

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

Friday, June 11, 2010 at 10:00 a.m.

TCEQ – Austin, TX

Minutes

Members Present: Ed Buskey, Mike Gonzales, Thom Hardy, Scott Holt, Norman Johns, Warren Pulich, Liz Smith, Sam Vaughn, Gregg Eckardt, Debbie Magin.

Call to Order and Introductions

Chairman Sam Vaughn called the meeting to order and the members and attendees introduced themselves. It was noted that member Paul Hudson had accepted an appointment overseas and would not likely be able to participate as a BBEST member. The group discussed the need to include another geomorphologist on the committee and noted that Dr. Judith Haschenburger had been nominated but not selected to serve on the BBEST. The group agreed by consensus to approach the Basin and Bay Area Stakeholder Committee (BBASC) and inform that committee of the request to include a geomorphologist, but that the ultimate decision on a replacement would be made by the BBASC.

Cory Horan, TCEQ, discussed the approval by the Environmental Flows Advisory Group of the revised schedule for the Environmental Flows process.

Steve Raabe, San Antonio River Authority (SARA) discussed ftp site developed for use by the members and subcommittees of the BBEST.

Public Comment

James Dodson with the San Antonio Bay partnership mentioned a meeting of that group to be held on June 24, 2010 and to contact him for further information.

Approval of Minutes from April 29, 2010

The minutes were approved unanimously by consensus.

Science Advisory Committee (SAC) Report (Ward)

George Ward, SAC liaison discussed the SAC comments on the submitted recommendations from the Trinity and San Jacinto and Sabine and Neches BBASCs. He noted a substantial failing of the reports due in part to the science underlying BBEST recommendations from each group. He also discussed subsequent analysis provided to the BBASC, and noted that the SAC is now trying to figure out a way forward which will be presented in the SAC's "lessons learned" document. He mentioned that the SAC is working on a guidance document on how to develop the workplan required by SB3.

Members discussed what they could do to avoid this issue. They agreed that all caveats/strengths/weaknesses of the BBEST development process needs to be translated to BBASC and that there was a need for the group to anticipate that the BBASC must consider other factors beyond science alone for their recommendations to be of benefit to the BBASC.

Members discussed the BBEST budget and noted that the BBASC doesn't have the funds to hire people to perform the WAM analysis and must rely on outside sources. They agreed that the BBEST

budget should reflect the need to have BBEST members available to interact with BBASC after BBEST recs are submitted.

Subcommittee Reports

Members of the BBEST subcommittees (Bay and Estuary/Freshwater Inflows, Hydrology, Instream Flows, and Riparian) gave updates on the various activities and meetings held by each group. The members agreed that minutes for subcommittee meetings are not required by Senate Bill 3, but there was a need to document the decision making process and a formal procedure for doing so should be developed. The group agreed that this could be done through the ftp website maintained by SARA.

The group agreed there was a need to maintain data integrity in the use of the group's ftp website and its use and distribution would be for BBEST members only.

Geographic Scope of Instream Environmental Flow Regime Recommendations

Kathy Alexander, TCEQ, gave an overview of this SAC guidance document. Members discussed whether permit considerations should be taken into account when selecting sites to be used for environmental flow recommendations, and agreed that they should be used when considering "other factors". Members also discussed redundancy in selecting gage sites and it was noted that redundancy would be determined after consideration of biological, geologic features, water quality factors, and other considerations. Member Thom Hardy discussed the need to identify in the process and translate to the BBASC what judgment calls and caveats were made in the decision making process of selecting gage sites, as this would be critical for adaptive management and work plan purposes.

Use of Instream Hydrologic Data and the Hydrology-based Environmental Flow Regime (HEFR) Methodology

Dan Opdyke, TPWD, presented an introduction to the HEFR methodology. He explained that the rationale for using the HEFR method was because hydrology is considered the master variable in the available literature and that it has a significant impact on many ecosystem functions. He discussed the SAC guidance document which outlines the HEFR methodology and noted that the consideration of hydrology was only a first step that provides an initial estimate only.

Consideration of River/Stream Environmental Flow Regime Recommendation Locations

At the June 1, 2010 subcommittee meeting on the Geographic Scope, fifteen proposed locations were presented, all but three being USGS gage stations. In selecting these fifteen sites, the following factors were considered: period of record, contributing drainage area, WAM primary control point, WAM unappropriated water availability, potential reservoir site locations, TPWD ecologically significant stream segment, the 2010 draft 303d list of impaired waterbodies, TCEQ aquatic life designations, etc. The members discussed the various sites and their use as environmental flow regime recommendation locations. From the list of fifteen sites, fourteen were selected for use by consensus of the group. The list of sites was approved with the caveat that other sites could be considered in the work plan development process. The sites are as follows:

- Guadalupe River near Spring Branch
- Blanco River at Wimberley
- San Marcos River at Luling
- Plum Creek near Luling
- Sandies Creek near Westhoff
- Guadalupe River at Cuero
- Guadalupe River at Victoria
- Medina River at San Antonio
- San Antonio River near Elmendorf

- San Antonio River near Falls City
- Cibolo Creek near Falls City
- San Antonio River at Goliad
- Mission River at Refugio
- Medina River at Bandera

The BBEST then considered the use of the HEFR method in their analysis. The HEFR approach was approved by consensus. The Hydrology subcommittee will develop a scope of work for the HEFR analysis.

Discussion of Sound Ecological Environment

The group discussed how to define a Sound Ecological Environment. The approach used for both the instream definition and the bay and estuary definition is based on the analysis of various indicator species, a look at trends of those communities, and what is driving those trends. The group agreed that the definition of a “sound” ecological environment was subjective and doesn’t necessarily mean an unaltered system. Norman Johns will draft a strawman on what exactly constitutes a “sound” environment.

Thom Hardy will work with Tim Bonner to come up with a rational approach to determining a sound ecological environment for the instream portion. Warren Pulich and the Bay and Estuary subcommittee will do the same.

The group agreed to be mindful that a sound ecological environment may not always be perfect but one that is acceptable and sustainable in terms of what’s defined in SB3. This was a comment by SAC chairman Huston during the recently held HEFR workshop.

Consideration of BBEST Budget

The group discussed which members will be charging against the budget. Sam Vaugh outlined and the group discussed the individual line items in the proposed budget. The discussion identified specific deliverables within the budget and noted that dollars can be moved among categories as long as deliverables are documented. The group approved the draft budget for submittal to the TWDB by consensus.

Future Meetings

The next BBEST meeting is scheduled for July 8, 2010 starting at 10:00 AM to be held in the Corpus Christi area. The Hydrology subcommittee will meet by conference call at 2:00 on July 1, 2010. The Instream subcommittee will meet by conference call on June 23, 2010. The Estuary subcommittee will meet on June 29, 2010 via teleconference.

Public Comment and Adjourn

There were no public comments at this time. The meeting was thus adjourned.