **IX Schedule Next Meeting/Location**

Tentatively January 29, 2004(first choice) or February 19, 2004 as a backup date.