

Trinity and San Jacinto River Basins and Galveston Bay BBEST Work Plan Development Meeting

Tuesday, October 26, 2010 at 11:00 a.m.

Lonestar College Training Center, The Woodlands, TX

Minutes

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by BBEST chairman Bill Espey at 11:00 am.

Discussion of Work Plan Charge, Characteristics, and Other Business

Chairman Espey reviewed the Work Plan charge from the Senate Bill 3 legislation and the TCEQ e-flows rulemaking schedule. The group was reminded that the stakeholders would be meeting on January 5th, and the draft Work Plan would need to be submitted sometime in early December to allow time for stakeholder review of the document. There was brief discussion of a tentative BBEST budget from TWDB that would have some flexibility in how it would be allocated.

Chairman Espey next presented suggested characteristics of the Work Plan including objectives, strategic framing of the questions to be answered without getting too bogged-down in details, and a possible tiered approach with short-term and long-term considerations. The science team then engaged in general discussion of how best to accomplish this task. Science team members also identified several key data gaps and information needs. The group came to a consensus decision on their first work plan charge, which is “to establish a periodic review of the basin and bay environmental flow analyses and environmental flow regime recommendations, environmental flow standards, and strategies, to occur at least once every 10 years”. They decided that the review should occur every five years and should be synchronized with the state water planning schedule.

Work Plan Outline Discussion

BBEST members discussed information needs in both instream and estuary categories. The topics that were discussed are summarized as follows:

Instream

- effect of varying flows on riparian vegetation
- flow gage extrapolation assessment
- wet/dry/average condition determination
- identifying indicator species
- contradiction between period of record and current sound ecological environment
- flow-biotic response data
- acoustic Doppler current profiling
- TRA river survey work started this past summer and to continue next year
- water quality modeling

- defining baseline conditions to make comparisons against
- test assumptions underlying the flow standards
- tributary studies

Estuary

- relationship between nutrients and flow
- quantification of nutrient loading
- salinity data associated with *Vallisneria* populations
- hydrologic data for ungaged tributaries
- validation of Max H numbers
- evaluation of mobile indicator species
- comparison of instream vs. inflow recommendations
- important aspects of tidal portions of rivers being ignored?
- additional sonde data in San Jacinto River mouth
- intensive study of near-shore fish species
- relation of flows to primary productivity
- additional oyster research (PCR study, diseases)
- analysis of inflow (GPFIG) numbers: frequency evaluation and effect on salinity

Chairman Espey suggested that individual science team members would take the lead on each of the components of the instream (freshwater/riparian ecology, hydrology/hydraulics, water quality, geomorphology) and estuary (ecology, nutrients/sediments, salinity, benthic macroinvertebrates/oysters) categories, with each component outlining data gaps, refinement and validation needs, and short/long term considerations. Other BBEST members can work with any of the subject areas they prefer.

Review and Future Initiatives

A work schedule was presented which called for the Work Plan chapters to be submitted for team review by Nov 12, revised chapters to Chairman Espey by Nov 17 for consolidation into the draft document, submittal of the integration chapter by Nov 24, and review of the overall draft plan at the next BBEST meeting in December. The group agreed to try to work with the proposed schedule. The next meeting of the BBEST was scheduled for December 6 at 11:00 am. Jim Lester would check on meeting at HARC.

SAC chairman Bob Huston gave some closing observations. He was encouraged by the focus on identifying work plan objectives as opposed to a detailed scope of work. Although he hoped there would be dedicated funds in the future, his expectation was that the Work Plan would likely be executed by cobbling together efforts from programs that already exist, and he encouraged the group to incorporate into the Work Plan suggestions of how existing programs could be tweaked to meet their needs.

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 4:30 pm.