

Texas Environmental Flows Science Advisory Committee

Wednesday, March 14, 2012

9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Texas Parks and Wildlife Headquarters

4200 Smith School Road

Austin, Texas 78744

Minutes

Call to order

Chairman Bob Huston called the meeting to order.

Approval of meeting minutes from December 14, 2011

The minutes from the December 14, 2011 meeting were approved by consensus.

FY2012 Budget Update

Ruben Solis, TWDB, provided a brief report on the status of the SAC budget to date.

Liaison Reports

Member Bob Brandes noted that the Rio Grande BBESTs had requested and received an extension to their report submittal deadline. The Upper and Lower BBEST groups are coordinating the preparation and compilation of their final reports and will submit a joint report to the TCEQ, SAC, and EFAG. The Rio Grande BBASC is waiting for the BBEST report before they meet next.

Member Ed Oborny reported that the Guadalupe BBASC is currently in the process of developing their work plan. They are currently integrating the instream and bay and estuary strategies developed by their respective subcommittees. The group hopes to finalize their work plan sometime after their April meeting.

Colorado-Lavaca BBASC member Myron Hess noted that this BBASC has a draft of their work plan which needs to be revised to include cost estimates for the individual strategies.

Chairman Huston noted that the next SAC meeting will include a review of the work plans being developed. The SAC will provide comments on the work plans to the EFAG.

Presentation and Discussion – Brazos BBEST Report

Brazos BBEST Chair Tom Gooch provided an overview of the Brazos River and its associated bay and estuary system BBEST environmental flows recommendations report. He discussed the geographic scope of the basins and the selection of 21 USGS gages for which flow recommendations were developed. As part of their instream evaluations the group focused on available fisheries data, utilizing over 100 collections. In defining hydrologic conditions the BBEST used the Palmer Drought Index and concluded that below the 25th percentile equals dry conditions and above the 75th percentile equals wet conditions. As part of their flow separation analysis the BBEST evaluated both MBFIT and IHA, ultimately choosing the IHA method.

Mr. Gooch also discussed the recommended flow matrices developed by the group. He noted that recommendations for high flow pulses and overbank events were based on ecological

significance to the system. The group also considered pulse connectivity with oxbow habitats in the lower basin. Regarding freshwater inflow recommendations he noted that the Brazos River has no associated bay and the San Bernard River has only a limited bay. In their analysis the BBEST studied five scenarios: 1) historical gaged flows, 2) WAM run 8 (current conditions), 3) the Region G water planning WAM, 4) WAM runs with the Millican and Double Mountain Fork West projects included, 5) and the recommended environmental flows only.

BBEST member Kirk Winemiller also discussed the BBEST's recommended research priorities and reviewed the BBEST's recommended implementation rules for subsistence, base, and high flow pulses which include:

- For subsistence flows: allow diversion of half the difference between base flow and subsistence level under dry conditions when flows are below the seasonal base.
- For base flows: Under wet and average conditions, no diversions when flows are below seasonal base flow.
- High flow pulses are initiated when flow exceeds the peak flow trigger.

The SAC members discussed the BBEST recommendations and their analysis. The members will review and provide comments followed by a conference call to discuss comments. Paul Jensen will summarize the group's discussions and prepare a draft SAC review of the Brazos BBEST report.

Initial Discussion – SB3 “Going Forward”

Chairman Huston began this discussion by concluding that the topic of SB2/SB3 is something that the SAC should comment on. Member Mary Kelly noted that there are still some non-scheduled basins that have not gone through the SB3 process with ongoing SB3 work plans and strategies and, in general, there is more funding available through the SB1/Regional Water Planning process. Ruben Solis noted that there will be coordination of environmental flow recommendations which will be integrated into the SB1 planning process. He also presented a document outlining suggestions for how the SB2 and SB3 processes might be coordinated. Chairman Huston will summarize today's conversation for evaluation and future discussion by the SAC members.

Other Discussion Items

There were no other discussion items at this time.

Public comments

There were no public comments at this time.

Discuss Future Meeting Dates and Agenda

Future agenda items include:

- SB2 update
- Complete review of the Brazos BBEST report
- Trinity/San Jacinto Work Plan
- Continuation of SB2/SB3 “going forward”

Adjourn

