

Texas Environmental Flows Science Advisory Committee
Wednesday, August 10, 2011
9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.
Texas Parks and Wildlife Department
1340 Airport Commerce Park, Bldg. 6
Austin, Texas 78719

MINUTES

Call to order

SAC chairman Bob Huston called the meeting to order.

Approval of meeting minutes from July 13, 2011

The minutes from the July 13, 2011 meeting were approved by consensus.

Budget Update

Member discussed the status of the budget, noting that current projections indicate that there will be remaining funds for the current fiscal year. Chairman Huston stated that the TWDB, upon request by the EFAG, had explored funding options for SB3 activities to continue beyond FY 2011. They have tentatively identified \$260,000, subject to Board approval. The SAC will receive a modest portion of this to support their activities.

Liaison Reports (San Ant., Colorado, Nueces, Rio Grande, Brazos)

Guadalupe/San Antonio:

Member Ed Oborny discussed recent activities of the Guadalupe/San Antonio BBEST and BBASC. He noted that the BBASC was making some final decisions regarding their recommendations, and that most of these decisions were made by consensus. The group is still discussing recommendations for sites associated with water supply projects. BBEST member Norman Johns noted that the group is looking at estuary recommendations which were not developed in the same manner as instream flow recommendations using hydrologic triggers. Mr. Oborny noted the group was considering work plan strategies as well.

Colorado/Lavaca:

There was no report at this time.

Nueces:

Chairman Huston reported that the BBEST would not have their report complete by September 1, 2011. The group still has work to do before completion, but will be presenting their final report to the BBASC on October 19, 2011.

Upper Rio Grande:

Member Mary Kelly noted that the Upper Rio Grande BBEST is scheduled to meet over the next two days. She and member Bob Brandes will participate via teleconference. The group will be discussing HEFR, its applicability and use by the BBEST on the Rio Grande. Dan Opdyke, TPWD, explained that the group was considering HEFR as more of an informational starting point rather than a tool to identify flows.

Lower Rio Grande:

Member Bob Brandes noted that the Lower Rio Grande BBEST was focusing on salinity outputs from TxBLEND estuary inflows and links with seagrasses. This includes evaluating the Lower Laguna Madre and the Arroyo Colorado as well.

Brazos:

Member Paul Jensen reported that the Brazos BBEST is plugging away and members are completing individual assignments. The group is making decisions regarding seasonality and flow analysis. They will incorporate flows needed to maintain oxbow connectivity as part of high flow pulses.

Presentation/Discussion – Sabine/Neches Work Plan Addendum

Chairman Huston began discussion of the work plan addendum prepared by the Sabine/Neches BBEST, which was developed in response to SAC comments regarding the initial work plan submittal. The Sabine/Neches BBEST and BBASC are in the process of reviewing and approval of the draft work plan. Jack Tatum, Sabine/Neches BBEST chair, reviewed the details of the draft addendum. The addendum outlines monitoring programs for continued evaluation of environmental flow standards, as outlined in SB3 legislation. The work plan suggests that these monitoring and validation efforts be coordinated along the 5 year review timeframe established in the initial Sabine/Neches work plan. The work plan addendum identifies options for funding the various elements of the work plan and addendum, utilizing existing programs to maximize efficiency.

Market Approaches to Support EFlows

Member Mary Kelly began the discussion of market approaches to meet environmental flow needs in those areas of the state where there is not sufficient unappropriated water available. She noted that existing market programs in the US have been driven by specific species protection (salmon, etc.) than ecosystem protection in general. While there are legal mechanisms in Texas to allow this (water trust, ability to amend an existing water right to add instream use) there is not a lot of activity. The SAC will explore this topic to evaluate whether market approaches are viable and what might be needed to make these efforts more effective.

Attorneys Glenn Jarvis and Ken Ramirez were asked to discuss market approaches with the SAC. The discussion revolved around two main points that would need to be addressed if market approaches are to be successful: 1) how, from a market standpoint, can you change a water right to an environmental use, and 2) modifications of existing water right permits after water is identified for environmental purposes. Mr. Ramirez and Mr. Jarvis both suggested that enforcement of water rights is necessary to establish value of the water authorized by permit. Mr. Ramirez stated that legislation and incentives would also be needed to provide incentives for a water right holder to convert water for environmental flow needs.

Geomorphology Subcommittee Progress Report

Member George Ward discussed the progress of the small work group in completing the addendum to the SAC geomorphology guidance. The final draft will be ready for comment soon. Members will review and comment quickly so that the addendum will be complete for use by existing BBASCs who are working on their final recommendations reports (Guadalupe/San Antonio and Colorado/Lavaca).

Schedule for Work Plan Review – Trinity/San Jacinto

Chairman Huston explained that the draft work plan from the Trinity/San Jacinto BBASC had been submitted to the EFAG. Chairman Huston noted that questions still remain regarding implementation

of the strategies identified in the work plan, as well as identifying funding to support implementation. Members discussed the review and comment schedule for both the Trinity/San Jacinto and the Sabine/Neches work plans. The SAC will review the draft and provide comments to the EFAG by September 1, 2011.

Other Discussion Items

There were no other items to discuss at this time.

Public comments

There were no public comments at this time.

Planning for Future Meeting Dates and Agenda

Members discussed the schedule for future meetings. Due to both a reduced activity and the the FY2012 funding available to support the SAC, meetings will not occur on a monthly basis. The next meeting is scheduled for November 2, 2011. The agenda will include discussion of the Nueces BBEST recommendations report.

Adjourn