

Environmental Committee Meeting, Paso del Norte Watershed Council

April 21, 2016 10:00 AM at SW Environmental Center (final notes)

Chairs are: Brian Hanson, Gill Sorg, Leslie Grijalva

Attendees – Brian Hanson, Gill Sorg, Peter Bennett, Conrad Keyes, Kurt Anderson, Elizabeth Verdecchia, Chris Canavan, Jake Kidd (Las Cruces), John Gahr (US Fish & Wildlife Service)

This committee was formed during the last Watershed Council meeting on January 21. It combined 2 previous committees; Water Quality and Biology.

Section 319 Clean Water Act

Liz recommended we look at the Watershed Based Plan. Chapter 5 and 6 discuss possible projects. Table 12 in Chapter 8 has a list of milestones and an implementation schedule. Outreach is included and these projects can be funded by 319. Chris suggested we apply for funds through the NM Environment Department. A small pamphlet encouraging drain management with EBID would likely compete well. The goal would be to protect water quality in the drains. It could be expanded to Texas; Leslie G could help with that. Perhaps EBID would be the fiscal agent. The grant notice will come out in July. Chris can help write the proposal. It was suggested that Zach and/or Fernando Cadena should be contacted (EBID).

Wetland at the end of Montoya Drain near Texas. Southwest Environmental Center (SWEC) applied for this before for work within the levees and could not raise the funding match. Apparently EBID and EP #1 objected to the previous proposal by (SWEC). There is support from irrigation districts for wetlands outside of the levees, on EP Electric property or along Frontera Drain. SWEC or EBID could be the fiscal agent. Conrad sent an email later to indicate that John Balliew with El Paso Water Utilities was willing to look at the wetland and drains, perhaps applying for 319 funds in 2017. Commissioner Drusina (IBWC) was supportive of the idea. They suggested EBID or SWEC could be the fiscal agent.

Chuck Bowdin Memorial Wetland and Trail

The outfall of the Las Cruces Sewage Treatment Plant just north of Interstate 10 is treated water and provides the only flow in this area of the Rio Grande in the winter. Many of the attendees feel that this could be great educational project. Brian was concerned with decreasing the flow to the Rio Grande and the hydrology of the site should be studied first. Gill said that there is no money to study this yet. It was mentioned that Jan Kirwan at Mesilla Valley Bosque State Park, was concerned about the flows in the river previously. Gill also said there were hurdles with its implementation and obtaining permits for groundwater from NMOSE, who said the project would need 15 acre feet due to evaporative losses.

Watersmart program, Bureau of Reclamation

www.grants.gov R16-FOA-DO-008 would need to apply next spring, May 2017

This program does not require a cost share match for up to \$750,000 for 2 years. Can be used to develop watershed management project concepts and/or watershed restoration plan. Watershed mgmt. projects include – water conservation, improve water quality, improve ecological resiliency or a river, reduce water conflicts, develop water markets.

A watershed plan could include – pay consultant to develop a restoration plan, obtain mapping, obtain mgmt. services. The idea came up of working in the Bosque State Park with a Watersmart grant.

EPA Environmental Education Local Grants Program, would need to apply spring, April 2017

Support local education projects; max is \$91,000, need 25% funding match

Need to address 1 of the below – EE capacity building, educational advancement, community projects, human health and environment, EE teaching skills, career development

Need to address EPA priorities – Climate change and improving air quality; Toxics and chemical safety; making a difference in waste mgmt.; protecting water; launching partnerships.

PDNWC work plan and this Committee

We did not have time to discuss this. We suggested that comments should be sent to Conrad within 2 weeks.

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