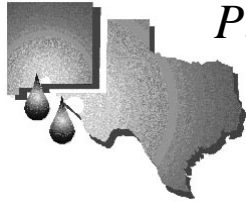


New Mexico – Texas Water Commission



Public Entities in Partnership for Sustainable Water Resources

Water Resources Research Institute, Dept. 3167
New Mexico State University, Box 30001
Las Cruces, NM 88003-8001
Phone: (505) 646-4337
FAX: (505) 646-6418

El Paso Water Utilities
Public Service Board
P.O. Box 511
El Paso, TX 79961
Phone: (915) 594-5501
FAX: (915) 594-5699

MEETING OF THE NEW MEXICO – TEXAS WATER COMMISSION

**Las Cruces City Council Chambers
200 N. Church Street
Las Cruces, NM**

**September 24, 2004
9:00 A.M.**

Welcome

Dan Santantonio, representing the City of Las Cruces (CLC) for Jorge Garcia, welcomed everyone and chaired the meeting. A copy of the sign-in sheet is attached as “**Exhibit “A”**”. Those members of the Commission attending were as follows:

Karl Wood – NMSU-WRRI
Tony Tarquin – UTEP
Mike Fahy – EPWU
Sue Padilla - DAC
Gary Esslinger - EBID
Ari Michelsen – TX A&M
Dan Santantonio - CLC
Tanya Trujillo – CLC

I. Review and Approval of Minutes from August 20, 2004, New Mexico-Texas Water Commission Meeting

Dan asked if anyone had comments on the August 20, 2004 Commission meeting minutes. Tony Tarquin had one minor comment regarding transposing two words in the minutes. Valerie agreed to change the minutes as prescribed, after which the Commission approved the minutes unanimously.

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

- El Paso Public Service Board • Elephant Butte Irrigation District • Texas A&M Agricultural Center •
- City of Las Cruces • New Mexico State University • Dona Ana County • University of Texas at El Paso
- El Paso County Water Improvement District #1

Watershed Council Coordinator).

Nancy Hanks updated the Commission on the latest activities of the Paso del Norte Watershed Council (PdNWC) for the month of August. She informed the Commission that the planned demonstration of the Coordinated Database/GIS scheduled for Congressional staff members on September 10 was postponed. In addition, the City of Las Cruces sent their regrets for not having the staff to have a representative on the Council. Nancy added that because of her illness last month, action on revising the Watershed Council By-laws, Strategic Plan and the Business Plan was tabled by the Council members until her return. The next annual meeting date still has to be determined. Nancy announced to the Commission that the URGWOM technical meeting will be held on October 14th in Albuquerque at the Corps of Engineers offices.

There was a brief discussion on whether the Council needed to vote on revisions to both the Bylaws and the Strategic Plan. Nancy confirmed that, according to the current Bylaws, the Commission did not need to approve changes to the Strategic Plan, only changes to the Bylaws. Karl Wood commented that the Strategic Plan can be changed or updated at any time without a formal Council vote. The Council will vote on the revised Bylaws and approve the Strategic Plan at its next meeting at the NMDA offices on October 6th. Dan Santantonio replied that the Commission would like to have time to provide comments before the approval of the Bylaws. Nancy distributed copies of the draft Bylaws and the Strategic Plan to the Commission members for review. Mike added that the draft Bylaws and the Strategic Plan had previously been distributed to the Commission members for review and that the 30 day comment period had started in early August. As of yet there has been no comments from the Commission members.

III. Update on PdNWC Project Funding Proposals, Fund Awards, Expenditures and Remaining Balances (Nancy Hanks, Watershed Council Coordinator)

Nancy updated the Commission with a PowerPoint presentation (**Attached as Exhibit “B”**). She identified the 2001 – 2005 funding sources for the Coordinated Database project as follows:

- EPWU Coordinated Database Project, Phase I
- EPWU Coordinated Database Project, Phase II
- US Army COE Phases I & II

This funding totals \$300,739 which includes \$5,355 for Nancy from the COE for her salary. The research programs and general administrative support are derived from the following sources:

- EPWU Cooperative Agreement Phase I
- EPWU Cooperative Agreement Phase II
- River Network
- US Bureau of Reclamation (BuRec)
- World Wildlife Fund: Public Outreach

- El Paso Public Service Board • Elephant Butte Irrigation District • Texas A&M Agricultural Center •
 - City of Las Cruces • New Mexico State University • Dona Ana County • University of Texas at El Paso
 - El Paso County Water Improvement District #1

- BuRec: Grey Water Reuse

This funding totals \$139,170 which includes \$66,770 going for Nancy's salary. The total from the above funding sources is \$439,909. Ari informed the Commission that the salary column shown on the tables does not include overhead.

In addition, Nancy provided a list of ten potential funding sources, of which eight are targeted for proposed submission in the near future. Potential funding from EPA for the National Center for Environmental Research (Sustainability) Grant and the Congressional funding sponsored by Senator Bingaman are still pending. Nancy remarked on a near term request for proposals from The Friends of the Rio Grande, with a limit of \$8,000, due October 15.

Conrad asked whether there was interest in Council membership representation from USIBWC. Nancy replied that she will invite Sally Spener from USIBWC to the next Council meeting.

IV. Status of the GIS Coordinated Database Program (Chris Brown, NMSU; Bobby Creel, NMWRRI)

Bobby announced the birth of a baby girl born to Chris Brown and his wife. The baby's name is Shelby Nicole Ray Brown. Congratulations, Chris and family!

Bobby Creel provided a PowerPoint presentation (**Attached as Exhibit "B"**) on the PdNWC Coordinated Database Project. Bobby briefly discussed the topics of the September 10 conference call which generated the Action Items described in the handout, and announced the next meeting as November 12 to be held at NMWRRI. He described the August 4 Technical Committee database demonstration given to Mike Conner, staff member of Senator Bingaman. The Committee briefed Mr. Conner and Ms. Rizutti at NMWRRI on their progress and future plans in hopes of future funding. This was followed up by a letter to Mr. Conner mailed on August 18.

Bobby informed the Commission that GPS data was collected at 38 EP #1 gage stations. An ArcMap shape file was generated and metadata was developed using the FGDC classic format. Also, UACJ is collecting GPS data for the Mexican irrigation district's gage stations. GPS data on EBID flow metering sites still needs to be obtained from EBID staff.

Bobby explained that the technical, executive committee conducts bi-monthly progress meetings, either in person or using conference calls. The Committee hopes to integrate the USACE and the EPWU project components and provide undated project reports to their funders. Conrad commented that there is still a large volume of ground water pumping data that must be digitized.

Next, Bobby updated the Commission on NMSU activities. He reported that WRRI and the Geography staff have updated the database files on WRRI servers to ArcIMS 9.0 and that new staff was hired for both the EPWU and USACE project components.

V. Status Report on the Draft Challenge Grant Proposal Concepts to BuRec for Phase III of GIS-Coordinated Database Project, plus Additional Data Collection (Michael Fahy, EPWU)

Mike Fahy updated the Commission on the anticipated 2005 Challenge Grant program (**Attached as Exhibit “C”**). He explained that the eligible applicants are irrigation and water districts in the western United States. Eligible applicants would receive a total of \$20 million a year for each of five years, with \$4 million per year earmarked for desalination related funding. The eligible project categories for the 2004 RFP included water banks and water markets, and new technologies for improved methods of water management.

Mike described those specific purposes and needs which would be beneficial for this region in general. The Cities of Las Cruces and Hatch, New Mexico could use additional river water quality data for design of their surface water plants. In addition, EBID and EPWU are proposing additional TDS sensors with telemetry at diversion dams and drain locations. EBID is interested in adding flow measuring stations at multiple canal turnout and control structure locations. EPWU has an interest in monitoring daily TDS data at major drains for future drain mitigation assessments and possibly to eventually assess the feasibility of drain water desalination. The mass balance of salts (dissolved solids) by source could be determined plus additional real-time TDS monitoring could be established to improve water treatment plant operations. EP#1 may have the same purposes and needs as EBID for use of the Challenge Grant funds, plus some of those exhibited by EPWU.

The objective of the FY 2004 Challenge Grant program was to invite irrigation and water districts to cost share with the Bureau of Reclamation on projects to optimize use of existing supplies through water conservation, efficiency, establishment of water markets and multiple agency cooperation. The total project funding available is \$16 million per year for each of 5 years. The 2005 program will likely open in late November or early December. Mike informed the Commission that there is a \$300,000 maximum award per project and 50% in local matching funds is required. The awards are due by approximately April of 2005.

Mike briefly explained how the grant funding could possibly be used for Phase III of the PdNWC Coordinated Database/GIS project, as the data sharing component for the project.

Mike Fahy, Ed Fierro and Zhuping Sheng met with EBID’s Gary Esslinger and Henry Megallanez on September 20 and discussed the needs of the different agencies and drafted an outline summarizing methods by which these agencies may file proposals that are jointly linked.

Finally, Mike cited the following benefits of data sharing:

- Will eventually facilitate implementation of water banking
- Promotes improved Rio Grande Water Balance calculations and conjunctive management of surface and ground water
- Facilitates research programs at all levels.

- El Paso Public Service Board • Elephant Butte Irrigation District • Texas A&M Agricultural Center •
 - City of Las Cruces • New Mexico State University • Dona Ana County • University of Texas at El Paso
 - El Paso County Water Improvement District #1

There was a discussion on the Challenge Grant concerning the partnering concept. Bobby asked if such partnering enhances the grant application, and Gary assured that it did. Another question was who will take the responsibility for writing the proposal? Mike Fahy replied that this will be a joint effort among EPWU, EBID, an PdNWC.

Mayor Mattiace of Las Cruces was introduced as he joined the meeting.

VI. Presentation on Hueco Bolson Ground Water Condition and Management (Bill Hutchison, EPWU)

Bill Hutchison, Hydrogeology Manager, provided a PowerPoint presentation (**Attached as Exhibit “D”**) on groundwater management for the Hueco Bolson. He offered a brief history on groundwater pumping in the Hueco, beginning with the first wells in 1904, and continuing through 1998 when the Hueco Bolson was designated as a Priority Groundwater Management Area by Texas (TCEQ). Bill displayed a map depicting the Rio Grande and the groundwater aquifers which constitute El Paso’s water supply sources. He explained the occurrence of declining ground water levels and brackish water intrusion within the Hueco Bolson.

Next, Bill described the basic assumptions of the 1979 report by the Texas Water Development Board (TWDB) which concluded that the Hueco Bolson would be nearly depleted by 2030. This conclusion was based on projected population growth and related water demand projections being met primarily from ground water supplies, with only a limited offset by such programs as water conservation, use of reclaimed water, a change in water rate structure and increased reliance on surface water when available. Bill explained that when EPWU reduced pumping starting in 1989, the conclusion reached in 1979 was no longer accurate. Hueco pumping peaked in 1989 due to several factors, such as increased surface water use, changes to the water rate structure, increased conservation, improved public awareness through education, and increased use of reclaimed water.

Bill described his key model assumptions used for the EPWU-USGS MODFLOW (finite difference): EPWU pumping was set at 40,000 AF/yr in “normal” years and 75,000 AF/yr in drought years. Juarez pumping was held constant at 120,000 AF/yr. He then evaluated subsurface flow directions, future fresh groundwater storage declines, and the effects of recharge.

Bill concluded by stating that water planning and policy implementations by the PSB have improved conditions in the Hueco Bolson by promoting the conditions that have resulted in groundwater pumping reductions, which have in turn stabilized groundwater level declines in many areas. He recommended continued conservation efforts, continued reclaimed water use expansion, completion of the desalination project, acquisition of additional surface water rights and expansion of surface water treatment facilities. He also recommended eventual initiation of an importation project, remaining proactive with Juarez with respect to sharing technical information and working together on mutually beneficial water resource plans , and cooperating with the Far West Texas Planning Region (Region E) identifying long range water reserves and associated development plans.

Sue Padilla asked if there will be a joint desalination plant with Juarez. Bill responded that there may be an exchange of treated surface water, which could be a joint project; however a joint desalination plant has not been discussed.

Tony mentioned that EPWU needs to be careful where public relations are concerned, especially with respect to this current presentation to the general public. Tony referenced conversations with colleagues who have expressed their concern regarding the mixed messages perceived when comparing prior media publications describing a limited Hueco supply versus the current media publications emphasizing a nearly-sustainable supply. However, Bill said that this is an educational process and stressed the avoidance of a “sound-byte” approach to the problem, further noting that it is important for the public to understand the full context of the change in the Hueco supply interpretation. Often that it is not the easiest thing to do.

VII. Other Business:

- Agency Points of Contact for New Commission Web Page.

Mike informed the Commission that EPWU’s webmaster has the contact page designated on the Commission’s website. Valerie explained that the contact page still lacked agency names or e-mail addresses. Concern was expressed by the Commission about preventing the propagation of Spam or viruses to any e-mail contacts listed on the webpage. Another concern was harvesting of e-mail addresses for mass e-mailings. Bobby suggested an agency e-mail which could be screened by one individual at each agency and then directed to the appropriate agency or individual. Mike offered to set up the web page point-of-contact at EPWU. Gary and Bobby later offered their personal e-mail addresses for display. Tanya said she would talk to Dr. Garcia about this topic before offering their point-of-contact e-mail address. Valerie also suggested that the comments be made available for all the agencies to review, not just a single agency.

VIII. Next Meeting/Location - Topics for Discussion

The following discussion topic was suggested for the next meeting:

- Progress report on flow and conductivity probes at the state line

The next NM-TX Water Commission Meeting will be held at the El Paso Water Utilities, October 29 at 8:30 A.M.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:39 A.M.