

**Guadalupe, San Antonio, Mission, and Aransas Rivers and
Mission, Copano, Aransas, and San Antonio Bays
Basin and Bay Expert Science Team (BBEST)**

Thursday, April 29, 2010 at 10:00 a.m.

SAWS – San Antonio, TX

MINUTES

Call to order

TCEQ

BBEST Role, purview, and timeline

TCEQ

Cory went over the SB3 duties document, work plan, timeline, and explained role of BBEST / BBASC / TCEQ. A request has been made to the EFAG to extend the BBEST timeline to March 1, 2011. BBASC will consider the BBEST recommendations while developing their recommendations for environmental flow standards and strategies to meet those standards.

Administrative / Procedural

• **Introductions and areas of expertise**

BBEST

Members introduced themselves and described their areas of expertise and backgrounds:

- Warren Pulich: Works at River Systems Institute in San Marcos, previously at TPWD. Plant/coastal wetland ecologist, modeling for freshwater inflow requirements for bays and estuaries
- Scott Holt: Retired from UT Marine Science Institute – estuarine fisheries ecologist
- Mike Gonzales: Works at San Antonio River Authority, a biologist, fish communities in San Antonio River, water quality monitoring, TMDL, Texas Instream Flow Program
- Gregg Eckhardt: Works at San Antonio Water System, upper basin, water quality modeling, water and wastewater treatment, recycling, aquifer storage and recovery project
- Debbie Magin: Works at the Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority, aquatic biology degrees, water quality monitoring, lab experience, Watershed Protection Planning, Clean Rivers Program, liaison between GBRA operations and TCEQ
- Sam Vaugh: Water resources engineer at HDR, has worked in Guadalupe-San Antonio basin for over 20 years, lots of interactions with river authorities and water resource agencies, modeling experience
- Norman Johns: Water resource scientist for National Wildlife Federation, marine and estuarine experience. Involved with environmental flows, especially freshwater inflows to estuaries
- Liz Smith: Center for Coastal Studies, Texas A&M University, coastal habitat assessment, worked extensively with Coastal Bend Bays and Estuaries Program, riparian experience, Mission and Aransas watersheds, interested in how species utilize habitats
- Tim Bonner: Associate Professor at Texas State University, director of aquatic station, ecology and biology of stream fishes, has looked at historical changes and trends in fish assemblages in San Antonio River, also for upper and lower Guadalupe system and San Marcos River, habitat associations in the Blanco River – lots of info on fishes in this system already analyzed
- Thom Hardy: Chief Science Officer at River Systems Institute, instream flow expert, aquatic ecology, civil and environmental engineering, focus on hydrology and hydraulics, was on National Academy of Sciences review committee for the Texas Instream Flow Program

• **SAC Liaisons**

George Ward: Commented that there are lots of resources produced by the SAC. Resources include: HEFR – an analytical tool that cast flow data into form of a hydro-statistical array, similar to IHA and TIFP. Encouraged group to attend HEFR workshops.

Jim Wiersema: Commented that this group has much more data than previous two groups; SAC is working on lessons learned from previous two BBEST groups to aid new BBESTs in their task.

- **Elect officers**

Cory explained that the resource agencies' role is to provide administrative and technical support and the need for the BBEST to elect a chairman. Norman Johns nominated Sam Vaugh as Chairman – motion was approved unanimously. Norman Johns was then nominated by Warren Pulich and approved as Vice Chairman.

Expenses and reimbursement logistics

TWDB

- **Budget review**

Carla Guthrie is the TWDB liaison; she handed out budget packets to members. Legislature provided \$228,000. BBEST needs to form subcommittee to develop budget, should include any funding for coordination with BBASC.

- **BBEST time at meetings**

Members may be reimbursed for time spent in meetings (rate is \$150/hour), travel costs but not travel time, and lodging expenses; both subcommittee and workgroup meeting time is eligible for reimbursement; tasks assigned to specific members or contractors can be reimbursed.

- **Contracting and BBEST assignments**

\$100,000 (out of the \$228,000) set aside for contracts. BBEST determines how to spend this money; most have to go out for qualifications-based selection unless interagency contract. If a member wants to do the contract work, they cannot be involved in developing the selection process.

- **Budget development**

Money can be moved between budget categories. Reimbursements can be submitted any time but can't be paid until EFAG approves budget.

Thom suggested that at the end of each meeting group needs to agree on time spent for reimbursement purposes. Carla suggested that members turn in reimbursement forms ASAP in order to keep track of budget and expenditures. She will have more information on contracts at the next meeting.

Sam and Norman will draft an initial budget for this group; and share it via e-mail for approval at next meeting. Norman noted that quite a bit of the literature compilation may already have been done, so group may not need to budget much money for that task. SARA offered to provide any administrative/staff support requested by the BBEST.

Decision making / consensus

TCEQ/BBEST

- **Quorum rules**

All other groups have defined quorum as two-thirds of members. This group has two non-voting members. Group decided that quorum will be of voting members only. A quorum would be needed to make significant decisions, but not necessary to conduct meetings.

The BBEST decided that a quorum will require the presence of seven voting members.

- **Proxies / alternates**

Norman suggested if members cannot make it to a meeting, they should either send a representative to take notes and monitor the meeting or contact another BBEST member to stay caught up. However several members opined that it is essential for continuous involvement on the part of the BBEST members. Group decided that for decisions requiring a vote, the votes have to be cast by members themselves.

Admin. documentation (e.g., meeting minutes) support

TCEQ

Cory explained TCEQ role and the role of the resource agencies (technical support). TCEQ staff will facilitate the meetings. Meeting minutes will focus on main discussion topics and any decisions made. TCEQ will draft meeting minutes and sent out to the group for review. Minutes will be discussed/modified/ approved at the next meeting and then posted on the TCEQ web site.

Technical documentation support

TCEQ

San Antonio River Authority will provide staff support to pull components of the BBEST recommendations report together. GBRA offered assistance to this group in this regard.

Technical / Scheduling (handout)

Sam and Norman

Sam and Norman put together draft framework/timeline. Cory will send out to BBEST members. Members discussed this material at length and felt it was a suitable beginning guide. Thom opined that the group should avoid spending too much time in early meetings receiving presentations and try to take it upon themselves to accelerate the work schedule. This idea was supported and led to the formation of subcommittees to move forward on subtopics and proposed work topics/schedules to bring back to the main group [see below].

Information for June meeting – The Group discussed agenda topics and needed items for next couple of meetings. One of these is a discussion of statistical instream flow methods (HEFR/MBFIT). Dan Opdyke (TPWD) will be asked to make a presentation at the next meeting. Review biology and hydrology of bays and estuaries; have TPWD or TWDB talk about inflow data, how it's developed and assumptions. Tim will discuss indicator species, fluvial ecology and incorporate discussion of sound ecological environment into presentation for June meeting as well.

Basin Geography: flow regimes will need to be developed for specific locations; this decision will be based on geographic conditions, manmade influences, etc. Norman pointed out that these sites will be used for decision making in the permitting process. The Hydrology Subcommittee, including Thom Hardy and Tim Bonner, will compile information for the next meeting. Kathy Alexander (TCEQ) will be asked to make a presentation at the next meeting.

Sound Ecological Environment: Group will have to define “sound ecological environment” (natural, current, pre- or post-reservoir development). This needs to be a decision point for both instream flows and freshwater inflow recommendations.

Information for July meeting – Potential presentations/topics from Clean Rivers Programs, water quality including impaired segments perhaps presented by TCEQ, discussion of subsistence flows (minimum DO levels). [Debbie (GBRA) and Mike (SARA) can present water quality assessment results]; discussion of estuarine methodology approaches and proposed plan for the group. Norman suggested that the group ask a SAC member to present insight from estuary work done by/for first two BBESTs.

Subcommittees

BBEST

Sam suggested subcommittees for hydrology, estuarine biology, fluvial biology, water quality, and geomorphology. Group agreed to have instream and estuarine subcommittees that each cover the various disciplines (biology, water quality, geomorphology) and a hydrology subcommittee because hydrology straddles both instream and estuarine. Norman suggested that workgroups include summaries to explain their work and how they developed their recommendation. Group agreed with this approach.

Subcommittee assignments:

- Instream – Thom (subcommittee lead), Gregg, Debbie, Mike, Paul Hudson (geomorphologist), Liz, Tim
- Estuarine – Warren (subcommittee lead), Scott, Norman, Ed Buskey, Mike
- Hydrology – Sam (subcommittee lead), Scott (estuarine), Gregg, Norman, Liz, Tim, Thom, Warren

Communications regarding subcommittees (meetings, etc.) come from subcommittee leads and cc Sam, Norman, and Cory. Cory will distribute information to the BBASC, agency staff, and SAC liaisons. Subcommittees not subject to Open Meetings requirements.

Subcommittee tasks / deliverables / logistics

Hydrology subcommittee – Objectives: recommendations on gage and season selection and justifications and discussion on how to define dry, average, wet conditions, subsistence flow and base flow for hydrograph separation. Conference call on June 1 at 2:00 p.m. Cory will set up the call and send out details to group.

Instream subcommittee – Thom and Tim will compile species list related to all instream flow data with goal of suggesting on June 11 where to apply recommendations to support HEFR overlays.

Estuarine subcommittee – members need to read bay and estuary guidance, discuss available techniques, target species, and what constitutes a sound ecological environment. Warren Pulich will work to schedule a meeting of the subcommittee.

Each subcommittee should identify data gaps or analysis type assignments by June meeting so that group can prepare for potential contracts.

Notebook orientation

Notebooks distributed. Administrative information included: list of BBEST members, BBASC members and its meeting rules. Technical information includes: HDR presentation on water rights; Texas Instream Flow Program study design on lower San Antonio River and Cibolo Creek and suggested deadlines for TIFP study. Instream flow program would like feedback from the BBEST regarding these deadlines.

Public comments

James Dodson discussed the San Antonio Bay Partnership – June 24 stakeholder meeting. The partnership will make data and technical documents available via the website that they are developing. Steering committee meeting on Tuesday. San Antonio Bay Partnership will sponsor a two-day conference in the fall.

Norman suggested the BBEST try to accommodate public dialogue throughout meetings, with option to limit individual's time as necessary, as well as provide opportunity for formal comment at end of the meeting. Group agreed to do so.

Future meeting dates and locations

Suggested meeting on the second Thursday of each month from 10-3 (flexible). Tentative date for November meeting is the third Thursday (11/18/2010), as second Thursday is Veterans Day.

June 10 – HEFR workshop (tentative). TPWD to coordinate a location for workshop.
June 11 BBEST meeting at location near HEFR workshop
July 8 BBEST meeting in coastal area.