

MINUTES

MEETING OF THE RIO GRANDE REGIONAL WATER PLANNING GROUP (RGRWPG) (REGION "M")

10:30 A.M. WEDNESDAY, APRIL 6, 2011
LRGVDC TRANSPORTATION CENTER BOARD ROOM
510 S. PLEASANTVIEW DR., TX
PRESIDING: GLENN JARIVS, CHAIR

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

Chairman Glenn Jarvis called the meeting to order at 11:00 a.m. and announced that the meeting had been posted as required by statute and a quorum was present. The following voting members were in attendance:

Board Members

Glenn Jarvis, Chairman
Jim Darling, Vice Chairman
Mary Lou Campbell, Secretary
Robert E. Fulbright, Executive Committee
John Bruciak
Dennis Goldsberry
Ella de la Rosa
Sonny Hinojosa
Sonia Lambert
Carlos Garza

Category

Other
River Authorities
Public
Agriculture
Municipalities
Water Utilities
Electric Generating Utility
Water Districts
Water Districts
Small Business

The following members were not in attendance:

Tomas Rodriguez	Municipalities
Donald K. McGhee	Industries
Ray Prewett	Agriculture
Gary Whittington	Other
Jorge Barrera	Municipalities

2. Consider Approval of February 2, 2011 Meeting Minutes

Ms. Sonia Lambert made a motion for approval of the minutes as presented. Ms. Ella de la Rosa seconded the motion, and upon a vote the motion carried unanimously.

3. Hear Public Comment

There being no Public Comments the Chairman moved to the next item.

4. Status Reports

A. Report on TWDB Application Submission

Ms. Marcie Oviedo was recognized and reminded the Group that at the last meeting in February the Group approved submittal of the TWDB Research & Planning Fund Application. The application was due on April 8th and staff submitted it on April 5th; no action needed.

B. Discussion RE: Status of Joint Groundwater Area Planning in GMA's 4, 5, 7, 13 & 16 Under HB 1763 (2005)

Mr. Jim Darling was recognized and informed the Group that the Rio Grande Regional Water Authority (RGRWA) was pursuing funding with the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) through the Basin Studies section of the WaterSMART Program and noted that some work may be duplicative of what the Joint Groundwater Planning Groups are planning. Chairman Jarvis suggested coordinating efforts on this project and asked when the RGRWA would receive confirmation on the funding. Mr. Ken Jones stated that the RGRWA would know by the end of April if they will receive an invitation to apply for funding through this program. Mr. Darling stated that the RGRWA feels that part of their task is to implement some of the tasks planned by the Region M Group.

Chairman Jarvis stated that the deadline for the GMA's to submit their Preferred Future Conditions is at the end of this year, so the Group should have their information prior to the beginning of the next planning phase. Mr. Jarvis asked Ms. Connie Townsend, TWDB, what was the status of the recommendations on Preferred Future Conditions for groundwater. Ms. Townsend stated that the process was evolving; staff has not yet finalized the procedure, and September 1st is when planning will begin. Mr. Jarvis commented that it is too early to tell how that will affect the RGRWA project, and noted that this item should be kept on the agenda.

C. Discussion of IBWC Water Accounting at Fort Quitman

Mr. Jarvis stated that the Water Accounting issue at Fort Quitman is beginning to dovetail into a few other items. IBWC U.S. and Mexico Sections entered into Minute Order 317 in June 2010 regarding the Conceptual Framework for U.S.-Mexico Discussions on Colorado River Cooperative Actions, which is a coordination effort similar to Minute Order 308 regarding United States Allocation of Rio Grande Waters During the Last Year of the Current Cycle. Mr. Jarvis suggested that TCEQ staff consider Minute Order 317 as a model for similar discussions for how Mexico will deliver water to the U.S. on the Rio Grande. Mr. Jarvis believes this item will dovetail into work in progress on the Forgotten River Reach and the water accounting issue; all of which pertain to increased flows down river. Historical research is ongoing because it is believed that there is a relationship between the Rio Grande Compact and the 1944 Treaty. It is believed that the Rio Grande Compact was agreed to in exchange for provisions in the 1944 Treaty pertaining to deliveries of water from Mexico. Research will continue and may be expanded, and this may become more of an implementation issue than a planning issue. Chairman Jarvis cautioned that work needs to continue in order to prevent changes in the amount of water the U.S. can expect from Mexico.

Mr. Erasmo Yarrito added that last week he met Ms. Adel Cardenas of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and discovered that the EPA is currently working on funding studies along the Border on the Rio Conchos. Mr. Yarrito mentioned the Forgotten Reach of the Rio Grande to Ms. Cardenas and she stated she would bring it to the attention of her supervisor. Mr. Yarrito also recommended that Ms. Cardenas contact Chairman Jarvis for more information. Chairman Jarvis commented that there has been much interest in the Forgotten River; and that accounting at Fort Quitman and the Forgotten River coincide with each other because if the U.S. receives more water at Fort Quitman it could increase flows through the Forgotten River.

D. Reports RE: Other Water Planning Groups

1. Reports from Liaisons with Regions E, J, L, & N
There was no new information to report.

E. Report on Water Conservation Plans and Drought Management Plans Filed with Region

There were two new plans received from Hidalgo County Water Improvement District #3 and Jim Hogg County W.C. & I.D. #2

F. Status RE: Field Release of Arundo Scale – Rhizaspidiotus donacis

Dr. John Goolsby was recognized and gave a presentation on the progress the USDA-ARS has made with research and experiments using insects to control invasive weeds in the Rio Grande. Dr. Goolsby showed photos taken by one of only two thermal cameras in the United States that illustrated how much water the invasive weeds use. The thermal image showed the plants in shades of blue indicating that they were cool from high water consumption. Dr. Goolsby added that the USDA - ARS has released more than a million insects between Del Rio and Brownsville in their efforts to control invasive plants.

At the conclusion of the presentation Dr. Goolsby notified the Group that the entire USDA – ARS laboratory was in danger of being closed due to federal budget cuts. Ms. Mary Lou Campbell suggested writing a letter of support for the USDA – ARS facility to remain open. Mr. Jones stated that the RGRWA met just before this meeting and passed a resolution of support for the USDA –ARS facility, and recommended replicating that resolution, letting the executive committee review it and submitting it for ratification at the next meeting. ***Ms. Mary Lou Campbell made a motion to draw up a resolution of support for the USDA-ARS facility in Weslaco for Executive Committee approval and ratification at the next meeting; Mr. Sonny Hinojosa seconded, and upon a vote the motion carried unanimously.***

G. Status on Local Funds Contribution

Mr. Jones stated that invoices for Local Funds Contributions had been mailed recently, however it was too soon to have received any responses, and he brought the Group's attention to a listing in the binders of the entities that received invoices and the amount of each request.

5. Reports from Federal and State Agencies

A. TWDB

Ms. Connie Townsend was recognized and gave a brief presentation on the application currently being submitted and a timeline and activities for the next five years of planning.

B. IBWC

Mr. Rodolfo Montero was recognized and gave a status report on the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) projects which included improvements to various sections of the levee system; most of these projects should be completed by the end of this fiscal year; there are several sections of the levee that are still in the design stage.

The IBWC Mexican section plans to have all four El Morillo Drain pumps in operation by the end of this year and it is anticipated for CONAGUA to transfer operations of El Morillo Drain to CILA by the end of June.

C. TCEQ

Mr. Erasmo Yarrito was recognized and reported the status of the water deliveries from Mexico to the U.S. In addition he reported that the area between El Paso and Maverick County is considered under extreme drought and the area from Maverick County to the Gulf of Mexico is considered to be Exceptionally Dry. Staff expects this area to be in drought for quite some time. Mr. Yarrito next gave a report on the reservoir levels, then reported that staff installed two new salinity monitors along the Rio Grande in Starr County; by the end of the year there should be a total of eight monitors in operation.

1. Status of Water Availability Model (WAM) for Mexico

There was no new information on the WAM at this time.

D. TPWD

Mr. Willie Cupit was recognized and stated he had no new information to report at this time.

6. Discussion and Possible Action RE: Meeting Schedule

It was the consensus of the Group to schedule the next business meeting for June 1, 2011 and not to meet in May.

7. Adjourn

There being no further business to come before the Group the meeting was adjourned at 12:35 p.m.

Glenn Jarvis, Chairman

Mary Lou Campbell, Secretary