

MINUTES
FAR WEST TEXAS WATER PLANNING GROUP MEETING

Thursday, January 7, 2010
1:00 P.M. (MST)
El Paso County WID #1
13247 Alameda Avenue, Clint, Texas 79836

MEMBERS PRESENT	NON-VOTING MEMBERS PRESENT
Janet Adams, Groundwater Districts	Bert Cortez, US Bureau of Reclamation
Jerry Agan, Counties	Billy Finn, US IBWC
Ann Allen, Industries	Hector Garza, USGS TX Water Science Center
Ed Archuleta, Municipalities, Vice Chairman	Ari Michelsen, TX AgriLife Research
Randy Barker, Groundwater Districts	Jack Stallings, TX Dept. of Agriculture
Becky Brewster, Municipalities, Exec. Comm. Alt.	Connie Townsend, TWDB
Sterry Butcher, Public	
Mike Davidson, Travel/Tourism	OTHERS PRESENT
David Etzold, Building/Real Estate	John Jones, J. Adams alt., Groundwater Districts
Dave Hall, Public, Exec. Committee Member Alt.	Allen Hains, A. Allen alt., Industries
Carl Lieb, Environmental	Scott Reinert, E. Archuleta alt., Municipalities
Albert Miller, Water Utilities	Talley Davis, R. Barker alt., Groundwater Districts
Jim Ed Miller, Water Districts	Zhuping Sheng, A. Michelsen alt.
Kenn Norris, Counties	Paul Perez, Western Refining
Chuy Reyes, Water Districts, Exec. Comm. Mbr.	John Ashworth, LBG-Guyton Associates
Teresa Todd, Legislative Rep., Exec. Comm. Mbr.	Tom Gooch, Freese and Nichols, Inc.
Paige Waggoner, Econ. Devel., Exec. Comm. Secty	Barbara Kauffman, RGCOG
	Korina Navarro, RGCOG
MEMBERS ABSENT	Annette Gutierrez, RGCOG
Jesse Acosta, Counties	Ed Drusina, El Paso
Cedric Banks, Ft. Bliss Garrison Command	Sal Payan, Office of Rep. Sylvestre Reyes
Tom Beard, Agriculture, Chairman	Lorenzo Arriaga, US Bureau of Reclamation
Sylvia Firth, Municipalities	Hector Gonzalez, El Paso Water Utilities
Mike Livingston, Small Business	David Carrasco, Lower Valley Water District
Juana Padilla, Legislative Representatives	Lisa Aguilar, Lower Valley Water District
Rick Tate, Agriculture	Jaime Iglesias, TX AgriLife Extension
Teddy Trujillo, Public	Girisha Ganjegunte, TX AgriLife Research
Carlos Zuazua, Electric Utilities	Bill Hargrove, UTEP-CERM

I. Roll Call and Determination of Quorum

Mr. Archuleta called the meeting to order, established that a quorum was present and that notice of the meeting had been properly posted. He thanked Mr. Reyes for hosting the meeting and providing lunch for everyone.

II. Recognition of Guests and Designated Alternates

Mr. Archuleta asked Mr. Reyes to introduce several guests who were present. Mr. Reyes introduced Mr. Sal Payan, El Paso Chief of Staff for Congressman Sylvestre Reyes, and Mr. Ed Drusina, who has been nominated as US IBWC commissioner. Mr. Drusina spoke a little about his background, including his military service, his former position as City of El Paso public works director, and his service at that time

as a member of the water planning group. Mr. Archuleta next introduced Mr. Cortez, US Bureau of Reclamation and non-voting member, who gave a brief update on the snowpack in the Rio Grande watershed. Mr. Cortez noted that the snowpack is still building, although there has not been the above-normal winter precipitation in the northern reaches of the watershed that has occurred in the south. He commented that the irrigation season will soon be underway again.

III. Election of Officers for 2010

Mr. Archuleta asked for nominations for planning group Chairman. Ms. Todd moved to re-elect the same officers as are currently serving. Mr. Etzold seconded the motion and it passed unanimously. The 2010 officers and Executive Committee members will be Tom Beard, Chairman; Ed Archuleta, Vice Chairman; Paige Waggoner, Secretary; Chuy Reyes, Member At-Large; Teresa Todd, Member At-Large; Becky Brewster, Alternate; and Dave Hall, Alternate.

Consent Agenda

IV. Approval of the Minutes of the WPG Meeting of December 3, 2009 and the Policy Committee Meeting of November 23, 2009.

V. Certification of Allowable Administrative Expenses

Mr. Reyes moved to approve the consent agenda as presented, Ms. Adams seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Regular Agenda

VI. WPG Member Updates on Local Projects & Issues of Importance to the Planning Process

Mr. Barker updated the group on the activities associated with the process of changing Hudspeth County UWCD#1's transfer rules. He stated that the district is accepting comments on the proposed rules until January 19, 2010, and expect to hold a public hearing on the rules in late March or early April. Dr. Michelsen announced that the Transboundary Aquifers research program had received double the amount of funding it received last year, with \$1 million appropriated for FY2010. The focus of activities in this fiscal year will be the Mesilla Bolson and two aquifers in Arizona. He also announced that the Rio Grande Basin Initiative partners would be holding their annual meeting in Alpine between January 17th and January 20th.

VII. Discussion and Action on Chapter 4 Water Management Strategies and Chapter Content

Mr. Ashworth apologized to the group for the late distribution of draft chapter materials for planning group review. He thanked the El Paso Water Utilities staff and Mr. Al Blair for their input and comments on the text. He then turned the initial discussion over to Mr. Gooch, who referred to his December 29, 2009 memo concerning the update to the 2006 El Paso County Integrated Water Supply Strategy, Tables 4-1 and 4-2, and the Chapter 4 text. The El Paso County integrated strategy is discussed in section 4.4.

Mr. Gooch focused on the positive impact of El Paso Water Utilities' successful water conservation measures on the timing and amount of water needed to implement the 5 original strategies and 2 new proposed strategies. The amount of water needed to meet non-agricultural demand over the 50-year planning horizon is significantly less than in the 2006 plan. Only two other municipal water suppliers in El Paso County will need additional supplies: Horizon Regional MUD and Tornillo WCID. Both of these suppliers are already planning for their projected future needs.

Mr. Ashworth summarized the portion of the Chapter 4 text dealing with agricultural supply needs. He

stated that the results of the Texas AgriLife Research interim project analysis of agricultural BMPs was cited and summarized in Section 4.6. Under drought conditions, there will be shortages in El Paso County agricultural water supply, ranging from 51,000 acre-feet/year to over 73,000 acre-feet/year.

The consultants stressed that they are still working on updating the costs associated with these strategies; therefore, they were not ready to ask the WPG for their approval. Rather, they asked the group for guidance on the direction they were taking. The group directed the consultants to continue with the analyses they had started, and expressed satisfaction with the proposed strategies. Mr. Archuleta asked that more detailed water supply plans for each irrigation district be included in the plan, so that the individual districts would be able to access funding to implement those plans.

VIII. Discussion and Action on Chapter 8 Recommendations

Mr. Ashworth discussed the changes that had been made to the Chapter 8 text following input received at or following the December 3 meeting of the planning group. Several suggestions were made that will require additional changes to the text prior to planning group review at the next (February 4th) meeting. Janet Adams noted that she is in the process of coordinating with other groundwater conservation districts in other regions concerning some of the recommendations, including those dealing with well driller data (#7) and the scheduling and due dates of regional water plans, GCD management plans and GCD desired future conditions (#9). She will provide additional wording and a schedule that will reflect a wider, state-wide perspective for recommendation #9. Concerning recommendation #11, the repeal of HB 1763, discussion was mixed on whether to retain or delete the recommendation. Ms. Adams will discuss #11 with Mr. Beard, who was tasked with drafting the text of the recommendation, and report back to the planning group.

It was agreed that recommendation #12, addressing data needs, was fairly complete, with a few changes to the proposed wording to be included. In particular, Mr. Ashworth stated that he had received feedback from Mr. Al Blair concerning the first bullet point, discussing irrigation pumpage reported by the TWDB. Mr. Blair suggested that the wording be changed from “significantly low” to “inaccurate”. The group agreed to the changed wording.

Mr. Archuleta suggested that the chapter include more specificity in terms of the infrastructure needs of regional water suppliers, mirroring the specificity in Chapter 8 regarding irrigation district strategies. This specificity is now needed so that the water suppliers are able to access state funding sources that require these needs be addressed in the regional water plans. He suggested in particular that a discussion on remaining colonias needs for all of the planning region counties, to be paired with an updated colonias table and summary in Chapter 1, should be included in the recommendations section. He suggested that the consultants work with the Lower Valley Water District and representatives from each of the counties in the planning region to assess remaining needs. The group agreed that this should be done. The discussion will center on the progress that has been achieved to date in providing service to colonias residents, and include an assessment of needs that remain to be met. Several members of the planning group and members of the public participating in the meeting promised to get updated information to the consultants for incorporation into the plan text. Mr. Carrasco, general manager of the Lower Valley Water District, stated that providing infrastructure to serve colonias residents in El Paso county was a continuing problem, and he would get information to Mr. Ashworth for inclusion. Ms. Todd stressed that it was a significant issue in the rural counties as well, and she could also provide data.

The group also reviewed the information provided on section 8.3, Ecologically Unique River and Stream Segments. The Trans-Pecos Water Trust has requested that an additional 3.5 mile segment of Alamito Creek, upstream of Big Bend Ranch State Park (which has already been recommended in the 2006 plan) in Presidio County, be recommended as a unique stream segment. Mr. Ashworth commented that he had

changed the wording in section 8.3.4 to emphasize that the stream segment does not include any private land inside Big Band Ranch State Park. Ms. Todd moved to approve the revised section 8.3 text, with the inclusion of the new stream segment. Ms. Brewster seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

IX. Administrative and Procedural Matters

Ms. Kauffman reviewed the proposed schedule for the next few months, stating that staff was proposing the next meeting date to be February 4th, in Alpine. She outlined the items that would need to be included on the next meeting agenda, including a review and adoption of the complete Initially Prepared Plan. In order to meet the March 1, 2010 submission deadline to the TWDB, meet the public notice requirements for public comment, and announcing the date(s) and location(s) of the required public hearing, staff felt that the meeting needed to take place early in February. Other items that need to be considered at the February meeting include authorizing the RGCOG to post notice requesting nominations for open seats on the planning group. She reviewed the membership list, noting that almost half of the member terms were expiring in March and most of the rest would expire in July. The group will also need to review and approve additional changes to the interim groundwater and surface water studies reports required by the TWDB. Those reports will also need to be resubmitted to the TWDB by March 1st.

After extensive discussion, the group decided that the next meeting will be held on February 4th, but the meeting location would be changed to Clint (at EPCWID#1 again) in order to facilitate the participation of several members of the group who would otherwise be unable to attend this important meeting. Ms. Kauffman reminded the group that a 2/3 supermajority quorum of 18 voting members would be required to adopt the IPP and authorize its submittal to the TWDB. Members stressed to the consultants that they would need to see a full draft of the completed IPP no later than January 28th in order to have time to properly review the document prior to the February 4th meeting. Mr. Ashworth agreed that the consultants would meet that deadline.

X. Adjourn

There being no further business to discuss, Mr. Archuleta adjourned the meeting at 2:20 PM.