

Texas Environmental Flows Science Advisory Committee

Wednesday, April 14, 2010

9:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.

Texas Water Development Board

Stephen F. Austin Building, Room 170

Austin, Texas 78701

Minutes

Call to order and approval of meeting minutes from March 17, 2010 meeting

Chairman Huston called the meeting to order. The SAC reviewed the minutes from the March 17, 2010 meeting. The minutes were approved without any changes.

Update on activities of the Colorado and San Antonio stakeholder groups

Cory Horan (TCEQ) mentioned that the Colorado-Lavaca had a joint BBASC and BBEST meeting on March 31st. The BBEST will have its first separate meeting the following week. The Guadalupe-San Antonio BBASC and BBEST also held a joint meeting, and the BBEST will likely meet again at the end of April. The Nueces stakeholder group will be meeting next Wednesday and will probably determine the makeup of their BBEST.

Chairman Huston stated that he attended both of the joint BBASC-BBEST meetings and engaged in a discussion of lessons learned from the first two basin BBASC and BBEST groups and what to expect in their process. He also gave them an overview of the SAC guidance documents that have been finalized and that are in-process.

Budget update

Ruben Solis (TWDB) gave an update on expenditures to date and remaining funds in the budget. He reallocated \$20,000 from the SAC budget to the Sabine BBEST budget to cover their cost overruns, similar to what was done with the Trinity BBEST about 10 months ago. Regarding the long-term budget, allocations will be made to existing BBEST budgets to cover coordination activities with the BBASCs after they have submitted their recommendations. This information has been relayed to the new BBEST groups as well.

Liaison reports

Vice-Chairman Brandes stated that the Sabine River Authority is having the firm AECOM analyze the impacts of the BBEST recommendations on water supply. Mary Kelly mentioned that varying interpretations may make this issue seem more significant than it is, and that different recommendations from the BBASC, compared to what the BBEST developed, will likely result. It was reiterated that the SAC has offered their assistance, and it is up to the BBASC to accept or not.

Chairman Huston reported that he met with the Trinity BBASC and that they generally agreed with the SAC's comments on the BBEST report. He also offered the SAC's help

if they felt it would be useful. Fred Manhart stated that he attended the following BBASC meeting and was able to give some advice to the group. He was also asked to attend the April 15th meeting as a potential resource. Chairman Huston mentioned that the SAC needs to be prepared to respond to any requests for assistance. Fred also mentioned that the Trinity BBASC has hired two facilitators from the UT Center for Dispute Resolution to help with their remaining meetings. Mary Kelly said that the BBASC is having TWDB do some WAM modeling to evaluate impacts of BBEST recommendations.

HEFR Enhancement Status report

Dan Opdyke (TPWD) reported that TCEQ has reviewed some of the code changes to HEFR, and that he is currently in the process of working on outputs. A change has been made to address intermittent and ephemeral streams; there's now a table that describes the frequency of zero-flow days, along with other changes. These enhancements should be completed by mid-May, with the exception of low priority items. Revamping MBFIT and connecting HEFR to the Trident workflow package is being developed by TCEQ and UT's CRWR. This is a large effort that will change HEFR output to make it more compatible for other uses. The SAC agreed that this is a useful track, but it should not hold up the other modifications already identified. Discussion ensued on how the modifications should be documented through revisions to the existing guidance document. Lastly, Dan will discuss possible workshops with the new BBEST chairmen.

Work Plan Development guidance document

Ed Oborny gave an overview of the environmental flows questionnaire that was distributed to the resource agencies and who it was sent to.

Program Presentations and Questionnaire Response

Each agency (TPWD, TCEQ, TWDB) discussed their data collection programs. Additional information regarding these programs can be found on the TCEQ-SAC website. It was agreed that all sources of data need to be documented in the work plans that will be produced by each basin group. Ed Oborny stated that he will beef up the guidance document to reflect the discussion and then distribute to SAC members for discussion at the next meeting. The draft will be completed by May 3rd. Comments will then need to be submitted to Ed by May 10th so they can be discussed at the May 12th meeting.

Lessons Learned Montagna

Paul Montagna – need to figure out what stakeholders need so can communicate to BBESTS to allow them to produce their recommendations in a manner that will be useful to the stakeholders and allow them to get what they need from a technical document.

Paul has so far outlined the timeline, scope of activities, BBEST is not done when recommendations are submitted; and some of the things along the way that are important for the workplan – ensure they don't get left behind

Who the audience is, what they need, and how to present it; also archiving issue – make sure data used to make recommendations is available after bbest recs are submitted.

Document will be direct to the bbests (the ones currently starting up)

BB – focuses on procedures rather than how the BBESTs came up with their recs; not focus on the analytical aspect; the guidance documents do that.

GW - Remind BBEST that their recs should be independent on needs for future water but solely the needs of the ecosystem; BB – but recs should be implementable otherwise they are useless - be careful how this is framed

MK – might be something for the new bbests to look at SAC comments on the first two bbest reports

PM - Might want to take another look at the SAC ISF guidance but beyond the scope of the Lessons Learned document

BB – we've set in motion a process to base on historical flows then use HEFR, there is no linkage to the environment/biology

BB – when you set the bbest approach (HEFR – hist flows) what you get is the default answer with confidence that that will protect a SEE but that's a big assumption

MK – concerned about transparency of process at bbase level to ensure that they are interpreting bbest recs the right way; could have a bad reaction to the flow regime recs -how balancing by bbase is done is important

Bbests need to be prepared to have their report scrutinized and have some hard questions asked by the bbase

PM – paul will put together a revised draft and group can finalize at the May meeting

Comments back to Paul by April 28th, to drive to conclusion on the 12th

Public comments

Steve Box – good to hear discussion of what a SEE is; liked workplan guidance discussion – will help future groups

Would like to hear about ecological function as a measure of SEE, that might drive a better understanding of process and help groups

Next Meeting (TCEQ) – Schedule (May 12) and Agenda

Envision SAC presentations on stakeholder documents

***talk with Huston about who will discuss discussion paper at G/SA

8:30 start time – should be finished by 9:00

Agenda Topics

- HEFR update transmittal memo on changes, final briefing on enhancements, potential workshop discussion
- Liaison report
- Lessons learned draft and conclusion
- Work plan draft and discussion
- Discussion of HEFR guidance/ISF guidance – brandes identify key areas that need to be updated