

Texas Environmental Flows Science Advisory Committee

Wednesday, May 12, 2010

8:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Texas Commission on Environmental Quality

Central Campus, Building F, Room 2210

Austin, Texas 78753

Minutes

Call to order and approval of meeting minutes from April 14, 2010 meeting

Chairman Huston called the meeting to order. The SAC reviewed the minutes from the April 14, 2010 meeting. The minutes were approved without any changes.

Update on activities of the Colorado/Lavaca and Guadalupe/San Antonio BBESTs

Gregg Easley, Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, provided an update on the Guadalupe/San Antonio BBEST April 29, 2010 meeting and the Colorado/Lavaca BBEST May 11, 2010 meeting. The G/SA BBEST discussed meeting rules and budget issues and established three subcommittees: instream, estuarine, and hydrology. George Ward and James Wiersema, SAC members, also attended this meeting. The next G/SA BBEST meeting is June 11, 2010 in Austin.

The Colorado/Lavaca BBEST met for the third time on May 11, 2010 in Austin. This BBEST group has two subcommittees: instream and bays and estuaries. The BBEST held preliminary discussions regarding methods; has had an instream subcommittee conference call; plans to begin some HEFR runs; and will have a discussion of focal species at the June 2, 2010 Colorado BBEST meeting. The bays and estuaries subcommittee discussed holding a meeting on Matagorda Bay to see the area firsthand. Paul Jensen, SAC member, also attended this meeting.

Budget update

Ruben Solis, Texas Water Development Board, gave an update on the SAC budget. At the beginning of the fiscal year there was \$226,600 available. With four months left in the budget cycle there is \$131,928 or 58% of the budget remaining. Chairman Huston encouraged SAC members to timely submit their statements for reimbursements.

Discussion of Trinity/San Jacinto and Sabine/Neches Stakeholder Committee action

SAC member Ed Oborny attended the final Sabine/Neches BBASC meeting and gave a summary of the meeting and the stakeholders' draft recommendations. He noted presentations made at the meeting by Sabine River Authority regarding the draft recommendations report and by AECOM on the impact analysis of the BBEST recommendations, as well as the proposal of an additional recommendation to the draft report (funding request from the legislature for additional study and analysis) and the introduction of an alternative recommendation proposal. A majority of the Sabine/Neches BBASC voted to approve the amended draft recommendations report, which among other things recommended that environmental flow standards not be established until more information on the amount of water needed to support a sound environment is available.

Recognizing the challenges and issues faced by the Sabine/Neches BBASC, and that the ongoing Trinity/San Jacinto BBASC is also grappling with, the SAC discussed specific things they could do to better assist the stakeholder groups with their charge to recommend environmental flow standards. Three specific tasks were identified to help the BBASC and BBEST groups: (1) including information in the Lessons Learned document that guides and structures an exchange between BBEST and BBASC members; (2) providing feedback on the process of translating flow regimes using Water Availability Models (WAM); and (3) integrating all of the instream/riverine guidance from the various disciplines. SAC members Mary Kelly and Bob Brandes will work on item one; Bob Brandes and George Ward will work on item two; and James Wiersema, Ed Oborny, and Paul Montagna will work on item three. A report for each of these items will be on the agenda for the next meeting.

Consider Lessons Learned draft document

Paul Montagna presented a draft of the Lessons Learned document. He clarified some factual statements regarding post-recommendation activities. The SAC discussed the document and decided that within 10 days, Mary Kelly will get information to Paul Montagna regarding the interaction between BBEST and BBASC members to ensure that the BBEST stays involved in at least the beginning of the stakeholder process. The SAC also discussed the timing for completing this document and decided that completing it by the next SAC meeting on June 15, 2010 would be sufficient. The group also discussed whether to include the WAM translation in this document and decided that, while reference might be made in the Lessons Learned document, the full WAM utilization discussion would likely work better as a stand-alone document. The SAC also asked all three agencies (TCEQ, TWDB, and TPWD) to provide comments regarding the document directly to Paul Montagna within the next 10 days.

Work Plan Development guidance

Ed Oborny presented his draft of the document. The SAC discussed the document and decided that this guidance needed to be more than just a restatement of Senate Bill 3 and should not be based on the outcome of the recent BBEST meetings. Chairman Huston asked SAC members to send their specific comments to Ed after the document has been revised based on today's discussion and redistributed to the members. Chairman Huston reminded the SAC members that Ed asked for input on the content found on pages 6–8 (enhancement vs. validation activities) and asked that the SAC members send the content information to Ed by May 19, 2010 and not wait for the reworked draft. Ed will send the revised draft to the SAC members for final review by May 26, 2010. Members should have their final review comments to Ed by June 4, 2010. Ed will also send the draft document to the three agencies for content comments no later than May 19, 2010. For sake of consistency with previous guidance documents, the members decided that for this document, others being discussed today, and future SAC documents, the numbering scheme from previous SAC documents should be followed.

HEFR Enhancement Status report—workshop planning

Dan Opdyke, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, gave an update on recent and planned future HEFR enhancements. He provided a memo describing each enhancement and briefly reviewed each one. He stated that these updates provide more output options but do not change the existing functionality. Dan mentioned that all work on the recent enhancements is completed and validation activities are ongoing. With a separate memo, Dan discussed other updates related to

HEFR. He is still engaged in activities with the UT-CRWR Trident linkage. Dan solicited three volunteers (Mark Wentzel-TWDB, Phil Price-Brazos River Authority, and Kathy Alexander-TCEQ) to assist with testing the newest version of HEFR. A HEFR workshop will be offered on June 10 at Lower Colorado River Authority in Austin, with the possibility of a second workshop later if demand is sufficient.

Other discussion items

Chairman Huston announced that the next Environmental Flows Advisory Group meeting is scheduled for May 27, 2010 at 9:00 a.m. in Room E1.012 of the Capitol Extension. The EFAG has invited Jerry Clark and Danny Vance to make brief presentation about their stakeholder groups. Chairman Huston has been invited to provide a brief overview of the SAC activities. The TCEQ has been invited to give a brief overview of the remaining BBASC and BBEST groups in other basins.

Chairman Huston discussed a comment letter written by Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and submitted to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers regarding the Lake Columbia project. In the letter, TPWD stated that the Science Advisory Committee endorsed HEFR but provided no qualifiers to the statement. Because of the lack of qualifiers Chairman Huston thought that this statement was overreaching. He asked other SAC members for their thoughts on this action. The SAC asked the TPWD to send a follow up letter to the Corps clarifying that there are important qualifications that should accompany their statement about SAC support of HEFR. Chairman Huston will work with TPWD on resolving this.

Public comments

James Dodson made an announcement that the San Antonio Bay Partnership newsletter is out on their web site and had copies available for anyone interested.

Next meeting—schedule and agenda

The next meeting will be on June 15, 2010, starting at 8:30 a.m., hosted by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. The meeting will be held at TPWD's Airport Commerce location.

Agenda topics will include:

- final action on the *Discussion Paper: Lessons Learned From Initial SB 3 BBEST Activities*, including new text on the interaction between the BBEST and the BBASC
- a review of and input on the document *Work Plan Guidance: Considerations and Development of Work Plan for Adaptive Management*
- a report on the flow regime translation using WAM
- a report on instream guidance integration
- a report on the June 10, 2010 HEFR workshop

Future meetings are scheduled for July 14, 2010 (TWDB); August 11, 2010 (TPWD); and September 8, 2010 (TCEQ).