

Colorado and Lavaca Rivers and Matagorda and Lavaca Bays Basin and Bay Area Stakeholder Committee (BBASC)

Wednesday, May 26, 2010 at 10:00 a.m.

Lavaca-Navidad River Authority, Hafernack Recreation Center
891 Brackenridge Parkway, Edna, Texas

MINUTES

BBASC Members Present: Chair Ronald Gertson, Vice-Chair Myron Hess, Bruce Arendale, Patrick Brzozowski, Jim Dailey, Deedy Huffman, Joe King, Frank Lewis, Jeff Fox (alternate for Teresa Lutes), Dick Ottis, Bob Pickens, L.G. Raun, Caroline Runge, Clarence Shomburg, Bob Shoemate, Buddy Treybig, and Suzanne Zarling.

Call to Order and Introductions

Chairman Ronald Gertson called the meeting to order and meeting attendees introduced themselves.

Discussion and Agreement on Agenda

The draft agenda was approved without changes.

Public Comments

Lindsey Lee Bradford, representing the advocacy group Leave Our Lavaca Alone (LOLA), voiced the group's opposition to damming the Lavaca River, stating that there are other alternatives to providing additional water supply. She mentioned that LOLA has been present at all recent Lavaca-Navidad River Authority board meetings and still has unanswered questions.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

The draft minutes from the March 31, 2010 meeting were unanimously approved.

Lavaca River Basin Presentation (LNRA)

Pat Brzozowski of the Lavaca-Navidad River Authority gave an overview of the Lavaca River basin with characteristics of its topography, major tributaries, drainage area, average rainfall, land cover, and land use. He then provided information regarding surface water rights within the basin including the number of permits and primary water uses, and discussed the rights owned by LNRA. He also talked about the major reservoir in the basin, Lake Texana, describing its history, size, yield, and water release schedule and requirements for delivering water downstream to Lavaca Bay. Sylvia Balentine with LNRA then discussed the river authority's objectives and priorities regarding water quality in the Lavaca River Basin such as protecting water quality and fish and wildlife habitat, providing a quality water supply, and monitoring water quality within the basin.

Lavaca Basin and Bay Monitoring Presentation (USGS)

Larry Thomas with USGS-San Antonio provided information on the USGS surface water stations currently operating in the basin and their individual capabilities. He also gave an overview of historic data availability for the basin. Lastly, he gave examples of the types of data that are collected in the basin, as well as the USGS's other data collection services. Tim Oden with USGS-Houston focused more specifically on the water quality data collection activities of the USGS in the state as well as the Lavaca River Basin, providing details on station locations and parameters examined. He also mentioned the ability to summarize available water quality data at specific sites in the basin of special interest to the BBASC.

Lavaca Bay Monitoring Presentation (TCEQ)

Keith Ladner with TCEQ-Corpus Christi talked about this regional office's surface water quality monitoring activities in and around Lavaca Bay. He described the sites that are monitored on both a routine (quarterly) and special study basis, listed the types of data collected, and explained how the data is potentially used. He also gave a specific example of data usage by providing results from the draft 2010 TCEQ impaired water body list. He concluded with information on how to obtain TCEQ surface water quality monitoring publications and resources.

State Shellfish Monitoring Program Presentation (TDSHS)

R.J. Shelly with the Texas Department of State Health Services-Seafood and Aquatic Life Group talked about the administration of the state's shellfish (oyster) monitoring program. He provided a map detailing the classification of shellfish harvesting areas in Lavaca Bay. He mentioned that there are 29 routine monitoring sites in the bay and that data on bacterial presence in oyster waters have been collected since 1952. The oyster harvesting season runs from November through April with closures potentially occurring due to events that increase bacteria concentrations (heavy rainfall and runoff) or that otherwise produce conditions that can compromise oyster health (harmful algal blooms, chemical spills).

Stakeholder Presentation – Refining Industry

Deedy Huffman and Dan Hall (alternate) with Texas Brine Company (TBC) spoke about the salt solution mining industry. They discussed where major salt deposits are located in North America, the U.S., and in Texas and surrounding states, and specifically showed where TBC has operations in southeast Texas. They gave an example of what a brine well looks like and how the brine is produced, stored, and transported to users. It was mentioned that TBC shifted from groundwater to surface water for their operations back in 1996. They also discussed the quantity demands for brine and the many products and manufacturing processes that use salt in some form.

Stakeholder Presentation - Groundwater Districts

Caroline Runge with the Menard County Underground Water District spoke about joint planning in Groundwater Management Area (GMA) 7. She began by giving an overview of GMAs in Texas and discussed House Bill 1763 (2005) which directs groundwater districts to establish desired future conditions of the aquifers (over 50 years) within their areas based on groundwater availability models or other available information. The Texas Water Code requires districts to submit DFCs to the Texas Water Development Board, who in turn uses the availability models to determine how much groundwater a district can potentially permit. The major (Edwards-Trinity) and minor aquifers of GMA 7 were discussed. Challenges to the process were identified including insufficient data and studies, pressures to standardize regulatory approaches and use single aquifer-wide DFCs, large numbers of districts in the GMA, and incomplete availability models. The varying, preliminary DFCs for GMA 7, in terms of percentage of allowable aquifer depletion over 50 years, were displayed, as well as what the current availability model for the Edwards-Trinity Aquifer predicts as far as 50-year water level drop with current pumping rates under drought of record conditions.

BBEST Update

BBEST chair Dave Buzan provided an update of the science team's recent activities. The hydrology subgroup has identified 23 sites in the basins for instream analysis. The freshwater inflow subgroup has begun to meet and the riparian zone subgroup has been formed and will start meeting next week. The full BBEST continues to meet at a minimum of once a month. An example of a HEFR flow matrix was presented to give stakeholders an idea of what to expect from the BBEST as far as instream flow recommendations. Based on his previous BBEST experience, he stated that it is important for stakeholders to get familiar with the technical terminology. It was mentioned that the BBEST has budgeted funds to allow for interaction with the stakeholders after the BBEST recommendations are submitted to the BBASC, to assist with comprehension of the recommendations. In response to stakeholder requests, it was agreed that the BBEST can make comparisons of their recommendations

to periods of record other than those used to derive the recommendations and also reiterated that the BBEST early on can give the BBASC the format that the recommendations will come in so that the stakeholders can familiarize themselves with it and be better prepared to receive and digest the actual recommendations.

Future Meeting Topics

Proposed stakeholder presentation topics for the upcoming August 25th (later changed to the 26th) meeting were: recreation (Bruce Arendale), irrigated agriculture (L.G. Raun), and possibly environmental interests (Myron Hess). Other topics could include: instream flow and freshwater inflow 101; WAM presentation; hydrological state of affairs of the rivers; Lavaca, upper and lower Colorado River, Matagorda Bay presentations; and an overview of river management. The August 26th meeting could be held somewhere in Wharton County, where a tour of rice growing operations could be done. Myron Hess suggested a meeting in October to help get in all of the information that's planned. Was agreed to meet on October 28th somewhere in the Austin/Greater Austin area, and would likely cover the WAM topic. Joe King expressed a desire to host the December or February meeting in Matagorda County.

Public Comments

None.