



## Approved Minutes

### **Paso del Norte Watershed Council Executive Committee meeting August 2, 2013 – 9:00 – 11:00AM U.S. IBWC 4171 N. Mesa, Ste C-100 | El Paso, Texas**

**Conrad Keyes, Chair**  
**Hilary Brinegar, Asst Chair**

**Sue Watts, Secretary**  
**Ari Michelsen, Treasurer**

#### **Present:**

Christopher Brown-NMSU (by phone)  
Conrad Keyes, Jr.-Corps consultant  
Elizabeth Verdecchia-USIBWC  
Gill Sorg-City of Las Cruces  
Bert Cortez-USBOR  
Jim Wilber-USBOR

Jan Kirwin-NMSP  
Ryan Ward-NMDA  
Hilary Brinegar-Marron & Assoc  
Mike Landis-USBR  
Peter Bennett- City of LC  
Zhuping Sheng-Texas AgriLife Rsrch Ctr

1. The Executive Committee meeting of the Paso del Norte Watershed Council was called to order by Conrad Keyes at 9:01AM. All participants introduced themselves. A quorum was present.
2. The agenda was approved with no changes.
3. The minutes of the May 8, 2013 mtg were approved with amendments.
4. Reports
  - a. PdNWC Financial Report – Zhuping Sheng reported no changes in funding levels. They are working with BOR to revise the SOW and contract so proposals could be funded within a five-year timeframe.
  - b. Technical Committee Report – Zhuping Sheng reported that the committee is waiting for consultants to deliver the lower Rio Grande portion of the URGWOM for review. The Colorado portion of the model is being developed. The URGWOM manual will be reviewed and updated this year. There is an URGWOM steering committee meeting on October 16, 2013 in Albuquerque.
  - c. Biological Committee – The Montoya drain proposal is being updated. It will be submitted to the Executive Comm for review.
  - d. Clean Water Committee – The WBP needs to be distributed as FYI for reference on other current projects in the region. Is there a way to streamline the EPA review?
  - e. PdNWC website – Reports in review will be posted when final.

5. Presentations by USBOR on the Rio Grande Project (RGP) and the Operating Agreement (OA) Supplemental Environmental Assessment (EA). Bert Cortez and Jim Wilber presented.

#### 2013 RGP operations:

- Irrigation season was shortest on record. Caballo releases started June 1, completed July 18, for 45 days of irrigation. Typical season is late Feb through mid-October. Full allocation is 700K acre-feet, this year it was 170K acre-feet.
- Severe drought reduced available RGP water, only 5K acre-feet remain. San Juan-Chama and compact credit volumes amount to ~60K acre-feet in Elephant Butte.
- Spring runoff season typically March-July; in 2013 it was 40 days.
- NM is still has large regions in exceptional drought. Short-term drought indicator through August is slightly above average.
- Some gray/black water has been seen in Caballo from the Silver Fire.

#### RGP Operating Agreement Supplemental EA:

- Summary: NEPA, analysis, conclusions, path forward
- RGP history was described. The OA was developed when responsibilities were transferred from USBOR to the irrigation districts. D2 curve accounted for drought conditions when supplies had to be reduced among all three districts. D2 curve development used data from 1951 through 1978.
- In 2008, an amended OA was signed. It reflects historical operations and has two key changes: carryover accounting for unused allocations and adjustment of annual allocation adjustments due to changes in delivery performance.
- NEPA: EA done in 2007 and FONSI released. EA lasted 5 years.
- 2013 Supplemental EA purpose and scope. Evaluated 2008-2012 operations. 2013-2015 EIS will be prepared. Data and models currently available are suitable for projecting impacts. Differences are expected to be minimal due to short time frame. Alternatives evaluated were no action (operations prior to 2008 OA) and proposed action (continue 2008 OA).
- Supplemental EA: IBWC, EPCWID, EBID, TxRGCC are the parties involved. Analyses were on surface allocations, GW levels, delivery efficiency, reservoir storage, ESA, RG Compact, water quality.

- Surface water/GW: water conservation incentive with carryover provision; GW pumping that affects delivery performance adjusts total diversions to each district to account for impacts.
  - GW incentives: OA has no direct effect on GW use, which is under authority of the states.
  - Reservoir levels are expected to be slightly higher under the OA due to the carryover provision.
  - OA may affect timing of Article VII storage restrictions. Evaporation may change due to increased storage; this is a complex equation.
  - Significant impacts on the RG compact are unlikely from 2013-2015.
  - ESA: no expected impact on SWFL nesting sites from 2013-2015.
  - WQ: 303(d) cite; OA doesn't contribute to adverse effect on WQ.
  - EIS process will be completed over a three year period and analyze the OA through 2050. Wider variety of hydrologic conditions, climate change, GW modeling will assess SWGW interaction and impacts of GW pumping on RGP operations.
  - <http://www.uwbr.gov/uc/albuq/envdocs/index.html>
6. Update on Canalization ROD projects-Liz Verdecchia
    - 50 shallow GW wells were constructed with data loggers in the flood plain this year. Data will be available when final report is received. Have seen low GW levels next to the river. Some wells at 16 feet. Located from Percha down to Sunland Park at restoration sites. Purpose is to determine if site was feasible for planting or if it needs supplemental irrigation. Drought is affecting native plants. Monitoring began just before irrigation releases.
    - BOR interagency agreement with IBWC for annual SWFL surveys. 2013 territory exceeds FWS recovery goals. Nest success monitoring is occurring in August 2013. All suitable habitats from Caballo south are being surveyed. Furthest southern nest has been Sunland Park but not for two years (found at banks of restoration site by Frontera Road).
    - Another FWS work order to add four restoration sites; nine total.
    - PdNWC EC members continue to attend ROD mtgs. Are reviewing river mgt plans and other associated project plans. Will go into another public review process eventually.
  7. Update on USBR-funded projects-Mike Landis
    - Windmill project complete; low water use.
  8. Update on Sunland Park wetland project-Mike Landis

- Report was due in 2012. Rough draft has been developed.
  - Presentation. Riparian area at Sunland Park (Sunland Park bridge to Country Club bridge). Sunland Park WWTP inputs to the river. Montoya drain aquatic refugia study; drain outfall is above WWTP inputs. Sunland Park land and El Paso Electric land – need mtgs to discuss possible wetland. EBID favorable to the idea, there could be available water rights near the area that could be transferred. BOR favorable too. Montoya drain inputs are greater than WWTP inputs. GW is highly saline in the area.
  - Pilot wetlands: acres are available, may not need to line ponds, can minimize mosquitos with construction and design, WWTP outfall can be buffered
  - Salts: Higher flows create higher salt levels. Montoya drain is 2x saltier than river with 10% flow. Drain accounts for 20% of the load at Courschesne. Sunland Park salt contributions are low.
  - RG Salinity Coalition: Sunland Park is one site identified for remediation. Could curtail GW contributions. Montoya drain is major load contributor.
9. Next EC Meeting-LC, October 10, time and place TBD. (maybe Andele's for lunch before the stormwater coalition mtg)
  10. Meeting adjourned at 11:13AM.