

TEXAS CLEAN RIVERS PROGRAM FOR THE RIO GRANDE BASIN

Upper Rio Grande Basin Advisory Committee Meeting

July 11, 2019

6:30 p.m.

Canutillo Independent School District

7965 Artcraft Road

El Paso, TX 79932

MEETING MINUTES

Meeting Participants

Espy Holguin, Wilson & Company

Madai Vasquez, Wilson & Company

Woody Irving, Bureau of Reclamation

Daniel Chavez, HCCRD #1

Michael Flores, Lower Valley Water Irrigation District

Joul More, ARCADIS

Katie Goetz, NM Dept. of Agriculture

Michael Riley, OSE

Karen Perez, Freese & Nichols

John Joyner, Jr., Joyner Arabians

Jerry Melendez, Bureau of Reclamation

Rosalba Montes, USIBWC American Dam FO

Lori Kuczanski, USIBWC Public Affairs Officer

Gilbert Anaya, USIBWC EMD

Samantha Stiffler, USIBWC Clean Rivers

Leslie Grijalva, USIBWC Clean Rivers

Meeting Notes:

- Meeting started late (7 PM) due to delays created by severe weather.

- Meeting opened with a member of the Citizens Forum Board doing the Pledge of Allegiance, the Texas Pledge, and a prayer.
- The Citizens Forum Board was introduced:
 - Mark Calimea, Chamizal National Park
 - Rosie Montes, USBWC American Dam FO
 - Yvonne
 - Danny Chavez
 - Blanca Trout
 - Phillip Partridge
- Audience Introductions
- Leslie Grijalva was introduced by the Citizens Forum Chair prior to beginning her presentation.
- Leslie's Presentation
 - History of the IBWC CRP
 - CRP Activities
 - Monitoring
 - Integrated Report and WQ Standards
 - Water Quality Issues
 - Other Studies and Activities
 - Webpage
 - Contact Information
- Questions from the audience:
 - What are natural ways to help water quality?
 - Mentioned aeration, sand, charcoal filters
 - Leslie suggested wetlands
 - Audience: Chicago is transporting bad water to the Great Lakes, reversing river flow, St. Louis is getting the bad water. What is the penalty for communities that dump or have their effluents violating?
 - Leslie stated that any wastewater treatment plant or permitted facility must follow their permit limits. Anyone found to violate those limits can face fines and other penalties.
 - Any penalties in this area within the last 5 years?
 - Leslie stated that yes, the Sunland Park WWTP had been found to be violating discharge limits and were fined. However, neither the IBWC nor CRP have enforcement capabilities, that responsibility falls on TCEQ.
 - Are we looking at the Rio Grande and the Pecos rivers from the headwaters and seeing where the issues start? Where do communities start to use the rivers as a dumping ground?
 - Leslie stated that yes, all states carry out some sort of monitoring to fulfill Clean Water Act requirements, although the extent may vary by state. A lady from the NM Env. Dept. answered as well that monitoring is down all the way down from Colorado to Texas.
 - Is TCEQ actively going after people? How do we deal with Mexico discharging their effluent?

- Unfortunately, we can't answer for another agency, but TCEQ region 6 has investigators who go out to investigate environmental complaints. When the IBWC CRP sees a need, we will file an environmental complaint and work with them however we can. We do the same with NMED. As for Mexico, they also have permits for their facilities, and can also be fined by the Mexican government for violating them. The IBWC works together with cities and the state and federal governments when an issue is reported.
 - What's in place to enforce it? Does the EPA look into it?
 - Leslie mentioned again that TCEQ is the enforcement agency in Texas. In New Mexico, the state does not have primacy and so EPA must investigate.
 - Audience member mentioned that permitted utilities are looked at most often because they are easy to tag, but they are only one piece of the puzzle. Agriculture is present along the whole length of the river and they are not as heavily regulated.
 - Yes, but for this reason it is hard to tie to a single source. It also accumulates over time as it flows downstream. Also, dredging activities can stir things up. Agriculture does use the most water but returns the most as well.
 - Audience member is concerned about the future of our water and Climate Change. To what extent does the program factor in climate change and what might we expect in the coming years? Is any modeling done? We must manage human behavior and mitigate change in water quality because it relates to human health.
 - Leslie mentioned that the IBWC does water modeling, but that is done by a different department and she could not answer the questions from a technical standpoint. In response to how we take changes into account, Leslie explained that TCEQ had issued a drought guidance some years ago to properly document changes related to the severe drought.
 - Asked by Rosie: Is the testing criteria between TX, NM, and CO the same?
 - Leslie stated that every state has their water quality standards, and they may be different. Also, what each chooses to test and analyze for may also be different.
- Gilbert Anaya gave a presentation on the Rio Grande Canalization Project, which is a large-scale IBWC project.
 - Where does the IBWC dispose of the sediment and what is it used for?
 - Gilbert explained that a deal had been struck with landowners, who would take the sediment for free, and the IBWC would go out and spread it, etc.
 - The River Management Plan includes multiple areas. Is it the intention, once the aquatic habitat assessment is done, that it will become a part of the management plan?
 - Gilbert stated yes.
 - Habitat protection will include aquatic and terrestrial habitat but doesn't mention small mammals. USFWS is involved in reintroducing species.
 - Member of the audience stated he has never understood the purpose of EBID. Who paid for the Dams and the canals originally? Is EBID a public or private organization? Have ornithologists done surveys? What do you plan to do about the mistletoe in cotton woods?
 - People present from EBID explained to the gentleman who and what EBID is (Elephant Butte Irrigation District).

- Gilbert said yes, ornithologists had participated.
 - My Patridge is concerned that river access is limited. Things like raft races are shut down, signs are posted saying “No Trespassing” or “Enter at your own risk,” which deters people from using the river for recreation.
 - Are there plans for the Ysleta area?
 - Gilbert said yes, there has been much discussion for a walking path, but it has not been done yet.
- Board Discussion:
 - Suggested agenda items for meeting taking place on 10/10/2019
 - How enforcement is carried out when people violate water quality permits/limits/etc.
 - Asked Leslie who would be best top contact, she stated TCEQ Region 6. Someone else suggested Mike Montoya of the Drinking Water Bureau in Las Cruces. Also, the Surface Water Quality Bureau of NM.
 - Humanizing the river. Historical and cultural uses. Affordability. Improve economy, habitat and water quality.
 - Can someone invite the Franklin Canal Oversight Committee?
 - Also El Paso Irrigation District.
- Meeting was adjourned at 8:30 PM.