

Brazos River and associated bay and estuary system Basin and Bay Stakeholder Committee (BBASC)

Tuesday, April 26, 2011 at 10:00 a.m.

Brazos River Authority Offices

Waco, Texas

Minutes

Introductions

BBASC chair Dale Spurgin called the meeting to order and members introduced themselves.

Public Comment

None.

Formalize ground rules/operating procedures

Members went through and discussed a draft version of the BBASC meeting rules. A motion was made and seconded to change the definition of excessive absences from three meetings to greater than 25% of all meetings over the course of the full BBASC term. The draft rules, as amended, were approved as final. The meeting rules will be posted to the BBASC web page on the TCEQ website.

Approval of minutes from the February 25, 2011 meeting

The minutes of the February 25, 2011 BBASC meeting were approved without changes.

Texas Environmental Flows Science Advisory Committee remarks

Texas Environmental Flows Science Advisory Committee (SAC) chairman Bob Huston explained the role of the SAC in the Senate Bill 3 process as providing technical support and coordination to all of the Basin and Bay Expert Science Teams (BBESTs). The SAC has produced several guidance documents, which are posted on TCEQ's website, and continues to tackle new issues. He said that the SAC also reviews the BBESTs' final reports and provides comments to the Environmental Flows Advisory Group (EFAG). Mr. Huston gave an overview of the Senate Bill 3 timetable and the players involved, including the designated SAC liaisons to the Brazos BBEST (Paul Jensen and Fred Manhart). He mentioned that the BBEST will be a technical resource for the BBASC, and he encouraged the BBASC to stay in touch with what the BBEST is doing in their process, in order to be prepared for the report that the BBEST will deliver. He also talked about the adaptive management process and the need to develop a work plan. Lastly, he encouraged the BBASC to engage fully in the process to ensure the best results.

Budget Update – TWDB

Nolan Raphelt reported that TWDB is currently working with the BBEST on developing an approved budget.

Basin and Bay Expert Science Team (BBEST) update

BBEST chair Tom Gooch gave a summary (handout) of the BBEST's first meeting in April. The BBEST elected officers (Kirk Winemiller as co-chair) and established two subcommittees, hydrology and ecology, to better focus their efforts. He said that funding for the BBEST will likely end after August 31st, so the BBEST is preparing to conduct as much work as they can up until that time. He then discussed the USGS flow gages that might be used to make

environmental flow recommendations (handout provided) and explained the geographic scope that the group has been charged to cover. He mentioned that the next BBEST meeting is scheduled for May 23 and/or 24 in Austin.

Environmental Flows 101 – TPWD

Dan Opdyke with TPWD presented a PowerPoint slideshow giving an overview of environmental flows (presentation on BBASC website). He defined environmental flows and listed some of the major ecosystem services they provide. He talked about the economic impact that fish and wildlife recreation can have in Texas. Dan next discussed instream flow, the four components of instream flow, and the ecological functions of each component in providing for a sound environment. He then described the primary disciplines (biology, geomorphology, hydrology, connectivity, and water quality) used to help quantify each instream component. Lastly, Dan mentioned the Senate Bill 2 Texas Instream Flow Program, its purpose of conducting detailed studies to determine instream flow needs in priority basins, and how it relates to the Senate Bill 3 process.

Kevin Mayes with TPWD gave a PowerPoint presentation (also on website) entitled “A Primer on Fish and Wildlife Issues in the Brazos River Basin.” He further elaborated on the primary disciplines involved with instream flow quantification and gave example considerations of each discipline. Kevin then discussed issues such as threatened and endangered species for specific Brazos River Basin fish, invertebrates, and reptiles. He also talked about golden algae and the impact that it can have in the basin.

Texas Instream Flow Program Update – TCEQ

Dakus Geeslin with TCEQ gave an update on the activities of the Texas Instream Flow Program (TIFP) in the middle and lower Brazos River (presentation on website). He started by giving more background on the TIFP and its purpose to determine flow regimes necessary to support a sound ecological environment in Texas rivers and streams. He said that in some cases the information collected by the TIFP can serve as best available science for the Senate Bill 3 process. Dakus laid out the steps involved in the TIFP studies, from goal development and study design to data collection and the final recommendations report, including areas where stakeholder input and peer review play a part. He mentioned that a draft study design has been developed for the middle and lower Brazos River and showed locations of the proposed study sites. A limited amount of data could be available for use by the Brazos BBEST. He then stepped through examples of how hydrological, biological, habitat, and water quality data can be used to make instream flow recommendations. The resulting information from the TIFP studies can serve as a resource for fish and wildlife conservation, water rights permitting, and state and regional water plans. Lastly, Dakus showed how the Senate Bill 2 and 3 programs can complement one another.

Identification/Discussion of Important Issues to Consider

BBASC members briefly discussed topics of interest such as BBEST considerations (e.g., flow gage and indicator species selections, gage period of record), stream vs. reservoir focus, balancing human and environmental needs, getting educated on the different needs of the interest groups represented on the BBASC, and how to resolve differences. These issues and others will be further discussed at the next BBASC meeting. TCEQ will coordinate a presentation to the BBASC on building consensus. Members were encouraged to spend time identifying issues of importance to their interest group and come prepared to share them with the group.

Set next meeting

It was agreed to hold the next meeting on June 28th in Waco starting at 10:00 am. Brazos River Authority staff will check on the availability of a meeting room at their facility. The meeting agenda will include a BBEST update, a presentation on consensus-building (coordinated by TCEQ), and a continuation of the issues identification discussion.

Public Comment

None.