



**Watershed Coordination Steering Committee  
Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board  
Wharton Regional Office**

**Meeting Summary  
Thursday, March 10, 2005**

**Attendance**

Persons present:

Jay	Bragg	Brazos River Authority
Tom	Wilkinson	Brazos Valley Council of Governments
Steven	Johnston	Galveston Bay Estuary Program
Hernan	Jaso	Golden Crescent Regional Planning Commission
Debbie	Magin	Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority
Carl	Masterson	Houston-Galveston Area Council
Sylvia	Balentine	Lavaca-Navidad River Authority
Walter	Garrett	Lower Colorado River Authority – Board of Directors
Alicia	Reinmund	Lower Colorado River Authority
Sky	Lewey	Nueces River Authority
Miles	Hall	Sabine River Authority
Stephen	Lusk	San Antonio River Authority
Diane	Boellstorff	Texas Cooperative Extension – Soil and Crop Sciences
Mark	McFarland	Texas Cooperative Extension – Soil and Crop Sciences
Dale	Rankin	Texas Cooperative Extension – Colorado County
Richard	Eyster	Texas Department of Agriculture
Kraig	Gallimore	Texas Water Development Board
Cecilia	Gerngross	Texas Water Resources Institute
Carter	Miska	Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board
Kendria	Ray	Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board
Kevin	Wagner	Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board
Aaron	Wendt	Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board

Committee agencies not represented:

Lower Neches Valley Authority  
South East Texas Regional Planning Commission  
Texas Commission on Environmental Quality  
Texas General Land Office  
Trinity River Authority

**Call To Order**

Aaron Wendt opened the first meeting of the Watershed Coordination Steering Committee (WCSC) of the Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board (TSSWCB) Wharton Regional Office (WRO) at 10:00 a.m. Self-introductions of those in attendance were made. The meeting was held at the Colorado SWCD office in Columbus, Texas and was well attended by those invited entities representing diverse perspectives including river authorities, councils of governments and other state agencies.

## **Overview of the Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board**

Aaron Wendt presented an overview of the TSSWCB so that all meeting attendees would have a congruent understanding of the operational structure and program areas of the TSSWCB, as well as, the management tools in the TSSWCB's arsenal. For a detailed review of this presentation, please see the Adobe Acrobat PDF handouts or Microsoft PowerPoint presentation.

## **Overview of Water Quality Management Plans**

Carter Miska presented an overview of Water Quality Management Plans (WQMPs) so that all meeting attendees would have an equivalent comprehension of the major water quality management tool of the TSSWCB. For a detailed review of this presentation, please see the Adobe Acrobat PDF handouts or Microsoft PowerPoint presentation.

## **Overview of Watershed Protection Plans**

Aaron Wendt presented an overview of the 9-element EPA framework for Watershed Protection Plans (WPPs), a major component of this watershed coordination pilot project. For a detailed review of this presentation, please see the Adobe Acrobat PDF handouts or Microsoft PowerPoint presentation.

## **Overview of Watershed Coordination Pilot Project**

Aaron Wendt presented an overview of this watershed coordination pilot project, as described by its Clean Water Act §319(h) grant, including explanations of all enumerated tasks and the current status of achieving those tasks. For a detailed review of this presentation, please see the Adobe Acrobat PDF handouts or Microsoft PowerPoint presentation.

## **Discussion of Steering Committee Purpose, Goals and Outcomes**

Aaron Wendt led a discussion of this steering committee's purpose and goals and of this watershed coordination pilot project's tasks and deliverables. The vision for this steering committee is to guide the Watershed Coordinator throughout the project, focusing efforts on those watersheds which will benefit the most from WPP development and implementation assistance.

Question – How will the recent proposed budget cut to the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Resource Conservation and Development Program (RC&D) affect this and other water quality improvement efforts?

Response – The Clean Water Act (CWA) may pull in previously untapped funding in those areas impacted by RC&D cuts. WPPs would help to target these monies. While the TSSWCB and this project may appear to be focused on CWA §319(h) funds, WPP funding is wide open, including other federal and state sources, as well as private, corporate, and non-profit sources. In addition, water quality issues do not always/only have a money solution, but may also necessitate a public awareness/knowledge solution.

Discussion – Watershed Delineation – This Steering Committee will identify the watersheds within the WRO service area. Factors influencing identification include: 1) standardization of

delineation across the multiple basins, and 2) selection of a standard size or hydrologic level which is most appropriate to WPP solutions. Discussion points and comments included:

- Utilize CRP delineations from 10 partner agencies
- WRO service area encompasses 40 SWCDs in 47 counties
- TCEQ classified river segments (162) and associated watersheds
- 8-digit Hydrologic Unit Codes (HUC-8) represent 51 watersheds
- HUC-14 represents watersheds on a scale with better management potential
- Tie to land use/land cover (LULC) change which impacts landform and therefore watershed delineation

Discussion – Prioritization Criteria – This Steering Committee will develop a set of criteria which will be used to prioritize the delineated watersheds. Factors influencing prioritization include: 1) identification and weighting of criteria, and 2) assessment of each criterion to each watershed.

Discussion points and comments included:

- Known impairments – 303(d) list and 305(b) report
- Coastal zone – 10 Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs)
- SB 503 priority areas and WQMP statistics
- Current WPP projects
- Clean Rivers Program (CRP) priorities – top 5 from each partner
- 303(d) list – emphasize the work TCEQ has done in prioritization
- level of citizen activism
- historic LULC change over time
- which impairments are best suited to WPP solutions
- should be pro-active in unspoiled areas threatened by “urban flight”
- political will/local government buy-in
- don’t reinvent the wheel in criteria development
- WPPs do not have to be for 303(d) impaired water bodies, even though CWA §319(h) focuses on impairments. Prevention of threats in non-impaired water bodies may be just as important.
- Long-term viability of WPP citizen group – ability of citizens to assume control when group/WPP is thriving

Discussion – Texas Cooperative Extension Master Watershed Steward – A separate, yet intrinsically linked CWA §319(h) project which will be conducted in a watershed in the WRO service area and designed with the potential for future expansion throughout Texas. Project tasks include: 1) develop and/or adapt watershed education training materials and resources to create a science-based, community-responsive watershed education curriculum, 2) work in concert with the TSSWCB to facilitate and support the development of a WPP, and 3) facilitate the establishment of a local watershed action committee to promote implementation of the WPP. This curriculum clearinghouse will be structured similar to the Master Gardener and Master Naturalist programs.

Explanation – WRO WQMP Status Chart – This chart details the WQMPs in the WRO service area. As there was no legend provided, explanation of the columns is as follows:

- SWCD – name of the Soil and Water Conservation District
- # – number designation of the Soil and Water Conservation District
- SB 503 – if the SWCD is within the SB 503 cost-share priority area
- CZM – if the SWCD is within the Coastal Management Zone
- # of WQMPs – number of certified WQMPs in the SWCD

- Acres – number of acres covered by certified WQMPs in the SWCD
- # of AFOs – number of certified WQMPs (subset) which cover Animal Feeding Operations in the SWCD

Discussion – Clean Rivers Program Steering Committees – Agencies not familiar with the CRP inquired as to how the CRP Steering Committees operate. Discussion points and comments included:

- The various CRP partners operate Steering Committees generally the same; however, differences revolve around 1) size of river basin and therefore multiple Steering Committees based on geography, and 2) more localized subcommittees supporting specific projects in the basins like TMDLs
- Organized and operated under the Texas Clean Rivers Act enacted by the 72<sup>nd</sup> Texas Legislature in 1991 (Texas Water Code §26.0135)
- Note that the CRP Steering Committee mandate names permit holders as the primary stakeholder
- Often fight low turnout in smaller CRP where no significant water quality concerns exist as opposed to urban issues areas
- How to motivate without screaming “The Sky Is Falling”?
- Inconsistency of Steering Committee membership and issues in relation to the long-term life of the Steering Committee itself. Participation waxes and wanes as issues fluctuate between hot and cold topics.

Question – How much sharing of water quality data occurs among the various agencies?

Response – CRP partners guide coordinated monitoring efforts in the basins among a variety of entities including cities and counties, river authorities and water districts, university departments and institutes, federal and state agencies, and private firms and non-profit organizations to reduce redundant monitoring and sampling thereby saving fiscal resources.

Discussion – Steering Committee Membership – Based on discussions at this meeting of the direction of this watershed coordination pilot project, were the necessary players here? Did we invite the correct agencies? Is anyone missing essential to region-wide prioritization of watersheds and overall coordination of this project? Note that when a specific watershed has been selected and WPP development begun, a different, more specific stakeholder group will be necessary. Discussion comments included:

- Texas Parks and Wildlife Department
- Texas Forest Service
- Citizen involvement (HGAC Colorado County – Kathy Burris, Phillips, Reynolds) (LG Raun, Lowell Farms, El Campo)
- Federal agencies – EPA, NRCS (State Technical Committee, RC&D)
- Coastal Bend Bays and Estuaries Program (counterpart to Galveston Bay Estuary Program)
- Non-governmental organizations; not-for-profit entities (The Nature Conservancy)
- TSSWCB Board member (distance may mitigate participation)
- Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFO) representatives (emergent pollutant issues – antibiotics and hormones in water)
- Commodity organizations; Texas Farm Bureau

Discussion – Website development – Every task lends itself to being posted on the website, including the presentations and summaries of these Steering Committee meetings. As of now,

the website will be hosted off of the TSSWCB site (<http://www.tsswcb.state.tx.us/>). The Watershed Coordinator will design the site with fundamental assistance provided by the TSSWCB Network Specialist and IT department.

#### Discussion – Steering Committee Logistics

- Meeting frequency – quarterly (March, June, September, December)
- Meeting location – Colorado SWCD office in Columbus will continue to suffice

For more information on this presentation, please see the Adobe Acrobat PDF handouts or Microsoft PowerPoint presentation.

#### **Adjournment**

Aaron Wendt thanked those in attendance for their active participation. Today's productive discussions laid the groundwork for the long-term sustainability of this Steering Committee and this Watershed Coordination Project. After bonus discussion time, the meeting adjourned at 12:10 p.m.

Based on the WCSC's consensus that meetings be held quarterly, the next WCSC meeting will be scheduled for June 2005 at the same location.

#### **Action Items Extracted From Discussion**

##### Steering Committee Members

1. By June 16, 2005, provide to the Watershed Coordinator a list of all watersheds within the CRP partners' monitoring basins which lie, wholly or in part, within the TSSWCB WRO service area along with an assessment of the priority criteria for each watershed.
2. Review the Project Workplan to discuss its components in detail at the next WCSC meeting.

##### Watershed Coordinator

1. By May 12, 2005, fill the WCSC membership gaps identified at the March 2005 meeting. Specifically: 1) Natural Resources Conservation Service, 2) Texas Forest Service, 3) Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, 4) Coastal Bend Bays and Estuaries Program, and 5) citizen advocate.
2. By June 30, 2005, compile list of all watersheds provided by WCSC members and analyze the priority criteria assessment of each watershed.
3. Continue work on other project tasks, including website design.