

# Trinity and San Jacinto River Basins and Galveston Bay BBASC Meeting

Wednesday, February 4<sup>th</sup>, 2015 at 1:00 p.m., San Jacinto River Authority Office  
1577 Damsite Road, Conroe, Texas

## Minutes

**Members Present:** John Bartos, Chair; Jace Houston, Vice-Chair; Adam Sinclair; Tom Michel; Scott Alford; Pudge Willcox; Glenda Callaway; Ken Kramer; Jun Chang; Abby Paben (alternate for Zachary Holland); Phyllis Frank (alternate for Lori Traweek); Glen Clingenpeel (alternate for Kevin Ward); Gene Fisseler; Glenn Lord; Paul Nelson; Tracy Woody

**BBEST Members Present:** Bill Espey, Chair; Jim Lester, Vice-Chair; Mike Turco; Mike Reedy; Tony Smith; Webster Mangham

### Call to Order

Chair John Bartos called the meeting to order and the members introduced themselves.

### Public Comment

No public comments were made at this time.

### Approval of November 5<sup>th</sup>, 2014 Meeting Minutes

The minutes from the November 5<sup>th</sup>, 2014 meeting were unanimously approved with corrections.

### Acceptance of Resignations

Both William Goldston's and Jim Parks' resignations from the stakeholder group were unanimously accepted.

### Report from Vacancies and Nominations Committee

Jace Houston provided a brief overview of each BBASC candidate's qualifications.

- I. Mike Rickman was nominated and unanimously approved to replace Jim Parks on the BBASC to represent River Authorities.
- II. Wendell Null was nominated and unanimously approved to replace William Goldston on the BBASC to represent Recreational Water Users.

### Status of Work Plan Approval by the Environmental Flows Advisory Group (EFAG)

Chair Bartos inquired as to when the Environmental Flows Advisory Group (EFAG) would approve the Trinity work plan. Leslie Patterson, TCEQ, stated that no information had been received from the EFAG concerning a timeline of approval. Members inquired whether any additional action was required on the BBASC's part, and Member Ken Kramer stated that no action is required from the BBASC concerning EFAG approval of the work plan.

### Work Plan Project Updates

- I. United States Geologic Survey – Mrs. Amy Beussink provided an update on a project aimed at determining freshwater inflow volume from the Trinity River into Trinity Bay. She indicated that Task 2 and Task 3 of the project involving hydrologic monitoring as well as development of an index velocity rating are ongoing. Additionally, she stated that recent rains had allowed sampling at a wide range of instream flows and that calibration of the velocity index meter to

sediment discharge is nearly complete. Members inquired as to when a final report would be available and whether any entities were evaluating changes in flow downstream of USGS Gage No. 08067252 (Trinity River at Wallisville, TX). Mrs. Beussink indicated that gage data is available online from USGS National Water Information System (<http://waterdata.usgs.gov/nwis/rt>), a summary of findings will be submitted to the BBASC in August 2015, and technical report will be finalized in August 2016. Further, she indicated that changes in flow as a result of shoaling below the Wallisville gage are not being evaluated by this study.

- II. Trinity River Authority – Webster Mangham provided an update on the progress of LiDAR acquisition and the flow assessment study in the Middle Trinity River. He indicated that RAS modeling for the RM 444 site had been completed, and that sampling had commenced at the new site RM 75. Furthermore, he stated that two high flow pulse events had been captured during recent sampling efforts at the RM 75 site. Deadline for the final project report is August 31, 2015.
- III. Texas A&M University, Galveston (TAMUG) – Antonietta Quiggs representative, Jamie Steichen, updated members via teleconference on the status of the identifying bioindicator species responsive to freshwater inflows to Galveston Bay. She indicated that data analysis of indicator species' responses to freshwater inflows is currently underway. Additionally, she stated the final project report is due in August/September 2015.

#### **Review Process for SB3 Work Plan Studies and Additional Funding Opportunities**

Mark Wentzel, TWDB, informed members that several BBASCs expressed interest in reviewing the study draft reports as they come out prior to becoming final. As a result, the Board is inviting and encouraging members to volunteer to participate in the process for their basin. Mr. Wentzel indicated that the draft study reports for TRA and TAMUG are due August 2015. He stated that the focus of the review would be limited to within the context of the original Scope of Work, guidance document outlining the reviewing process will be provided, comments are expected to be submitted in electronic format, and reviewers will have a 2 week window (in August) to complete their review of the studies. BBASC members inquired as to how many reviewers are needed, and Mr. Wentzel indicated approximately 3 to 4 reviewers would be ideal. Following discussion, BBASC members were in agreement to request volunteers from the BBEST to provide comment on the draft reports. Additionally, John Botros offered for Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) to review and provide comments on the Trinity studies as well.

Members were also made aware of future funding opportunities including the request for proposals by Texas SeaGrant and the additional legislative funding requested by the TWDB for further implementation of BBASC work plans.

#### **Discussion of 2015 Legislative Session**

Member Ken Kramer briefed members on changes to committees in the Texas Legislature as well as any filed bills with the potential to impact water resources. He informed members that the Senate's Natural Resource Committee, which previously had reviewed most water legislation, has been changed to the Natural Resources and Economic Development Committee. Furthermore, review of (some) water related legislation would be transferred to a newly formed committee titled Agriculture, Water and Rural Affairs. In the House, committee assignments would be announced later this afternoon Wednesday, February 5<sup>th</sup>.

In addition to the above, Mr. Kramer provided an overview of the previous legislative funding awarded to the BBASC groups across Texas. He stated that the appropriation bill passed during the previous 83<sup>rd</sup>

legislature session included a rider, contingent on the passage of House Bill (HB) 4, containing an appropriation for \$2 million for the continuation of environmental flow studies. In this rider, \$750,000 was earmarked for the Guadalupe, San Antonio, Mission, and Aransas Rivers and Mission, Copano, Aransas, and San Antonio Bays Basin and Bay Stakeholder Committee (GSA BBASC), with the SAC recommending the remaining \$1.3 million divided equally between the BBASCs with submitted work plans. In the current 84<sup>th</sup> legislative session, TWDB has requested the continued appropriation of the \$2 million for environmental flow studies in their base budget, and at present, current versions of HB 1 and Senate Bill (SB) 2 include the continued funding. If the bill is passed, it will take affect September 1st, 2015, for spending in the next biennium. Mr. Kramer also remarked there is no earmarking of the \$2 million, so there will be flexibility to how the funds are appropriated between BBASC groups. Additionally, members were informed that Article 6 of each bill contains the appropriation request for natural resource agencies such TPWD, TWDB, and TCEQ, and the \$2 million for environmental flows is addressed specifically under A.1.1. Strategy: ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT INFORMATION. Mr. Kramer informed members that the Senate's Finance Committee is set to review Article 6 of the Appropriations Bill on Friday, February 20<sup>th</sup>, and he encourages BBASC members to contact state representatives to express support for retaining funding for continuation of environmental flow studies.

Additional filed bills discussed are as follows:

- I. HB 201 and SB 109 – Similar bills were introduced during a previous legislative session but were not passed. Aimed at streamlining the water rights permitting process, with hard deadlines for reviews and permit issuance. Also addresses who can be a party in a contested case hearing, with limitations on what prospective parties have to provide before they can contest an application. Additional versions might be introduced.
- II. SB 77 – Relates to development of a state climate adaptation plan. A similar bill was introduced during a previous legislative session but was not passed. The bill has been referred to the Senate's Natural Resources and Economic Development Committee.
- III. SB 78 – Deals with the state water planning process and directs planners to evaluate available science during the planning process. In addition, it has been revised to direct planners to look at the sustainability of aquifers.
- IV. HB 928 and SB 329 – Relates to state and local planning in response to drought. The bill has been referred to the Senate's Agriculture, Water and Rural Affairs Committee.

Members discussed the bills and inquired as how they can obtain more information concerning bills that could potentially impact water regulation and environmental flows in Texas. Chair Bartos and member Ken Kramer informed members they can access bill information through the Texas Legislature Online (<http://www.capitol.state.tx.us/>) and setup alerts to receive up to date information concerning specific bills.

### **Agency Updates and SB2 Middle Trinity Texas Instream Flow Program (TIFP) Studies**

Mark Wentzel, TWDB, provided members an update on the status of ongoing SB2 Texas Instream Flow studies in the Middle Trinity River. He indicated that progress had been made on habitat, biological and water quality components of the study, and that work requiring specific expertise had been contracted out such as water quality modeling and algal studies. He stated that TWDB has awarded in the range of \$25,000 to \$50,000 to each contractor, and at present, they are in the process of negotiating a contract for scientific peer review of the study design document. In addition, Leslie Patterson, TCEQ, provided members a handout outlining the work to date, and John Botros, TPWD, indicated that additional sampling events were planned for the upcoming spring and summer months. A final report is due out December 2016.

**Additional Items and Announcements**

Member Tom Michel requested the Trinity BBASC/BBEST webpage hosted by TCEQ be updated to better reflect the recent actions of the committee (i.e. work plan funding awarded, studies in progress, etc.) as well as adoption of the TCEQ environmental flow standards for the Trinity Basin. Leslie Patterson, TCEQ, indicated that the webpage could be updated.

Member Tracy Woody informed members about the formation of Sustainable Texas Oyster Resource Management, LCC which uses private enterprise to facilitate the development/restoration of oyster reefs in Galveston Bay and promotes sustainable harvesting of oysters. He encouraged members to visit the website [www.oysterstorm.com](http://www.oysterstorm.com) to learn more and indicated he would be discussing STORM further on the radio station 790 AM at 8:20 a.m. this Saturday, February 7<sup>th</sup>, 2015. Members inquired as to whether the organization had contacted the Galveston Bay Foundation (GBF) and whether fences would be utilized to restrict access to oyster beds. Mr. Woody stated that he had been in brief contact with GBF but had not had the opportunity to meet with them yet, and that access would not be limited to oyster beds using parameter barriers such as fencing.

**Public Comments**

No public comments were made at this time.

**Next Meeting**

The next TSJ BBASC meeting date is tentatively scheduled for October 7<sup>th</sup>, 2015. The Trinity BBEST will meet in July via conference call if additional legislative funding becomes available to prioritize additional work plan projects for funding. Future agenda items include updates on currently funded work plan projects, legislative funding for further work plan studies, and EFAG approval of the work plan.

**Adjourn**