

## Texas Environmental Flows Science Advisory Committee

Tuesday, June 15, 2010

8:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department

Airport Commerce Park

Austin, Texas 78744

### MINUTES

#### **Call to Order/Approval of Meeting Minutes**

Chairman Huston called the meeting to order. The minutes from the May 12, 2010 meeting were approved by consensus.

#### **Liaison Reports – All BBEST's**

Paul Montagna attended a meeting of the Guadalupe/San Antonio BBEST estuary subcommittee. The subcommittee members discussed the state of the bay and estuary system and whether it could be considered as a sound ecological environment.

George Ward attended a meeting of the Guadalupe/San Antonio BBEST. That group had held meetings of the estuary and hydrology subcommittees. The hydrology subcommittee focused on the use of HEFR and many members attended a HEFR workshop. He discussed the loss of member Dr. Paul Hudson who is unable to serve on the BBEST and noted that the BBASC will be addressing this vacancy at their next meeting. The group agreed that an expert in geomorphology, as Dr. Hudson was, is essential to the group. He also noted that the group was soon to develop a work plan for potential work to be completed by a contractor.

Paul Jensen discussed the activities of the Colorado/Lavaca BBEST. He noted that they were moving ahead at a good pace and that they have formed subcommittees to address riparian, estuary, hydrology issues. He noted that member Bryan Cook summarized inflow results from LCRA/SAWS water project at their last meeting which the group intends to use this as a starting point. He noted that the group has planned a meeting which will focus on freshwater inflows to be held in Palacios. The group is also attempting to schedule a field trip in the bay for those who are unfamiliar with the bay itself. Ed Oborny noted that the group is discussing actual field trips to better characterize the river and the unique aspects of the basin/bay system.

#### **Budget Update**

Ruben Solis, TWDB, gave an update on the SAC budget and remaining funds. He noted that approximately half of the budget remains. The SAC members discussed the need to re-evaluate budget in light of the timeline extensions given to the current BBESTs and BBASCs.

#### **Discussion of T/SJ “Conditional” Group Response**

The SAC discussed the response sent to the SAC and others by the Trinity/San Jacinto “Conditional Group” BBEST members regarding the SAC review of their environmental flow recommendations. The SAC members identified content of a letter which would be prepared to respond in order to clarify the Conditional Group’s interpretation of the

SAC's comments. The members agreed that the response would be a high level overview, not a detailed response to all aspects of the Conditional Group's comments. Members noted that they should focus more on the lessons learned from the <sup>first</sup> two BBEST groups and their recommendations and how the <sup>second</sup> tier groups could benefit from their process. Chairman Huston summarized suggested essential SAC response elements, and the group agreed that a response was warranted and they will work together to prepare the draft.

### **Consider for Adoption Lessons Learned Draft**

Paul Montagna began a discussion of Version 4 of the lessons learned document. He noted several changes to the document from the previous version:

- added procedural activities that included administrative activities summary
- professional aspect regarding historical documentation.
- Specific technical lessons – expanded:
  - consider a more precise definition of “sound ecological environment” in the instream portions
  - keep it simple regarding HEFR matrix; don't need to include every aspect of the HEFR matrices
  - be careful about the period of record
  - be careful about reservoirs which the SAC has not fully addressed
  - post recommendation activities: the BBASC and BBEST groups will need to work together after BBEST recommendations are submitted

Members discussed additional items of concern which they felt needed revision in the document. The SAC agreed to hold a conference call to discuss the response to the TSJ conditional group's concerns and to address the finalization of the lessons learned document, taking into account the conditional group response.

### **Report from WAM/Flow Regime Translation Subcommittee**

Bob Brandes gave an overview of the effort to address how groups might utilize the WAM. A meeting was held on June 3, 2010 with several people in attendance. The group focused on 2 issues: 1) how to look at flows generated by WAM for regional water planning purposes and determine to what extent a flow regime can actually be achieved, in particular the frequencies of occurrence; and 2) the potential impacts of a proposed environmental flow regimes on proposed water supply projects that will include environmental flow restrictions. The group will be meeting in the near future in order to produce a guidance document that will lay out procedures for the BBASCs to address this issue.

It was noted that technical information would need to be provided to the BBASCs and that the TWDB is starting to look at WAM models for future basins and updating future models for the upcoming basins so they are ready when those groups are formed.

Members discussed implementability and agreed that if the science of the environmental flow recommendations isn't implementable then it doesn't work. The SAC members agreed that this topic merits guidance from the SAC as it is fundamental to the environmental flows process.

### **Consider for Adoption Work Plan Development guidance draft**

Ed Oborny noted that the first draft of this document had been reformatted. SAC member's comments were incorporated into the document. He noted that members commented that the document should not be prescriptive of what the basin groups should do, but to note what groups should consider and not direct them to work a certain way. He also added a short section on interpretation of what adaptive management means, with a request for comments and direction from the other SAC members. Chairman Huston stated that this guidance document should not be just a list of options the groups can think about, but should be more direct to components of the work plan that appear to the SAC to be necessary. Members discussed the work plan component and agreed that there are the 3 elements of the workplan: recommendations, validation, and modification. Members discussed how to validate flow regime recommendations. The members agreed to provide additional input to Mr. Oborny. He will summarize the group's discussion and suggest specific assignments of the various SAC members to complete and enhance different sections of the document.

### **Report on Instream Guidance Integration**

Member Jim Wiersema is leading this effort. He noted that the SAC has produced several overlay guidance documents related to instream flows which have been used by existing BBEST groups. He questioned if these documents can be compiled into something useful to the BBESTs as a single document. Members discussed the integration of various components of the guidance documents. Ed Oborny stated that the purpose of this task is to focus on overlays rather than simply relying hydrology and that both the instream flow and freshwater inflow documents say that you can't rely on hydrology alone, but that historical hydrology is just one factor in developing environmental flow recommendations.

The members discussed what can or should the SAC be doing to facilitate the completion of instream guidance integration. Jim Wiersema noted that the SAC can flesh out what has already been addressed in previous guidance documents to put this aspect into more detailed perspective. He stated that sections in biology guidance document could be expanded further and incorporated into the lessons learned document. Members agreed that groups will need to use available field data to identify and verify exactly what the current conditions represent and how it can be applied in their recommendations. Members of the BBESTs can rely on their own knowledge of the various systems to lay out proposed approaches to defining an eflow regime.

Members discussed whether this should be documented in new guidance or an expanded biology guidance. Members also agreed that the challenge is how the SAC will communicate what they think the emphasis needs to be at the BBEST level against the backdrop of what guidance has already been produced, specifically how can the BBESTs better utilize the guidance that's already been developed. Jim Wiersema indicated that he will develop an outline that puts into perspective where this effort might go.

### **HEFR Enhancement Workshop Reports**

Dan Opdyke, TPWD, gave an overview of the HEFR workshop. The BBEST members discussed using the various overlays, primarily biology, as a supplement to the hydrologic analysis.

Dan Opdyke also gave a presentation regarding the use of the HEFR methodology. He explained that the rationale for using the HEFR method was because hydrology is considered the master variable in the available literature and that it has a significant impact on many ecosystem functions. He discussed the SAC guidance document which outlines the HEFR methodology and noted that the consideration of hydrology is only a first step that provides an initial estimate only.

### **Other Discussion Items**

Chairman Huston gave an overview of the Environmental Flows Advisory Group (EFAG) meeting where he explained the progress of the SAC and the various basin groups in their development of environmental flow regimes. He also discussed the revision to the schedule as adopted by the EFAG.

### **Public Comments**

Todd Chenoweth, TCEQ noted that at the EFAG meeting there were comments that a linking of the SB3 process with the RWPG process was lacking and it would be useful to the policymakers if the groups looked at this relationship. The groups will need to carefully look at this issue, especially when determining future human needs. He will follow this up with an e-mail to the SAC.

Steve Box noted that from the EFAG comments there was a need to look at biology as an important overlay, but mostly there was a need for the BBESTs to come to a consensus on their recommendations.

### **Next Meeting – Schedule (July 14, TWDB) and Agenda**

The next meeting of the SAC will be held on July 14, 2010 to be hosted by the TWDB.

Agenda items include:

- Final action on workplan guidance
- Bob Brandes action on his workgroup activities
- Lessons learned document update
- Drafting of biology piece (biology lessons learned)
- Discussion of reservoirs in relation to sound ecological environment

The SAC members will meet via conference call on Monday, June 21, 2010 to discuss their response to the Trinity/San Jacinto “Conditional” group response, as well as other follow up items from this meeting.

The August meeting is set for August 8, 2010