

# **Arroyo Colorado Education and Outreach Workgroup - under the Arroyo Colorado Watershed Steering Committee**

DRAFT Meeting Summary – February 19, 2004

**ATTENDING WORK GROUP COMMITTEE MEMBERS:**

**Roger Miranda – TCEQ**  
**Earlene Lambeth – TCEQ**  
**Tony Reisinger – TX Sea Grant**  
**Don Hockaday – Pan Am Coastal Studies**  
**Laura DeLa Garza – Citizen**  
**Paul Bergh – Coalition to Save the Arroyo Colorado**  
**Kevin Ayarzagoitia – TCEQ Region 15**  
**Chris Caudle – TCEQ Region 15**  
**JD White – UTPA-CSC**  
**Dave Buzan – TPWD**  
**Rocky Freund – Nueces River Authority**  
**Donna Berry – TX Master Naturalist**  
**F. Miguel Pumarejo - Citizen**

## **CALL TO ORDER/WELCOME/INTRODUCTIONS:**

Don Hockaday opened the second meeting of the Education and Outreach Workgroup that was hosted at the University of Texas – Pan American Coastal Studies Laboratory located in South Padre Island. Introductions were made, handouts distributed, and there were discussions of what was on the agenda.

Goals and objectives were discussed with a variety of ways to attain them. The “Getting In Step” program was decided on as the format for the education and outreach plan. The guide(s) offer advice on how to effectively raise citizen awareness of nonpoint source pollution and to motivate individual behavior change to develop more water-friendly habits and practices that will lead to cleaner waters for the community. It provides information from the growing field of community-based social marketing. The plan is intended as a reference that pulls together principles, techniques, and information for effective watershed outreach.

A brief review was given on the recent Water Summit that was held in Harlingen. The “Project Wet” was discussed which is a K – 12 nationwide education program. The workgroup would consider implementing such a program in the Valley under the Workgroup. Don Hockaday had ordered and received many educational tools from the program and put them out for display.

Jim (JD) White with the UT – Pan American Center for Coastal Studies presented a summary of the recent EPA Environmental Education Needs Assessment. The survey

was conducted between May of 2000 and February 2003 and was in English and Spanish. The survey was sent to parties on both sides of the River (Rio Grande). Some of the goals of the survey were to: 1) Determine regional environmental priorities; 2) Solicit information on what type of education programs were being offered in the border region; 3) Determine the types of environmental education most often received by border educators; and 4) Identify educational environmental partnerships. Jim went on to explain that all the survey seemed very relevant to the purpose of the Education and Outreach Workgroup would want to accomplish. The number one survey response was water issues and the second concern reported was trash...litter. The survey identified this region as bilingual and also identified the fact that people are not willing to travel in order to receive environmental education. The survey also concluded that small, informal, fun group settings are preferred and that media was the number one way that people received most of their environmental education. Other ways the environmental message was received was through television, newspapers, the Internet, and person-to-person contact and discussions. The survey also identified children, kindergarten to grade 12, as the first group to educate and the second group would be adult outreach.

Don went on to explain the "Getting In Step" program that was developed and distributed through the EPA. The set of resources are designed to assist local governments, watershed groups, watershed management agencies, and others how to plan and conduct effective watershed outreach campaigns. Don spoke on and how important it to plan an education and outreach program that will be effective in changing behaviors.

One comment received from the group was the need to maintain the focus for the Workgroup and that objectives and goals should be directed to the Arroyo Colorado Watershed. Roger Miranda had previously sent Don his ideas for short and long term goals for the Education and Outreach Workgroup. A copy of the goals were distributed to the group and discussed as a first step to defining the groups' purpose. The first goal that Roger suggested was the need to confirm the membership of the Workgroup and made suggestions as how to expand the group to include key people in the area that would be a great asset to the Arroyo project. Paul Bergh agreed to contact a couple of people in the area that the group felt would be able to assist. The group agreed to recruit a few more key people, confirm and document membership of the Workgroup by March 16.

The second item Roger suggested was the need for the group to continue exploring and identifying other groups in the Valley that are already committed to expanding environmental educational. The purpose would be "not to re-invent the wheel" but continue to make people aware of the problem(s) in the Arroyo and foster local stewardship in the watershed.

Roger reminded the group that the state has limited funds and that specific monies had been requested to fund the Education and Outreach Arroyo project through a grant. The grant would have a specific timeframe in which the work and outreach would have to be delivered. Roger continued the discussion by saying that he would like the Workgroup to envision a "grass roots" organization that would continue to expand the efforts of the

Arroyo Colorado Watershed Steering Committee. The grass roots organization would foster local stewardship by continuing to educate and perform outreach that would in turn, continue to improve the water quality of the Arroyo Colorado. Roger cited other homegrown groups such as the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, Friends of Clear Creek in the Houston area, and the Armand Bayou Committee. He reported that these groups are long standing groups that look for their own funding to work on watershed issues, are home-grown, create their own outreach, and keep public awareness going far beyond what the state will be able to offer in terms of continued resources.

Dave Buzan pointed out the interest of the Master Naturalist in the Arroyo project. Donna Berry, the Master Naturalist Outreach Coordinator present at the meeting, reported that a one-day annual festival was being planned and that it would be held at a park on the Arroyo. She said the event was being planned as a celebration of the Arroyo. Items being considered for the celebration included speakers, holding small environmental seminars, having activities for children, and possibly concluding the day with a jazz festival held in the evening.

Another suggestion made was to contact the Lower Laguna Madre Foundation for continued support and outreach and that the foundation's goals and mission statement might be a "fit" to include the Arroyo Colorado. Roger reminded the group that the Arroyo Colorado Steering Committee at-large should be the group to spearhead the "grass-roots" effort and should be undertaken by the all the stakeholders and not just one of the Workgroups formed.

Roger reminded the workgroup that the goals of the Education & Outreach Workgroup needed to be clarified. He suggested that the short-term goal of the Workgroup could be to bring awareness to the groups' efforts and the on-going work to draft the Watershed Protection Plan. He also pointed out that the long-term goal(s) of the Workgroup should include the education and outreach component of the Arroyo Watershed Protection Plan. The ultimate goal should be to clean up the Arroyo and improvement of water quality through the efforts of Education and Outreach Workgroup. He said the workgroups efforts would create awareness and increase participation in the projects efforts.

Don pointed out how important is to start an education program at a basic level of, "What is a watershed"? "Where and what is the Laguna Madre?" "Do you know the Arroyo Colorado is polluted?" Don also made the point that what ever the group decided on, that information should be printed and distributed in English and Spanish.

Dave Buzan suggested the need for continued recruitment. The group agreed and identified key people within the community that they felt would be an asset to the project and Workgroup. Volunteers agreed to make the contacts and it was the hope of the group these key people would be willing to participate and offer assistance or ideas. The suggestion was made to try to complete recruitment, confirm and document membership leadership of the Workgroup by March 16.

A suggestion was made by Don to possibly meet in Raymondville to make the meetings more accessible for some who travel and also the group should consider video conferencing. The group agreed to begin working through the “Getting In Step” program at the next Education and Outreach Workgroup meeting which was to be held before the next Watershed Steering Committee meeting in April.

TCEQ - TX Commission on Environmental Quality

Arroyo Colorado Education and Outreach Workgroup