

**Brazos River and Associated Bay and Estuary System
Basin and Bay Stakeholder Committee (BBASC)**

Monday, December 2, 2013 at 1:00 p.m.
Conference Call

Minutes

Members Present: Dale Spurgin, Chair; Tom Michel, Vice-Chair; Cindy Bartos; Brian Hays; Ned Meister; Gená Leathers; Tom Conry; Horace Grace; Eddie Saucedo; Ed Lowe; Tommy O'Brien; David Blackburn; Phil Ford; Tyson Broad (for Ken Kramer); Kevin Wagner

Call to Order

Chair Dale Spurgin called the meeting to order and the members in attendance introduced themselves.

Public comment

There were no public comments made at this time.

Approval of October 8, 2013 Meeting Minutes

The minutes from the October, 8th, 2013 BBASC meeting were approved by consensus.

Financial Update

Tom Conry provided a financial update to members and indicated that there had been no activity since the last Brazos BBASC meeting.

Discussion and Approval of Proposed Priority Projects for Anticipated Funds from the Legislatively Adopted Rider in the Appropriations Bill

Members reviewed the proposed priority projects for the anticipated \$312,500 awaiting approval from the EFAG for funding of work plan items. Members discussed why certain priority projects were proposed and whether upper basin studies should also be considered for funding. Because of the limited amount of funds and time constraints on completion of the studies, members unanimously agreed to limit funding to the two study descriptions listed below:

- Study to address Item 3.1.6 from Table 1 of BBASC Work Plan – Estuaries
This study will quantify the responses both abiotic (sediment and nutrients) and biotic (freshwater flow dependent estuarine species) to the subsistence, base flows, and high flow pulses specified in the proposed SB3 regulations. For example, we anticipate concentrations of sediments, nutrients, and abundances and densities of freshwater, flow-dependent species to increase over subsistence and base flow rates with each recommended high flow pulse (i.e. 2 per season, 1 per season, 1 per year, and 1 per 2 year). Over time this pulse specific approach will allow us to evaluate the value to the estuary of each of the pulse categories specified in the proposed SB3 regulations.
- Study to address portions of Items 3.1.5, 3.1.7, and 3.1.11 from Table 1 of BBASC Work Plan – Evaluate impact of pulse flows on fluvial specialists and facultative riverine species
This study is very similar to the estuary study but will focus on the reactions of both fluvial specialists (fishes that are dependent on flowing water at some point in their

life cycle) and facultative riverine species (fishes not dependent on flowing water for completion of their life cycle) to subsistence, base flow, and high flow pulses specified in the proposed SB3 regulations. This study will evaluate the relative abundance and densities and reproductive energy and success of both groups of fish in response to SB3 subsistence, base flows, and specified pulses. Additionally, growth and condition and habitat quantity and quality for the fluvial specialists will be assessed. For example, we anticipate the abundances and densities of fluvial specialists will increase over subsistence and base flow rates with each recommended high flow pulse and will decrease for the facultative riverine species. Over time this pulse specific approach will allow us to evaluate the value to the environment of each of the pulse categories specified in the proposed SB3 regulations.

Ruben Solis, TWDB, outlined TWDB recommendations for stakeholders inclusive of refining scopes of works for selected work plan items as well as developing a scoring criterion for proposals. Mr. Solis further explained that the \$312, 500 in funds would have to be completely spent by the end of the biennium, August 2015 and that TWDB would administer the contracts. Members inquired to the timeframe for accomplishing these tasks inclusive of RFP issuance and awarding of funds. Mr. Solis indicated that the process is dependent on when funding is approved by the EFAG as well as TWDB, but that once approved an RFP can be issued, advertised, and funds awarded in approximately 60 days. Members agreed to forward the approved recommended project descriptions above to TWDB to begin revisions of scopes of work for the RFP announcement.

Other Items as Necessary

Chair Spurgin inquired as to the when the proposed Eflow rules would go before the TCEQ commissioners and he was informed that the item was on the Commission's agenda for Wednesday, February 12, 2014.

Public comment

There were no public comments made at this time.

Adjourn

Email Meeting

Meeting Notes

BBASC Members Participating: Dale Spurgin, Chair; Tom Michel, Vice-Chair; Ken Kramer; Dan Loomis; Tom Conry; Tommy O'Brien; Brian Hays; Gená Leathers; Jeff Goodwin; David Blackburn; Mary Ruth Rhodenbaugh; Cindy Bartos; Kevin Wagner; Phil Ford; Ned Meister; Joe Langdon; Horace R. Grace; Ed Lowe; Eddie Saucedo

Email Announcement and Call to Order:

Stakeholders,

As you may be aware, the Environmental Flows Advisory Group approved the funding distribution recommended by the Science Advisory Committee for continued study of environmental flows and instream flows for river basins on January 16th, 2014. Based on this \$312,500 will be allocated for studies in the Brazos basin.

Over the last week a work group comprised of Brazos BBASC and BBEST members worked with the TWDB to narrow the proposed study scopes. The next step in this process is approval from the full BBASC of the prepared scopes. With that background, please review the attached scopes of work and relay your consent or objection by email to all of us no later than **COB Monday, February 3rd, 2014**. This is a short turn around but will allow the group to submit the finalized documents to the TWDB by February 5th in order to be put on the March 20, 2014 Board agenda. Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

Proposed Scope of Work:

Brazos River
Basin and Bay Area Stakeholder Committee (Brazos BBASC)
Version 2
Preliminary Draft Solicitations of
Proposals for Prioritized Work Plan Activities
January 27, 2014

The Brazos BBASC is seeking studies, in accordance with its work plan, to utilize funding appropriated by the 83rd Texas Legislature and administered by Texas Water Development Board (TWDB) that builds upon existing data, existing or ongoing research, and / or additional field work to assist in the validation or refinement of the adopted Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) environmental flow standards in sustaining the environmental health of the rivers, bays and estuaries. Many investigations have been performed on the fresh water fishery in the Lower Brazos River; very few have sought to directly link the success of the fish community to instream flows. Additionally, little work has historically been conducted on the Brazos River estuary, and thus little is known regarding the relationship between flows in the Brazos River and fish and nekton responses in the Brazos River estuary. This study will seek to build on recent investigations in the river and the estuary regarding aquatic community success, and quantify and integrate aquatic community response in the Brazos River and estuary to the environmental flow standards. Improved understanding of the river's influence on both instream fisheries and the estuary's

aquatic community will be beneficial to validation and/or refinement of the approved TCEQ environmental flow standards.

The proposed study area for environmental flow standard validation is from Waco to the coast. Work may occur in the estuary and at any, or all, of the following Brazos River environmental flow standard locations: United States Geological Survey (USGS) Gage 08096500, Brazos River at Waco; USGS Gage 08108700, Brazos River at SH 21 near Bryan; USGS Gage 08111500, Brazos River near Hempstead; USGS Gage 08114000, Brazos River at Richmond; and/or USGS Gage 08116650, Brazos River near Rosharon. At minimum, three sites in the estuary at or below Rosharon must be assessed.

Brazos Basin Environmental Flow Standard Validation and Integration of River Flows and Brazos Basin Estuary Response (Addresses Portions of Brazos BBASC Work Plan Items 3.1.6, 3.1.7 and 3.1.11 and potentially, if overbank flows are experienced during the study period, 3.1.5)

The ability to tie biological responses to environmental flow is critical to validating the committee's environmental flow recommendations for the lower Brazos River and its estuary. The Brazos BBASC believes that determining the response of both fluvial specialists and facultative riverine species to the recommended environmental flow standards will be beneficial for validation and/or refinement of these standards. Additionally, being able to integrate biotic responses of the estuary to the recommended environmental flow standards in the lower Brazos River basin will be critical to validating and/or refining the flow standards.

Hence, the Texas Water Development Board (TWDB) requests a proposal for a study assessing the response of fluvial and facultative riverine species (e.g. changes in relative abundance and densities and/or changes in reproductive energy and success) and quantifying and integrating biotic (aquatic community) responses of the estuary to the Brazos River recommended environmental flow standards.

These studies will generate data across the range of adopted subsistence, base, and high flows at each of the above locations. These studies are highly dependent on the occurrence of specific flow levels. Work is not expected to occur at all of stream sites listed above or across all flows in each site's adopted flow regime but to occur at the flows provided. At a minimum, one assessment must occur per quarter in the estuary and one assessment from the above listed stream sites at one of the specified flow regime tiers regardless of whether the site is at subsistence, base, high or overbank flows. It is anticipated that every effort will be made to assess biotic responses to high and/or overbank flows regardless of when or where they occur.

For safety purposes, work is not expected to occur during a high or overbank flow events. It is anticipated that researchers will allow the event to subside to base flow levels, determine the appropriate length of time to allow for observable biotic response to the event, then conduct the instream or estuary assessment.

It is expected that fisheries biologists and estuary biologists will partner together on this project to coordinate monitoring, reduce duplication of effort, and integrate results. Funding to be allocated to this activity is not expected to exceed \$312,500 and all proposed work and deliverables associated with the TWDB administered funding shall be completed prior to August 31, 2015. Any proposed work and deliverables that utilize additional funding sources must be completed and submitted to the Brazos BBASC by August 31, 2016.

Vote Summary: Nineteen members participated in the email meeting and unanimously supported the workgroup's recommend Scope of Work.