

The Mission and Aransas Rivers and Copano Bay Public Meeting Summary
Refugio City Hall, 613 Commerce St.
Refugio, Texas
December 3, 2007 at 6 pm

A public meeting for the purpose of informing the public, as well as, to receive public comment on the current status of the Mission and Aransas Rivers and Copano Bay Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) Project was conducted on December 3, 2007 in the Refugio City Hall. Time was allotted before the meeting from 6 pm to 6:45 pm for a poster session. The participants from the poster session are listed below:

The Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board (TSSWCB)
The Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ)
The United States Department of Agriculture-Natural Resource Conservation Commission (USDA-NRCS)
Texas Water Resources Institute (TWRI)
Texas AgriLife Extension Service
Nueces River Authority (NRA-Tx)

At approximately 6:45 pm, Leroy Wolfe (USDA-NRCS) opened the meeting by introducing the meeting participants and provided opening remarks. He spoke of the importance of keeping the lines of communication open between the public and the project staff. He was followed by John Foster (TSSWCB), who gave opening remarks, as well. He outlined the mission, jurisdiction, and responsibilities of the TSSWCB. He spoke of how the TSSWCB is becoming more involved in the project by increasing communication and funding opportunities for more water quality sampling and outreach and education projects. He also spoke of the new Memorandum of Agreement between TCEQ and TSSWCB, that contains measures to ensure high levels of communication and cooperation. He stressed that any implementation measures developed by the project for livestock grazing operations will be of a voluntary nature, since these operations are not regulated by any agency in Texas. Opening remarks were concluded by Tom Weber (TCEQ). Mr. Weber explained that the purpose of the meeting was to provide status information on the project, as well as, to receive feedback. He also wanted to convey that TCEQ currently does not have a deadline for a completion date on this project. He described the new approach to implementation of TMDL projects termed adaptive management. Adaptive management is a continuous process of developing a plan to address a problem, followed by a time of evaluation. The evaluation will determine what is most effective at achieving the project goal, and then move forward with those types of activities that will have the greatest success. This process will repeat itself throughout the implementation process.

A project status update was presented by Ward Ling from the TCEQ TMDL Program. A history of the project was given, followed by an overview of how TCEQ has responded to stakeholder comments received at past public meetings. The TCEQ and TSSWCB relayed they are taking a fresh approach to this project, and that approach is reflected in

the response to public comment and the recommendations of the Bacteria Task Force Report. Recent technical activities discussed at the meeting include a 3-year data collection project managed by NRA-Tx and funded by TSSWCB aimed at collecting bacteria data in the rivers that flow into Copano Bay. Water samples will be taken during low flow and rainfall/runoff events. Also, unannounced sampling of wastewater treatment facilities (WWTFs) has begun for those operating in the watershed. Data analysis will likely take the route of using load duration curve analysis in the non-tidal portions of the rivers. Tidal influenced portions of rivers will use a form of mass balance analysis, while the bay portion will use the Prism model. Texas A&M Corpus Christi has begun Phase II of their bacteria source tracking (BST) project that is now focusing on collecting sampling data from the rivers that flow into Copano Bay. The results of the BST project will likely be useful during implementation. The TCEQ and TSSWCB are working together to keep the public updated, as well as to receive feedback. Time was given for discussion of various topics.

Clyde Bohmfalk from TCEQ gave a recap on the conclusions of the Bacteria Task Force Report. He explained where this project fit into the recommended tiered process described in the report. A time of discussion followed that clarified how our modeling approach will follow Task Force recommendations, as well as other project related topics.

Feedback was requested from the attendees through various methods. Individual meeting feedback forms were distributed to every attendee and collected at the close of the meeting. Feedback was also received in the form of questions and comments prior to the meeting during an informal poster session, as well as during the meeting presentations. Finally, contact information for project personnel was distributed for providing feedback at a later time. Attendees recommended having the next public meeting sometime in May or June 2008. Meeting was adjourned at 9pm.