

**Arroyo Colorado Education and Outreach Workgroup
Formed Under The
Arroyo Colorado Watershed Steering Committee**

Meeting Summary – July 20, 2004

ATTENDING WORK GROUP COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

Layne Budd
Laura De La Garza
Don Hockaday
JD White
Sky Lewey
Amy Winters
Ken Jones

Present at Austin through video-conferencing:

Kris Shipman
Earlene Lambeth
Roger Miranda

CALL TO ORDER/WELCOME/INTRODUCTIONS:

Don Hockaday opened the fifth meeting of the Education and Outreach Work Group that was hosted at the University of Texas – Pan American Coastal Studies Laboratory located in South Padre Island. Introductions were made and the agenda was reviewed. Video-conferencing was set up for participants through the Austin TCEQ.

The minutes from the previous meeting were not approved at this meeting due to the low attendance. Don Hockaday asked the meeting summary be approved at the next meeting.

The next item on the agenda was an update about Coastal Expo's that the work group is planning to participate in with TX Parks and Wildlife. Volunteers will be needed to help with the Arroyo outreach at these events. Earlene was looking into educational materials available through TCEQ to use as handouts. Kris Shipman reported that she was working with Amy Winters, the Director of the World Birding Center to hold a Coastal Expo in March 2–3, 2005. School children will be the target audience and a Thursday night community family event offered. October 7-8 will be a Wild Walk in McAllen, which will predominantly be marketed toward children. Kris also reported that Donna Berry had sent e-mail to the Education & Outreach Work Group letting them know that a Fiesta Arroyo Colorado event through the Master Naturalist would not be possible this year. Kris also contacted Patti Alexander, the Outreach Coordinator for Santa Ana National Wildlife Refuge about holding a Coastal Expo in January. There are a lot of other options and events that are possible for the work group to participate in that will further

to public education about the Arroyo and what needs to be done. Don reminded the group that their efforts need to be concentrated in the Arroyo watershed.

The next item discussed was funding through various grants and contracts for the Education and Outreach efforts. Roger Miranda reported to the work group that he had applied for a Border 2012 grant for \$30,000 and it was not awarded. Roger was able to identify 6 reasons the grant was not received. They are as follows: 1) no clear bi-national effort 2) no time line 3) approach not creative or innovative 4) no successful models from other areas, 5) no clear measures of success and 6) no letters of support or endorsement attached. Roger said the group could re-apply in the fall keeping these items in mind and when the proposal is written again, it should be written with the “Getting In Step” program since it is EPA approved.

Also, the Clean Water Act (CWA) 106 funds are available but may be hard to get due to the budget shortage in the State. These funds may be needed to back-fill on going projects since the agencies are required to reduce general revenue. Roger also reiterated that at this time, the only thing the Education and Outreach Work Group has to do at this time is to compile their portion, or component of the Watershed Protection Plan for the Arroyo Colorado. Roger explained that TCEQ management would not support funding (CWA 106) until the education and outreach plan (“Getting In Step”) is prepared. In any contract using CWA 106 funds, the main deliverable that has to be featured prominently as one of the deliverables, is the plan for education and outreach for the Arroyo.

Roger asked the group if they felt they were progressing on the “Getting In Step” program? Is integration and cooperation of the Education and Outreach Work Group with the other work groups formed under the Steering Committee being planned? He also suggested looking at other local organizations and what was on their agendas that the group could tag onto, demographics as well as the TX Parks & Wildlife Expo’s. He asked for discussions about the need of other assistance from professionals or independent consultants or has the group identified resources and expertise within the group to move forward preparing flyers, inserts, etc. Also possibly producing interim products such as the PowerPoint presentations to be given at local meetings. He said that all of this kind of activities such as grant writing, would take a back seat to CWA 106 funding until the actual deliverable of having the education and outreach plan prepared is done. All of these things can be included but “keep in mind that task number 1 is going to be the plan itself”.

Don expressed his confusion on whether the “Getting In Step” was necessary and should be completed and how much he felt the group flipped–flopped on using the guide. He said it seemed to go back and forth and he felt he always had to “sell” the “Getting In Step” program. He said it is hard to do and people don’t like to do it because it is “no fun”. Don has supported the development of the outreach and education portion of the WPP through the use of the EPA approved, “Getting In Step”.

Roger reminded the work group that the deadline for getting the entire plan done (WPP) is approximately 18 months after the Watershed Coordinator is hired. He said that was

going to happen by August 1, 2004. He estimated that the education and outreach component of the WPP should be in four or five months before that.

Roger said he felt all the activities were good and we should still pursue them but that these items should be the recommendations written into the plan, and then implemented once all have come to consensus on exactly what the actual activities should be. There was discussion about demographic work and if the group could move forward with what was available through International Museum of Art & Science (IMAS) and other sources or if others should be hired to gather more information. Several people agreed that they would get together and work on completing the "Getting In Step" plan and not prepare it together as a group and others would work on activities.

Other discussions were held on education and outreach coordination with the other work groups and various state entities and how to work together. Everyone agreed it would be helpful to meet with each of the work groups one at a time. Questions would be asked such as "who is your important target audience"? What is your message? It would be good to offer outreach assistance to the other work groups so not to overlap what is already being done. An example of that would be what is already being offered in the Agriculture Work Group through the Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board.

Roger updated the group on a TCEQ, Small Business Division, Arroyo Colorado brochures and travel display purchased with CWA 106 funds. The travel display and brochures would be ready by Sept. 1 for presentations. Discussions were held about whom the target audience would be and who would be the best to target that would actually begin to change the wastewater infrastructure and agriculture practices in the Valley. It was decided that the first travel display would be in English and possibly another developed next year in Spanish. The brochure will have pictures, a map and graphics. Various comments were made but all felt it was a good start to begin presentations to the community that could influence a change.

Another topic Roger made the group aware of was a Water Pollution Prevention campaign in Laredo and the Rio Grande Valley also being funded and presented through TCEQ Small Business Division. The TMDL staff was not initially involved in the non-point source campaign but Roger was able to have input in the press release(s). A meteorologist that works for a television station has been approached and Roger had been told they would have "pollution forecast" on the weather news to make people aware of the fact that quality of run-off is important.

A Texas Watch Regional Conference will also be held in McAllen on Saturday, August 14 hosted by IMAS. All are invited to attend. Roger will be giving a presentation on the Arroyo Colorado at 9:00 AM. Roger, at two local Valley universities through a Small Business program called Environmental Education, is also giving one-day seminars. He is speaking on the Arroyo Colorado to the teachers and taking them on a tour and field trip.

Development of a newsletter was another suggestion and the group expressed the desire to put one together. It would be very helpful as well as a web site specifically for the Arroyo.

Another item discussed was moving the Education and Outreach monthly meeting to Texas State Technical College (TSTC) in Harlingen. TSTC has agreed to partner with TCEQ and make available video conferencing with Austin or other sites as needed. Earlene was going to research the consensus of the group and make the arrangements of the video conferencing.

The next item worked on was the “Getting In Step” program and the goals and objectives, target audiences, visions of results and measures of evaluating the results. Layne agreed to try and attain information on landowners along the Arroyo Colorado so they could be contacted. The group brainstormed who the target audience(s) should be. However, focus of the middle-class, English-speaking public is not to be over-looked and would probably have the greatest influence on those in positions such as elected officials, who can make a difference in these specific areas. This is not to diminish those living in colonias but probably could not make as much of a difference in correcting the situations in the Valley. A demographer would be able to help us identify those people in the Valley that would have the most positive effect and where with-all to effect change that is needed to help the Arroyo.