



Officers:

Chair & Acting Secretary
Conrad Keyes, Jr
Retired, NMSU and USIBWC

Treasurer
Zhuping Sheng, Director
Texas A&M AgriLife Research Center

Secretary
Delbert Humberson

Executive Committee Member Organizations:

High Desert Native Plants, LLC

*New Mexico State University,
Department of Geography*

Southwest Environmental Center

Texas A&M AgriLife Research Center

Universidad Autonoma de Ciudad Juarez

U.S. Bureau of Land Management

U.S. Bureau of Reclamation

*U.S. Section, International
Boundary and Water
Commission*

*Other Federal, State, and Local
involved agencies with PdNWC*

Other Private Citizens

Paso del Norte Watershed Council
Texas A&M AgriLife Research
Center
1380 A&M Circle
El Paso, TX 79927-5020

Website: www.pdnwc.org

PDNWC Annual Meeting Minutes

11 Oct 2018, 2-5 pm

EBID Boardroom, Las Cruces, NM

List of Attendees:

Kurt Anderson – Sierra Club or Dona Ana Mun.
Kevin Bixby - SWEC
Debra Brinkman - TAMU/Agrilife
Gary Esslinger - EBID
Delbert Humberson – USGS & Secretary
Gizelle Hurtado - NMDA
Woody Irving - USBR
Conrad Keyes – Chair & NMSU (Retired)
Zach Libbin – EBID
Connie Maxwell - NMWRRI
Zhuping Sheng – Treasurer & TAMU/Agrilife
Gill Sorg – City of Las Cruces
Greg Torell - TAMU/Agrilife
Liz Verdecchia – USIBWC

List of Call-ins:

Christopher Brown - NMSU
Corey Durr - BLM
Leslie Grijalva - USIBWC
Luzma Nava - CONAYCT

1) Introductions & Determination of Quorum – Keyes, et al.

Meeting attendees introduced themselves. Ten of 15 Executive Committee (EC) members were in attendance at onset of meeting. Quorum of the PdNWC EC was present. In addition to the EC, 6 other committee members were also present.

2) Upcoming USIBWC Environmental Assessments for the Rio Grande Canalization Project – Liz Verdecchia

a. EA for aquatic habitat restoration

Liz Verdecchia (USIBWC) provided a handout and brief background on USIBWC's 2009 Record of Decision (ROD). The ROD authorized restoration of aquatic habitat and a mosaic of native riparian plant communities at 30 sites totaling more than 550 acres over 10 years. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) drafted a conceptual plan that proposed aquatic habitat restoration through river bank destabilization, however this approach was deemed risky for the levee system by USIBWC.

USIBWC has been working with local stakeholders in identifying alternate aquatic habitat restoration activities and issued a task order that will conduct an environmental assessment and result in a final design of preferred alternatives. The task order is on an aggressive schedule so that the final environmental assessment is completed prior to the expiration of the ROD in June 2019. Liz commented that there may be room to change the schedule if it is too aggressive.

A scoping meeting is tentatively scheduled for Nov. 9, 2018. IBWC would like PDNWC personnel to attend this meeting since PDNWC input would play a critical role in implementation. A handout was also provided that summarized the task order schedule and goals.

b. EA for the continued implementation of the River Management Plan past the ROD deadline

Liz Verdecchia spoke about the June 2019 expiration of the 2009 ROD. The ROD had many aspects related to river management, including - but not limited to - habitat restoration, cessation of mowing to implement managed grasslands, phasing out grazing leases, periodic implementation of a peak restoration flow when feasible, and use of an adaptive management strategy during implementation. USIBWC has incorporated ROD commitments into the River Management Plan (RMP).

USIBWC issued a task order to complete an EA for RMP activities beyond the ROD timeframe to ensure compliance with NEPA. The No Action will be to implement the current RMP (or upcoming revision), and alternatives will evaluate other options such as recreation. Scoping meetings and site tours are scheduled for Nov. 13-15, 2018 and Liz Verdecchia encouraged PdNWC members to attend. This is the time for PdNWC members to provide suggested changes based on previous experiences with the ROD.

3) Reports by PDNWC Committees by either co-chairs – Appropriate attendees

a. Financial Report

Treasurer Zhuping Sheng provided a handout summarizing the status of grand awards, fund allocation, and current balances. Currently there are no funds, but a TCEQ grant for \$540,803 is pending for 19 September 2019.

b. Environmental Committee

Committee had nothing to report. Zhuping Sheng of TAMU AgriLife also thanked the Environmental Committee for their support on the recent TCEQ proposal.

c. Website Committee

Christopher Brown reported that the website contract was completed over the spring and summer. Moreover, the aquatic study was completed and all paperwork had been submitted to Texas A&M. The final report was published to the PdNWC website. If any updates are needed, they need to go through Conrad Keyes and Liz Verdecchia.

d. Technical Committee

Committee had nothing to report.

4) Review of By-laws and Strategic Plan and Work Plan of PdNWC thru 2022 – Keyes, et al

Conrad Keyes briefly spoke on the PdNWC by-laws. Currently the by-laws remain the same, but if any member has proposed changes they can send them to Conrad. He also asked the group if we wanted to add another officer to the council, but no replies were given. Current officers included in the by-laws are the Chair, Assistant-Chair, Treasurer, and Secretary.

Conrad Keyes also mentioned that the by-laws need clarification on the phrase “simple majority”. Is this a simple majority of the EC? Is it a simple majority of all members? Is it a simple majority of only members present at the meeting? Christopher Brown later provided feedback via email stating that a simple majority is based on the total members present for a vote, whether they are attending in person or remotely (e.g. telephone, webex).

5) Approval of any new members of PDNWC and/or the Executive Committee – Keyes

a. One new EC member before this meeting – Luzma Nava Jimenez of CONAYCT

Luzma Nava Jimenez was introduced to the group via phone. She is looking forward to working with and supporting PdNWC.

b. Other potential EC members – TBD as appropriate

A motion was made to renew EC membership for Christopher Brown, Gary Esslinger, Mike Gaglio, Alfredo Granados, and Gill Sorg. Motion was seconded and approved.

Motions were made to add Kurt Anderson (Sierra Club) and Connie Maxwell (NMWRRI) as voting members of the EC. Connie stipulated that she could only be a voting member if she represented herself as an individual on the EC. Motions were seconded and approved.

c. PdNWC Assistant Chair and Secretary positions for FY 2019 – nominations from the floor

A call for volunteers was issued for Assistant Chair, but there was no response from meeting attendees.

Regarding the Secretary, Conrad Keyes gave a brief update that Delbert Humberson is serving as Secretary, but he is limited in status to a non-voting member due to being a Federal Employee at the U.S. Geological Survey.

6) Roundtable discussion about any proposed projects to be approved by PdNWC EC for 2019

a. TX 319 project by TAMU

Zhuping Sheng provided a brief update on TAMU's TX 319 project to develop a watershed protection plan for the Rio Grande watershed region from the Texas-New Mexico border to Fort Quitman. In addition to stating that the North American Development Bank (NADBANK) could be a potential project partner, he has also approached IBWC to look for participants from Mexico; Luzma Nava said that she may be able to assist in finding Mexican participants. Zhuping Sheng also provided a brief overview of subsequent project tasks, which include performing a data compilation, identifying data gaps, and raising public awareness.

b. WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program Phase II Synopsis

Conrad Keyes stated that USBR announced that they would fund up to 10 projects under their WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program Phase II. The award ceiling is \$300,000, and the closing date for applications is January 30, 2019. Zhuping Sheng mentioned that a similar opportunity was looked at last year, but the PdNWC decided not to pursue it. Some discussion ensued regarding the potential for the Stormwater Coalition to go after some of this money using already written plans. Also, there may be a matching requirement. In the past, El Paso Water money was used to meet matching requirements.

Zhuping Sheng will provide a timeline on working up a USBR proposal and will schedule PdNWC meetings as necessary to develop it.

c) Miscellaneous – requested by Chair Keyes via email

For the South Central New Mexico Stormwater Coalition (Stormwater Coalition), Connie Maxwell gave an update on a project focused on building long-term resiliency to drought in Hatch/Mesilla Valleys through watershed health and stormwater harvesting. Focused upon the Stormwater Coalition priority watershed restoration project Rincon Arroyo, they are starting discussions on pilot studies of restoration practices, and overall watershed assessment including modeling Hatch/Mesilla stormwater harvesting and sediment transport. Current modeling work involves HEC-HMS modeling with NEXRAD inputs. These models are being calibrated against EBID runoff data, and will be used to model mitigation of peak flows using different watershed management approaches. The project is also developing a vegetation monitoring protocol and procuring new monitoring equipment. Connie presented the current pilot study on the Rincon Arroyo where strategic placement of debris dams can be used to slow down water before it enters the arroyo, which could lead to reduced head-cutting in the channel.

Connie Maxwell also provided an update on another Stormwater Coalition focus, a conceptual study in the La Union area. This project builds on the Doña Ana County Flood Commission's master drainage plan by identifying areas to slow water and capture sediment before it reaches the town. The idea is to achieve this goal through the use of green infrastructure on appropriate roads, and use fields as settlement ponds to capture sediment. Detailed implementation of the ideas proposed in this study would require community involvement. Connie also proposed creation of an interagency team focused on watershed restoration and management. Liz mentioned that USACE has expressed interest in applying a regional permit for these types of projects in our area that would allow creation of structures that affect flow and sediment transport. Connie pointed out that these plans would not divert or retain flow, instead they would create structures that manipulate flow. This difference reduces USACE permitting requirements.

Keyes also asked Zack Libbin to show what the approaching storm looked like on the US Weather Bureau web site. The estimate of 1-2 inches of rain was shown on the weather radar for 12 Oct 2018.

7) Adjournment

Meeting was adjourned.