

Texas Environmental Flows Science Advisory Committee
Wednesday, February 9, 2011
8:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
Texas Parks and Wildlife Headquarters
Commissioner's Hearing Room
4200 Smith School Road
Austin, Texas 78744

MINUTES

Call to order

Chairman Bob Huston called the meeting to order. Bob Brandes attended by conference call.

Approval of meeting minutes from January 12, 2011

The minutes from the January 12, 2011 SAC meeting were approved.

Liaison Reports (San Antonio, Colorado, Nueces, Sabine, Trinity)

SAC member Jim Wiersema noted that the Guadalupe/San Antonio BBEST is working on their final report and finishing individual technical assignments. BBEST Chairman Sam Vaugh added that members are rethinking their approach to hydrologic analysis and moving toward subsistence flows, 3 tiers of base flows, with 5 tiers of pulse flows that will extend beyond single seasons. The initial recommendation for bay and estuaries is based on habitat and salinity suitability including antecedent conditions. Ed Oborny mentioned concerns over the use of SB2 data only as support for HEFR. George Ward discussed the blue crab "workshops" noting that those involved agreed that the blue crab is not an acceptable indicator species. Mr. Vaugh discussed the approach used by the freshwater inflow/estuary subcommittee. Dr. Ward stated that TxBLEND was used to estimate the relationship between salinity and flow.

Paul Jensen discussed the recent activities of the Colorado/Lavaca BBEST, noting recent meetings on January 18 and 19, 2011. The group reached a consensus on their flow recommendations, and is currently compiling the final recommendations report. The consensus is to present options and not a formal recommendation on how to characterize hydrologic conditions. Dan Opdyke, TPWD, noted that the Colorado/Lavaca and Guadalupe/San Antonio are using similar frameworks of high flow pulses using 5 tiers applied regardless of hydrologic conditions. The draft is due on February 11, 2011 and final report should be released as scheduled on March 1, 2011. The group will meet in February 15, 2011 to review and approve the release of the final report.

Paul Montagna gave an update on the activities of the Nueces BBEST. The BBEST met Friday January 28, 2011. He noted that the analysis and existing data for freshwater inflows to the Nueces delta will drive the work of the bay and estuary subcommittee. The BBEST discussed what approach to consider when looking at the hypersaline conditions in Baffin Bay. BBEST Chairman Vaugh indicated that some members believe the current conditions of Corpus Christi and Nueces Bay are not representative of a sound ecological environment. Members toured 5 of the selected gage sites with zero to no flow, and are struggling with what base flow or subsistence flow means in these areas. He added that the instream subcommittee is making good headway on sites with sufficient flow.

Chairman Huston reported no known activity on the Trinity/San Jacinto or Sabine/Neches. He said that SAC would continue its review of the Sabine work plan as requested by the

EFAG. Also, the Sabine stakeholders reconvened and have submitted another flow regime for TCEQ consideration during rule making.

Report on Formation Meetings of Brazos and Rio Grande Stakeholder Groups

Cory Horan, TCEQ, stated that in late January organizational meetings for the Brazos and Rio Grande Stakeholder groups were held. The nomination period for expert science team members for the Brazos closed on February 4, 2011 with 29 nominations, and the nomination period for the Rio Grande will close February 11, 2011. The groups will evaluate the nominations at their next meeting on Friday, February 25, 2011 for Brazos and Monday, February 28, 2011 for the Rio Grande. Both groups hope to have the BBEST in place by March 1, 2011.

Discussion of Liaison Assignments for Brazos and Rio Grande

The members discussed liaison assignments. For the Brazos, Paul Jensen will be the primary liaison with Fred Manhart as the backup. For the Rio Grande, Bob Brandes is the primary liaison with Mary Kelly as the backup. Chairman Huston will assume the liaison backup role for the Colorado basin.

Budget Update

Ruben Solis, TWDB, gave an update on the budget and remaining funds.

Status of TCEQ rulemaking

Cory Horan, TCEQ, discussed the status of the TCEQ rulemaking process for environmental flow standards for the Trinity/San Jacinto/Galveston Bay and Sabine/Neches/Sabine Lake Bay basin and bay systems. TCEQ staff is in the process of preparing responses to comments. The process is still on track for the April agenda date.

Formation of Subgroups for review of BBEST March 1st Reports

The review subgroup for the Guadalupe, San Antonio, Mission, and Aransas Rivers and Mission, Copano, Aransas, and San Antonio Bays BBEST report includes George Ward as lead, Paul Montagna, Mary Kelly, and James Wiersema. The review subgroup for the Colorado and Lavaca Rivers and Matagorda and Lavaca Bays BBEST report includes Ed Oborny as lead, Paul Jensen, Fred Manhart and Bob Brandes. Subgroups will review each BBEST report then present findings and initial write-up to the full SAC for further discussion at the next meeting scheduled for the third Wednesday, March 16, 2011.

Discussion of Sabine-Neches/Sabine Lake Work Plan

The Environmental Flows Advisory Group (EFAG) asked the SAC to review the work plans and present their findings to the EFAG. The SAC will not consider the Trinity San Jacinto work plan until the stakeholders have had an opportunity to review and finalize. Members discussed the Sabine-Neches/Sabine Lake Stakeholders Work Plan dated December 7, 2010, and the lack of specificity found in the document. Members will identify those portions of the document that do not meet the SAC perception of a work plan but are of interest, and will suggest how the remaining elements of the work plan can be organized for ease of understanding, highlighting which elements need some level of elaboration, and recommend that tasks are prioritized as to importance if funding is limited. Mary Kelly will distribute a draft outline to all members for review and James Wiersema will prepare a draft document in letter format for discussion at the next SAC meeting. Chairman Huston suggested a completion date for the SAC review of the work plan of March 31, 2011.

White Paper on Market Approaches - Formation of Subgroup

Chairman Huston introduced Mary Kelly's white paper on the use of market approaches to meet environmental flow standards and the economic issues related to environmental flows. EFAG has not yet responded as to whether it is appropriate for SAC to take this initiative. Mary Kelly will research previous efforts and will summarize what work has been done and prepare a history of SAC and economics for distribution to members before the next meeting.

Hydrologic Methods Guidance – 3rd Edition

Chairman Huston will review recent revisions and forward revised document to members.

Other Discussion Items

The Flow 2011 Conference sponsored by the Instream Flow Council entitled "Instream Flow Evaluation and Other Decision Making" will be held May 2 – 4, 2011, in Nashville. The topic of market approaches to providing environmental flows will be addressed.

Public Comments

There were no public comments at this time.

Next Meeting – Schedule (March 16th - TCEQ) and Agenda

The next SAC meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, March 16, 2011 and will be held at the TCEQ, room 2201, building F

Discussions include:

- Summary by review subgroups of initial impressions of GSA and Colorado BBESTs reports.
- FRAT tutorial presentation
- TCEQ Rulemaking update, including comments received
- Review of Sabine Work Plan
- Discussion of comments received on proposed environmental flow standards

Adjourn