

Atascosa River TMDL Public Meeting

FINAL DRAFT Meeting Summary – November 13, 2003

Attendees: Jeremy Walther, Johnny Huizar, Rocky Freund, Jesse W Jones, Mike B. Arr, Raul Riggle, Melanie Edwards, Gerald Black, David Alviso, Jr., Kelly Ruble, Diana J. Bautista, Johnny Martinez, Joe M. Bosquez, William O. Lamb, Santiago Lopez, Jr.

Also present was TCEQ Project Manger Andrew Sullivan, Facilitator Earlene Lambeth, and TCEQ contracted staff representing Conrad Blucher Institute for Surveying and Science (CBI) - Mark Beaman

CALL TO ORDER/WELCOME/INTRODUCTIONS:

Earlene Lambeth (TCEQ) opened the first meeting of the Atascosa River TMDL project with a thank you to the Evergreen Underground Water Conservation District for use of their conference room and supplying coffee. Introductions were made, handouts distributed, and the evenings' agenda was reviewed.

The purpose of the meeting was to inform the public and potential stakeholders on the status of work that was being performed for a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) project on the Atascosa River as required under the 1972 federal Clean Water Act. The evenings' meetings agenda included presentations on the TMDL program and process, history and development of the Atascosa project, the 305(b) assessment and 303(d) listing processes, and an opportunity to provide input from the public on the project.

Basic ground rules were established for the first informal meeting of the Atascosa River TMDL Project. The following ground rules were set up:

Everyone's ideas are important--share the time.

Stick to the topic - tonight's agenda is the Atascosa TMDL Project. If you have comments related to topics other than this project, please hold them until after the meeting.

Be candid but courteous.

Address all comments to the group at large.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Mr. Andrew Sullivan, the TMDL Project Manager, focused the discussion on the work that has been done on the Atascosa River for approximately the last 1½ years. Mr. Sullivan began with an introduction to the TMDL process. He explained the goal of a TMDL is to determine the amount (or load) of a pollutant that a body of water can receive and still support its designated uses, such as recreation or support of aquatic life. The load is then allocated among all the potential sources of pollution within the watershed, and measures to reduce pollutant loads are developed as necessary to meet applicable water quality standards.

Mr. Sullivan continued the presentation explaining the history of the project and established water quality standards. Mr. Sullivan reported that under the current standards, aquatic life use has different levels such as high, intermediate, or limited. There are no levels under the recreational use to be considered. He also explained that the Atascosa River has been placed on the 303(d) list of impaired water bodies and that this list is compiled every two years. Mr. Sullivan explained that water quality in a 25 mile segment (downstream of SH16) of the Atascosa River did not meet the criteria for dissolved oxygen and bacteria for aquatic life uses and recreational uses respectively. He explained that the aquatic life use is not supported due to depressed dissolved oxygen concentrations and that the contact recreation use is not supported within the same segment due to elevated fecal coliform \ E. coli Bacteria densities. TCEQ and contracted staff could be looking for possible pollutant sources as part of future TMDL work, considering non-point sources and working to inform stakeholders of the work being done.

Public participation is very important and ensures that state government considers local perspectives in its decisions and this project will be a joint effort among the state and local stakeholders. At this time there exists three potential outcomes of the work being performed on the Atascosa River, a possible de-listing from the 303(d) list, a Use Attainability Analysis (UAA) or a full and complex TMDL. At this point it has not been determined which course of action will be taken in the Atascosa watershed.

Mr. Sullivan explained that the historical data had been compiled for the impaired segment of the Atascosa River and that additional data is being collected to verify the existence of the observed impairment. He reported that a Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) had been developed as well as a Monitoring Plan for the Atascosa project. Mr. Sullivan also reported that TCEQ was about three months into the 2003-2004 Monitoring Plan timeline. After the additional monitoring is complete a summary of the results of the data collected is expected to be available in the fall of 2004. At that time a determination would be made to develop a TMDL or take other appropriate action to address the impairment(s).

Meeting attendees had questions about the sites or stations being monitored under the project in the area of impairment. Mr. Sullivan explained that the Watershed would be visited at least ten times at three stations within the area of impairment in the initial two years of the project. Data would be collected at each site for a total of at least 30 Atascosa River samples analyzed from each site. Biological samples would also be taken three times at each site that would include fish, insects, and a habitat study. . Mr. Sullivan reported that initial indications appear a TMDL for bacteria (contact recreational use) may be necessary for this segment of the Atascosa River. A possible change in the water quality standards by means of a UAA for the aquatic life use could be considered but all is subject to change based on new data. Biological, chemical and physical parameters will be considered before any action is taken. All potential stakeholders will be notified and another meeting will be held when data is available.