

Trinity and San Jacinto River Basins and Galveston Bay
Basin and Bay Area Stakeholder Committee
Thursday, March 18, 2010 at 10:00 am
Trinity River Authority Offices
Arlington, Texas

Meeting Minutes

Call to Order

Chairman Vance called the meeting to order.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

Minutes from the February 23, 2010 meeting were approved with no changes.

Public Comment

None.

Update on Meeting Facilitation Services

Ken Kramer informed the group of funding offers for facilitation from National Wildlife Federation (\$7500), Sierra Club (\$2500), and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (probably \$7500). If professional facilitation is still feasible at this point, the plan would be to go through Galveston Bay Foundation (GBF) to retain the service. The group agreed to pursue Suzanne Schwartz from the University of Texas Dispute Resolution Center as a facilitator because of her background and experience with water issues. Chairman Vance requested that each member start to compile a list of issues and concerns about the flow recommendation process that can be sent to the facilitator.

SAC Comments on BBEST Recommendations Report

Science Advisory Committee (SAC) chairman Bob Huston gave an overview of the SAC's comments on the Trinity/San Jacinto BBEST final recommendations report. Copies of the draft comments were distributed to the members. Chairman Huston mentioned that the SAC will be sending their finalized comments to the Environmental Flows Advisory Group (EFAG) the next day. The EFAG may or may not submit their own comments to the TCEQ. The SAC made no attempt to resolve or harmonize the split recommendations of the BBEST.

Chairman Huston then updated the committee on relevant issues discussed at the previous day's SAC meeting in Austin. The SAC wants to assist the BBASC in some way in their relationship with the BBEST. Specific SAC members (Mary Kelly, Jim Wiersema, Paul Montagna, and Bob Huston) were designated to assist the BBASC in its dialogue with the BBEST in trying to understand impacts of possible strategies and recommendations. Chairman Huston also mentioned the possibility of the SAC providing some funding to the BBEST to further assist with the BBASC-BBEST interaction. The group agreed to accept the SAC's offer of assistance.

Update on TWDB Water Availability Model (WAM) Runs

Nolan Raphelt with the Texas Water Development Board (TWDB) presented additional analyses to determine how often BBEST pulse and overbank flow criteria (peak only and peak, volume, and duration together) were met at three different gages (Carrollton, Conroe, and Oakwood) under four different flow scenarios (criteria development gage flows, recent gage flows, WAM 3 data, and WAM 9a data). After discussing the results, Nolan also presented an alternate accounting method for determining how often the flow criteria are met, which allows a given high flow event to satisfy more than one category of criteria. It was mentioned that this alternate method is more consistent with how the pulse flow criteria were developed. Nolan then proposed a possible path forward to help determine the effects of the BBEST's environmental flow recommendations on water yield. Texas Parks and Wildlife and TCEQ will assist with the effort as needed. The group agreed to have Nolan proceed with the proposed analyses with the stipulation that both accounting methods be utilized and compared.

NWF Proposal for Freshwater Inflow Standards for Galveston Bay

Norman Johns with the National Wildlife Federation (NWF) gave a presentation entitled "A Possible Consolidated Approach to Estuary Inflows for Galveston Bay." Norman began by giving an overview of the inflow proposals (the salinity zone approach and the state method) of the two BBEST subgroups and how each was derived. He then gave an example, using the Trinity River, of how the salinity zone inflow and the HEFR flow regime values could be consolidated and used to compare the state methodology numbers. The following conclusions were drawn: 1) the BBEST's salinity zone inflow recommendations can be consolidated with HEFR-based inflows to arrive at inflows comparable in volume to the state methodology; 2) there is reasonable seasonal alignment between the state methodology recommendations and a consolidated approach based on BBEST methods; and 3) protecting proposed instream flow regimes, including base flows & high flow pulse components, also appears to provide reasonable mid-level estuary inflows. Norman agreed to provide a write-up of his work for the BBASC.

Public Comment

Myron Hess (NWF) was encouraged by the proposed TWDB evaluations of future water availability, the offer of assistance from the SAC, and the prospects of facilitation for the BBASC. Scott Jones (GBF) informed the BBASC that he spoke with Suzanne Schwartz and that she is available to facilitate upcoming meetings and will need to begin gathering information from the members.

Agenda Topics for Next Committee Meeting

The upcoming meeting dates were established as April 7 (1:00 pm, Lone Star Conference Center in Conroe), April 15 (10:00 am, SJRA in Conroe), May 5 (time to be determined, SJRA in Conroe), and May 19th (10:00 am, SJRA in Conroe). Glenda Callaway will check with Jace Houston to confirm meeting locations. Topics for next meeting would include a report from the facilitator and discussion of concerns/issues, updates on analyses performed by TWDB and NWF, and development of timeline to complete tasks.

Adjourn