

**Brazos River and associated bay and estuary system
Basin and Bay Expert Science Team (BBEST)**

Tuesday, April 19, 2011 at 10:00 a.m.

Brazos River Authority Offices

Waco, Texas

Meeting Minutes

Introductions

The meeting was called to order and all those present introduced themselves.

Overview of SB3 and role of the Basin and Bay Expert Science Team

Gregg Easley (TCEQ) went over handouts regarding the duties of both the BBEST and the stakeholder committee (BBASC) as laid out in Senate Bill 3, as well as the approved schedule for the completion of these duties. Gregg told the BBEST that the handouts and all other relevant meeting materials will be posted on the group's web page on TCEQ's website.

Texas Environmental Flows Science Advisory Committee (SAC) remarks

SAC liaison, Paul Jensen, said a few words to the BBEST, stressing the amount of effort and commitment required from each member to successfully accomplish the charge of the group. He also emphasized the need to be consensus-driven in all aspects of the BBEST's work.

Budget Overview, discussion

Ruben Solis (TWDB) stated that the BBEST typically would be given \$228,000 to accomplish their charge, with \$148,000 allotted for this fiscal year (through August 2011) and the remainder for the following fiscal year. However, at this point, there doesn't appear to be any funding allocated for the 2012-2013 biennium. He said that he will work with the BBEST chair to develop a budget. Members are compensated for time spent at meetings and performing tasks at a rate of \$150/hr. Ruben encouraged the chair, when selected, to keep tabs on hours being charged and to standardize as much as possible hours being assigned to meetings and other tasks. He mentioned that using BBEST funds for contracting is an option, and that he will provide guidelines to the group. He also stated that the resource agencies are available as a resource to help accomplish BBEST tasks.

BBEST members briefly discussed Tim Bonner's proposal to fast-track their work given the probable lack of funding after August. All were in agreement that the schedule should be accelerated to attempt to get as much work done as possible prior to September 1st.

Set ground rules/operating procedures, discussion and adoption

The group reviewed the draft meeting rules for the BBEST. The rules were approved as presented. Members discussed potential locations for meetings and agreed to rotate the locations between Waco, Austin, and College Station.

Previous BBEST experience

Tim described his experience on the Guadalupe-San Antonio BBEST. He said there was some polarization on certain issues, but that the group pushed through and achieved consensus on their recommendations. He also said there are opportunities to streamline the process given that there will be some areas of study that have limited information. He encouraged members to familiarize themselves with how previous BBESTs have defined a sound ecological environment, but to not get

too bogged down in the particulars. Tim mentioned that gage period of record can also be an issue and stressed the need to reach consensus early on.

George Guillen spoke of his experience on the Trinity-San Jacinto BBEST. He said they didn't reach consensus on some of their recommendations due to strong differences of opinion. He stated that there were different levels of comfort with what conclusions could be drawn based on the level of scientific information available. When it came down to making some of the recommendation decisions, the group agreed to disagree. George also felt that implementation issues were factored into the decisions by some and shouldn't have been. One other issue that needs careful consideration is the presence of return flows.

Kirk Winemiller shared his experience on the Sabine-Neches BBEST. He said the group achieved consensus on their recommendations but that several compromises were made. He mentioned that too much time was spent discussing what their task was, when in fact the group's charge was clear – to make flow recommendations based on the best available science without regard for human needs. He felt that some members focused too much on human uses. Kirk said that there is an abundance of scientific literature regarding environmental flows and offered himself as a resource to members on this subject.

Elect BBEST chairs

Members discussed the potential duties of the chair and vice-chair. Three members were nominated for the two positions: Tom Gooch, Tiffany Morgan, and Kirk Winemiller. All agreed to individually rank each candidate, with the chair and vice-chair determined by who receives the top two ranks, respectively. Tom Gooch was elected as BBEST chair and Kirk Winemiller as vice-chair. The group agreed that the primary duties of the chair are to develop meeting agendas, run meetings, and maintain the budget. The vice-chair primarily serves as the report editor.

Identification of factors to be included in the final report

The group first discussed what streams to consider. They looked at a map displaying USGS gage locations throughout the Brazos River basin. Members also considered other information such as ecologically significant stream segments considered by regional water planning groups within the basin. There was discussion of the different overall categories of information to consider as the basis for the groups eventual recommendations. Kirk laid out the following categories for consideration: 1) geographic scope (gage locations, etc.); 2) hydrology (period of record, flow separation techniques); 3) geomorphology/sediment dynamics; 4) water quality; 5) aquatic ecology (instream); 6) riparian; and, 7) estuarine ecology. The group agreed with the proposed layout.

Formation of Subcommittees

BBEST members discussed how best to subdivide the group based on the identified categories of study. The group settled on a simple division into two basic subcommittees: hydrology and ecology. Tom Gooch, David Dunn, Philip Price, and Tim Bonner were assigned to the hydrology subcommittee, while Kirk Winemiller, Tim Bonner, Dan Gise, Jack Davis, Tiffany Morgan, and George Guillen will comprise the ecology subcommittee. All agreed to the subcommittee assignments, and that the entire BBEST should be kept abreast of the activities and decisions of each subcommittee.

Geographic Scope

The BBEST engaged in more focused discussion of what locations to select for development of flow recommendations. Various approaches were suggested to filter sites from throughout the basin such as ecoregions and BRA subregions. Tiffany offered to produce basin maps overlaid with ecoregions,

etc. for the group to consider. It was decided that only sites with USGS gages should be considered. Tom said that he would have a graphic put together showing gage periods of record. A question arose as to what adjacent coastal basins, if any, are included in the Brazos SB 3 scope. Mark Wentzel (TWDB) stated that TWDB has a map that addresses the question, and he'll make it available once he's back in the office. The group came up with the following preliminary list of USGS gages to focus upon, with the possibility of adding a few more locations later in the process:

1. Brazos River nr Rosharon
2. Brazos River at Richmond
3. Brazos River nr Hempstead
4. Navasota River nr Easterly
5. Brazos River nr Bryan
6. Little River nr Cameron
7. Little River nr Little River
8. Lampasas River nr Kempner
9. Leon River at Gatesville
10. Brazos River nr Highbank
11. North Bosque River at Valley Mills
12. Brazos River nr Dennis
13. Brazos River nr Glen Rose
14. Brazos River nr South Bend
15. Brazos River at Seymour
16. Clear Fork Brazos River at Fort Griffin or Nugent
17. Double Mountain Fork Brazos River nr Aspermont
18. Salt Fork Brazos River nr Aspermont

Process Timetable/Schedule

Kirk agreed to draft a timetable of the BBEST tasks and responsibilities for the group to consider. Members discussed some of the preliminary steps needed for the hydrological analysis. Dan Opdyke (TPWD) offered to produce charts for four example gages showing time series of annual gaged flows and some of the differences in parameterization approaches for HEFR. Kirk requested a comparison of flow separation methods (i.e., IHA and MBFIT). Once completed, Kirk will e-mail the draft schedule to members for comment.

Set next meeting

- Future meeting logistics
Members agreed that a lot of the ecology subcommittee work could be done by e-mail. Kirk encouraged members to save their work files as they go, since they could be used in the final report. The BBEST had previously agreed to rotate future meetings between Waco, Austin, and College Station.
- Where/When/How long
The BBEST set aside May 23rd and 24th for the next meeting. The group agreed to meet in Austin, with the specific location to be determined. A decision will be made closer to the next meeting time as to whether to have a one or two day meeting.

- Proposed agenda items

Agenda items for the next meeting include: budget (Tom will draft a budget and send out for comment), draft timetable, gage selection, HEFR parameterization, flow separation comparisons, ecology update, and geographic scope (coastal basins?).

Public Comment

Brazos BBASC chair, Dale Spurgin, thanked the BBEST for their commitment and asked the group to focus on that which is unique to the basin.

Mark Wentzel passed on additional budget comments to the group by mentioning the specific forms necessary for reimbursement, TWDB staff contacts, the importance of getting invoices in on time, and to keep track of time spent on tasks.