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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:

City of Las Cruces
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 Executive Committee Meeting Minutes

02 April 2019, 1-3:30 pm

Texas A&M Agrilife Research Center, El Paso, TX

List of Attendees:

Debra Brinkman - TAMU/Agrilife
Mike Gaglio, Frontera Land Alliance
Delbert Humberson – USGS & Secretary
Woody Irving - USBR
Connie Maxwell - NMWRRI
Greg Torell - TAMU/Agrilife

List of Call-ins:

Gilbert Anaya - IBWC
Kurt Anderson – Sierra Club
Kevin Bixby – SWEC
Fernando Cadena – Consultant Davena
Crosley - NMED
Corey Durr - BLM
Leslie Grijalva – USIBWC
Conrad Keyes – Chair & NMSU (Retired)
Gill Sorg – City of Las Cruces
James Stalker - Consultant
Liz Verdecchia – USIBWC

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

Meeting attendees introduced themselves. Ten of 17 Executive Committee (EC) members were in attendance at onset of meeting, so a quorum of the PdNWC EC was present. In addition to the EC, 6 other committee members were also present.

2) Updates from Texas A&M Agrilife Research Center – Brinkman, Torell

a. TX 319 Project – El Paso County Update

Debra Brinkman informed the group that the TCEQ grant was not awarded to the PdNWC. TAMU is moving forward for the time being by building on the 2010 Stormwater Master Plan and work published by Marmolejo, Sheng, and Walton. This work is a technical report on using alternate approaches to help slow down water flow, beautify arroyos, and replenish the aquifer. Instead of concrete lined arroyos, the proposed approach would use in-channel features such as check dams and vegetation to slow water down.

The Sparks arroyo region was the initial target, however areas in Fabens and Tornillo were also added after project staff spoke with stakeholders (local elected officials and water district managers). The project was well received, and it was suggested to add areas in Fabens and Tornillo. There is also potential to cooperate with the Paso del Norte Health Foundation's efforts on developing the Paso del Norte Trail. See attached powerpoint, "TAMU_EIPasoCenterUpdate.pptx" for more details.

Next steps include continuing development of stakeholder interest, determining common goals among stakeholders/project partners, and applying for grant funding (such as the USBR Phase I grant).

James Stalker asked what the benefits of this project will be. Greg Torell is currently working on cost-benefit numbers, but Mike Gaglio stated that existing research of green infrastructure shows returns of \$3-\$6 per \$1 spent. Debra added that the targeted areas flood easily, and these efforts could help mitigate against this hazard.

During discussion, Connie Maxwell mentioned that she is also planning to apply for USBR Phase I grants for the Rincon Arroyo projects, so there is potential to cooperate.

Fernando Cadena asked how success of the program could be measured. Debra replied that if the project is successful, we will see reduction of flooding and improvement of home values through beautification of the area. Fernando also asked if precipitation data will be used, and Debra confirmed that it would be used in a hydrologic model as part of Phase I of the project plan.

b. Governor's Commission to Rebuild Texas

No formal presentation was given on this topic, however, Zhuping Sheng gave a brief description of the project via email before this meeting:

"In the Rebuild Texas initiative, one of the recommendations to better integrate emergency management functions was to unify the most critical emergency response and recovery elements. The goal is to unify all of the emergency management functions under one organizational structure. There is currently a House and Senate bill that will effectively move the Texas Division of Emergency Management from the Texas Department of Public Safety to the Texas A & M University umbrella."

See attached report, "RebuildTexasHurricaneHarveyEyeOfTheStorm_12132018.pdf" for more information.

3) New Mexico Wetlands Roundtable Update – Gaglio

Mike Gaglio spoke briefly about strategies for planting wetland/riparian areas in different environments. For example, planted shrubs/trees with deep roots at USIBWC restoration sites wouldn't need much watering. This has implications when planting in remote areas where driving water trucks hundreds of miles for frequent watering would cost. Mike Gaglio stated that he would send a list of planting strategies to the group via email.

4) Frontera Land Alliance Update – Gaglio

Mike Gaglio spoke on the [Frontera Land Alliance](#), which is El Paso's only 501(c)3 land trust organization. It is similar to the Nature Conservancy, however the Frontera Land Alliance operates on a local scale whereas the Nature Conservancy works on a macro scale. The Frontera Land Alliance works with several organizations, including El Paso Water, El Paso Parks and Recreation, the National Park Service, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife to preserve natural habitat. The Frontera Land Alliance is also accredited by the Land Trust Alliance, which means they have been vetted for being trustworthy and ethical. They currently operate in southern New Mexico and west Texas.

Recent efforts include public outreach/education activities and two conservation easement deals that are in the works. The details on these easement deals are confidential, but they are in Santa Teresa (700 acres) and Socorro. They will be co-hosting an event on June 14 titled "Your Land and Your Legacy Workshops" that will teach about estate planning and conservation easements. See their website for more details. They are also looking for good board members.

5) USBR WaterSMART Projects – Irving

Woody Irving provided an overview of the USBR's WaterSMART Program, which helps entities conserve water through 6 different sub-programs: (1) Basin Study, (2) Title XVI, (3) WaterSMART Grants, (4) Water Conservation Field Services, (5) Drought Response, and (6) Cooperative Watershed Management. These programs are funded by a combination of Federal and non-Federal funds. USBR will not fund individuals, but multiple entities can group up to strengthen their proposals. In these cooperative cases, funds will be given to a single agency that represents the watershed and serves as the fiscal agent. Woody currently oversees several WaterSMART projects, including two with Elephant Butte Irrigation District and three with El Paso County Water Irrigation District #1. He has approximately

10-12 projects within USBR's Rio Grande Project area. See more details in the attached powerpoint, "WaterSMART Program04012019.pptx".

Debra Brinkman asked which program TAMU should apply for in relation to efforts described under Item #2. Woody responded that the Cooperative Watershed Management Program was the best fit.

6) Rincon Arroyo Project Updates – Maxwell

Connie Maxwell provided an update on efforts to build long-term resilience to drought in the Hatch and Mesilla Valleys through watershed health and stormwater harvesting. They partnered with Las Cruces and applied for funding under USBR's Cooperative Watershed Management WaterSMART Program in 2018, but no funding was awarded. See details in the attached PDF, "20190402_PDN_RecWSupdate_midres_pr.pdf".

Connie asked Woody Irving how long respondents have to submit a proposal once the FOA is announced, and he replied respondents will have 3 months. The FOA is likely to be announced this summer. It is hopeful that the 2019 WaterSMART budget will be greater than in 2018, and Connie will approach the PdNWC for a letter of support. During discussion, it was suggested that all project partners be convened to help develop the plan. Conrad Keyes also suggested that we convene PdNWC with the Stormwater Coalition for a presentation on the project.

Questions were raised regarding how much water would be managed through these efforts, and who would be the actual owner of this water be? The quantity of water is currently unknown, but they are working on figuring it out. Woody stated that once runoff hits the river, it belongs to the Rio Grande Project. Connie added that this water can be intercepted prior to reaching the Rio Grande without any restrictions during the winter. However, restrictions apply during the summer. She also mentioned that another benefit of this project is that it can help mitigate against massive flow events that dump sediment in the channel.

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

a. Financial Report

Treasurer's proxy reported that PdNWC currently has no funds or assets.

b. Environmental Committee

Leslie Grijalva informed the group that the Texas Clean Rivers Program held their annual meetings on March 18 for the El Paso to Ft. Quitman stretch at USIBWC Headquarters. The meeting for the stretch from Ft. Quitman to Amistad was held on April 19 at Big Bend Ranch State Park, and the Pecos meeting was held in Midland on 4/20. Minutes for the meetings may be found at <https://www.ibwc.gov/CRP/Calendar.htm>. The Clean Rivers Program will also be having a public meeting for the Pecos River Sub-Basin in Midland on May 14, 2019. Information can be found at the same link. It was suggested that Fernando Cadena has always been a member of the Environmental Committee. Davena Crosley provided the following input via email right after the meeting:

"The New Mexico Environment Department, Monitoring, Assessment & Standards Section (MASS) held meetings in Silver City on February 12th and in Las Cruces on February 13th to discuss the 2019-2020 Watershed Survey plan. MASS will be focusing on the Upper Pecos River, San Francisco River, Gila River, Mimbres River and Lower Rio Grande over the next two years. Field sampling plans describing current surveys are available from the Surface Water Quality Bureau website at: https://www.env.nm.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/2019-2020_FSP_FINAL_20190311-certified.pdf.

Rotating, intensive watershed surveys are used to identify water quality standards exceedances and associated data needs. Under this type of survey, the state is divided into eight watersheds or groups of watersheds, and two areas are intensively monitored over a two-year period, depending on staff and financial resources. This eight-year survey cycle identifies waterbodies where water quality problems exist, serves to prioritize and re-direct the water quality monitoring program, and informs the Watershed Protections Section. As part of these surveys, monitoring is often conducted above and below point source discharges (e.g., wastewater treatment plants) to assess the impact of their discharges. Additional short-term targeted monitoring designs are employed as the need arises to address special concerns such as citizen complaints, accidental spills, fish kills, or illegal dumping."

c. Website Committee

- Liz Verdecchia and Chris Brown (via email) informed the group that NMSU is still supporting and updating the PdNWC website for free, there are no longer any PdNWC funds to support these efforts.
- All requests for website updates must be channeled through Liz Verdecchia.
- Please contact Liz or Chris Brown with any questions.

d. Technical Committee

Committee had nothing to report. It was suggested that James Stalker might potentially become a member of the Technical Committee.

e. Roster report

Conrad Keyes informed the PdNWC that the Asst. Chair normally helps to seek personnel to serve on the PdNWC work plan actions, but Keyes has been during this effort for the past 1-2 years.

6) Adjournment

Meeting was adjourned.