

**RIO GRANDE REGIONAL WATER PLANNING GROUP (RGRWPG)
REGIONAL WATER PLANNING REGION "M" MEETING
 9:30 A.M. - WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 18, 2004
 MCALLEN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
 1200 ASH AVENUE - MCALLEN, TEXAS**

Presiding: Glenn Jarvis, Chairman

Voting Members Present:

Glenn Jarvis, <i>Chairman</i> , Law Offices	Other
Charles W. Browning, Jr., <i>Vice-Chairman</i> , NAWSC	Water Utilities
Mary Lou Campbell, <i>Secretary</i> , Sierra Club	Environmental
Jaime Gomez, Topaz Power Group, Laredo Power Plant, Webb County	Electric Generating Utility
Sonny Hinojosa, HCID #2	Water Districts
Sonia Kaniger, CCID #2	Water Districts
Mayor James R. Matz, Palm Valley	Others
Donald K. McGhee, Hydro Systems, Inc.	Small Business
Ray Prewett, Texas Citrus Mutual	Agriculture
Xavier Villarreal, T&J Office Supply	Small Business
Gary Whittington, Unifirst Linen Service	Industries
Commissioner John Wood, Cameron County	Counties

Chairman Jarvis called the meeting to order, stated that notice of the meeting required by law had been published, and it was ascertained that a quorum of voting members was present. The Chairman then moved to agenda item 2. - Consider Approval of Meeting Minutes of July 21, 2004, and asked for any changes. There were none, and ***Mayor James Matz made a motion to approve these minutes. Commissioner John Wood seconded the motion, and upon a vote, the motion passed unanimously.***

Under agenda item 3. - Hear Public Comment, Mr. Ernesto Reyes, National Fish & Wildlife Service (NF&WS), informed the Group that the NF&WS was reviewing the biological assessments from the NRCS on problem brush species (Honey Mesquite - 56 million acres, Salt Cedar - 400,000 acres, Ash Juniper and Red Berry Juniper) and their control, in coordination with NRCS, Audubon of Texas, Central Texas Cattlemen's Association, Environmental Defense, Texas Parks & Wildlife Department, Department of Agriculture - Texas Cooperative Extension, and several other agencies. He added that the area of study is west of I-35 from Laredo to Dallas, and he understood that there is funding available for these types of projects. Ms. Monica Monk, NF&WS, then informed the group that Salt Cedar, although small in population (mostly in arroyos) at present, will become a problem in this area if not eradicated. She added that this plant uses water and excretes salt, and although it is good for soil conservation, it is not good for water conservation. It was agreed that

control measures should be taken now to prevent Salt Cedar from becoming a major problem in the future.

At the conclusion of Ms. Monk's presentation and following discussion, Chairman Jarvis asked Mr. Bill Norris, NRS Consulting Engineers, to address agenda item 4. - Regional Water Plan Development. The Chairman, with reference to agenda item 4.A. - Discuss and Consider Formation of Chapter Work Groups, following discussion, appointed the following Committee to Review Chapter 2: *Mr. Charles Browning, Mr. John Bruciak, Mr. Robert Gonzalez, Ms. Sonia Kaniger, Mr. Ray Prewett, and Mr. Carlos Rubinstein.* Later during the meeting, the following Committee was appointed to Review Desalination: *Mr. Charles Browning, Mr. John Bruciak, Ms. Mary Lou Campbell, and Mr. Don McGhee.* Mr. Norris agreed to assist in developing a schedule to review the various water management strategies (WMS's). It was agreed that the committees would meet prior to and on the same day as the Regular Region M Meeting, in the following order:

8-9 a.m. - Environmental Review Committee;
9-10 a.m. - Chapter 2 Review Committee; and
10-11 a.m. - Desalination WMS Review Committee.
11 a.m. - Regular Region M Meeting

Following discussion regarding committees, the Chairman moved to agenda item 4.B. - Ratification of Executive Committee Action RE: Brochure, and recognized Ms. Linda Fernandez, Fernandez Group, Inc. Ms. Fernandez distributed the brochures, and following discussion, ***Mayor James Matz made a motion to ratify the actions of the Executive Committee in reviewing and approving the printing of the Brochure. Commissioner John Wood seconded the motion, and upon a vote, the motion carried unanimously.***

At this time, Chairman Jarvis deviated from the agenda and requested that Mr. Randy Blankinship, Texas Parks & Wildlife Department (TPWD) address agenda item 5.D.1. - Presentation RE: Stream Segments of Ecological Significance. Mr. Blankinship's slide show had been requested at the last Region M Meeting, and he explained that it would answer some questions about the designation of stream segments of ecological significance. He added that there were some changes resulting from the last legislative session, namely the wording of the water code. *A printed copy of the slide presentation is attached to these Minutes.* Mr. Blankinship explained that the criteria used to identify these stream segments were: 1) biological function; 2) hydrologic function; 3) Riparian conservation areas; 4) High water quality/exceptional aquatic life uses/high aesthetic value; and 5) threatened or endangered species/unique communities. He expanded on each of these criteria and concluded by stating that the TPWD intends to help the regional water planning groups by: 1) providing information, data and expertise; and 2) TPWD will review the packets of information provided by the groups upon nomination of ecologically unique streams. A copy of the document, "Ecologically Significant River & Stream Segments of the Rio Grande (Region M) Regional Water Planning Area" was also distributed to the Group at this time. The Chairman noted that should be an issue for consideration by the Environmental Review Committee.

At the conclusion of Mr. Blankinship's presentation and following discussion, the Chairman asked Mr. Norris to report on agenda item 4.C. - Status on Final Survey of Water User Groups (WUGs). Mr. Norris distributed a document identifying the various WUGs, as well as a printed version of agenda item 4.D. - Status on Planning Time Line. He also stated that Mr. Bob Brandes was tentatively scheduled to report on the Water Availability Model (WAM) at the September Region M Meeting, and he anticipated presenting a draft of Chapter 3 at that same meeting.

Following the distribution of these documents, Chairman Jarvis proceeded to agenda item 4.E. - Environmental Review Committee, and recognized Ms. Mary Lou Campbell, Chair. Ms. Campbell referred to a letter from the TPWD, and Mr. Jarvis briefed the Group on this item: Previously, a letter

had been sent to the TPWD requesting a study of freshwater inflow needs of the Rio Grande Estuary, and a representative of the TPWD had responded it would work with TWDB and a proposal would be presented to the Water Planning Group regarding the study at a future Region M Meeting.

With reference to agenda items 4.F. - Review and Comments Chapter 9 -Infrastructure Financing, and 4.G. - Update on Review and Comments Chapter 2 - Current & Projected Population Water Demand for the Rio Grande Region Mr. Norris distributed copies of these chapters for the Group's review. (See agenda item 4.A. of these Minutes for review committee members.)

Following discussion, Mr. Norris reported on agenda item 4.H. - Discussion of and Possible Action on Environmental Policy Issues. He stated that there were presently no recommendations formulated on environmental flows, and then addressed agenda item 4.I. - Update on Review and Comments Chapter 8 - Unique Stream Segments/Reservoir Sites/Legislative Recommendations. He stated that copies of Chapter 8 had been distributed at the July, 2004 Region M Meeting, and was not updated at this time.

Agenda item 4.J. - Review & Discuss Water Management Strategy (WMS) RE: Desalination, had previously been mentioned under agenda item 4.A., and Mr. Norris reminded the Group that this strategy had been added to the original Region M Water Plan a year ago as an amendment. At this time, the Chairman appointed the Committee to review this strategy also. (See agenda item 4.A. above.)

The Chairman then moved to agenda item 5.A. - TWDB Report, and requested that Mr. Robert Flores, TWDB, report. Mr. Flores restated those issues previously discussed regarding Salt Cedar eradication, and mentioned Region E's Forgotten River Project application. He suggested that the group search for funding of the Salt Cedar eradication, and discussion occurred regarding aerial photography to identify the areas where Salt Cedar is growing.

At the conclusion of Mr. Flores' report, Chairman Jarvis requested that Mr. Rick Reyes, IBWC, address agenda item 5.B. - IBWC Report. Mr. Reyes reported the following during his report: On August 7, the U.S. received 328,000 acre-feet from Mexico, and it was anticipated that the water debt would be settled by 2007.

Following Mr. Reyes' report, the Chairman moved to agenda item 5.C. - Report from TCEQ Watermaster, and recognized Mr. Carlos Rubinstein, Regional Director, TCEQ. Mr. Rubinstein informed the group that at August 7, 2004 the current water level in the reservoirs was at 72.85%, or 2,423,212 acre-feet, with Mexico's capacity at 49.64%, or 1,230,644 acre-feet. Mr. Rubinstein then introduced Ms. Laura De La Garza, Arroyo Colorado Watershed Coordinator, Texas Sea-Grant, the TAMU System. Ms. De La Garza informed the Group that the Arroyo Colorado Group was working on a plan to improve the water quality of the Rio Grande, and invited anyone interested in participating to contact her. Mr. Rubinstein then reported that the House Committee on Border and International Affairs is scheduled to meet on August 19, 2004. He added that the Senate Committee on Water Rights is scheduled to be in the Valley on September 8, 2004. Discussion followed regarding testimony to be presented at these legislative committee hearings.

At the conclusion of Mr. Rubinstein's report and following discussion, Chairman Jarvis asked Mr. Ray Prewett to address agenda item 6.A. - Legislative Update. Mr. Prewett stated that the new bill authorizing additional projects has a good chance of being passed by the Senate.

At the conclusion of Mr. Prewett's report, Chairman Jarvis asked Mr. Jones to address agenda item

6.B. - Update on Contamination of Groundwater from Abandoned, Uncapped Oil and Gas Wells. Mr. Ken Jones reported that Mr. Robert Fulbright was unable to attend this meeting due to other commitments, and informed the Group that there was no new information to present. It was the consensus of the Group to defer action on this item until the September, 2004 meeting. The Chairman then moved to agenda item 7.A. - Reports from Liaisons with Regions E, J, L, & N, and stated that there were no reports to be given at this time.

At this time, the Chairman asked Mr. Jones to report on agenda item 8. - Report on TWDB Water Conservation Implementation Task Force. Mr. Jones stated that Mr. Gordon Hill, Task Force Member, was unable to attend this meeting because he was traveling in Mexico; however, the deadline for public comments is August 23, 2004.

No action was taken on this item, and following discussion, Chairman Jarvis moved to agenda item 9. - Discussion and Action RE: Meeting Schedule, and asked Mr. Jones to report. Following Mr. Jones' suggestions and discussion, **Commissioner John Wood made a motion to schedule the next meeting for Thursday, September 23, 2004, at the McAllen Chamber of Commerce, if available, with committee meetings prior to the regular Region M Meeting on that same day. Mr. Don McGhee seconded the motion, and upon a vote, the motion passed unanimously. It was the consensus of the members to return to the regular meeting schedule of the third Wednesday of each month after September.**

There being no further business to be conducted by the Group, Chairman Jarvis adjourned the meeting.

Glenn Jarvis, Chairman

Mary Lou Campbell, Secretary