

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

DRAFT Meeting Summary – October 19, 2004

ATTENDING WORK GROUP COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

Paul H. Bergh
Mark Lingo
Tony Reisinger
Laura De La Garza

Present at Austin through video-conferencing:

Kris Shipman
Earlene Lambeth

CALL TO ORDER/WELCOME/INTRODUCTIONS

Laura De La Garza opened the seventh meeting of the Education and Outreach Work Group that was located in the Board Room of the Science and Technology Bldg on the Texas State Technical College (TSTC) campus in Harlingen, Texas. Video-conferencing was set up for participants through the Austin TCEQ and TSTC.

The minutes from the previous meeting on September 21, 2004 was approved.

OVERVIEW AND PROGRESS REPORTS

Kris Shipman and Laura De La Garza reported on the Coastal Expo event at McAllen's Wildwalk on October 7-8, 2004. It was reported to be successful, hosting over 1,200 students ranging from kindergarten to 6th grade. Ms. De La Garza set up the Arroyo travel display and had an Arroyo Colorado watershed map for viewing. Brochures and a survey were available for distribution. The survey proved to be too difficult but was used as an awareness tool for the students, teachers, and parents. The children were most responsive to the watershed map and enjoyed pointing out where they lived on the map. The easiest message to get across for that age group was that everyone lives in a watershed and importance of not throwing trash on the ground.

Coordination for the November 13-14 Coastal Expo to be setup at the Harlingen World Birding Festival was discussed. Ms. De La Garza informed the group that she would not be able to participate that weekend and that she would solicit volunteers. Again, the Arroyo travel display, brochures and the survey would be available.

Ms. De La Garza next presented an overview and progress report of other outreach efforts. An article on the Arroyo Colorado watershed protection plan (Arroyo WPP) titled

“LRGVDC Participates in Arroyo Colorado Clean-up Efforts” was published in the October 2004, Volume XLVII, REGIONAL PURSUITS newsletter of the Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council (LRGVDC). Ken Jones of the LRGVDC has been very supportive in the Arroyo WPP planning process. Ms. De La Garza reported that Mr. Jones had intended on being at this meeting however was unable to attend due to a scheduling conflict. Earlier that day Mr. Jones did meet with Ms. De La Garza to share the LRGVDC’s experience in outreach and education in the Valley. Mr. Jones stated that:

- Public meetings were least effective in outreach and that it was more effective to get the word out through newsletters, meetings with specific groups, direct mail, and personal contact with key stakeholders with follow-up.
- The use of the media proved to be successful. Public service announcements (PSAs) are effective and it is worth the cost to pay for prime air-time.
- A website is effective, it is easy to publicize and can provide links to other groups.

Ms. De La Garza informed the group that she presented a brief summary of the Arroyo WPP to the Valley’s Chamber of Commerce Writer’s Invitation event in Mission on October 16, 2004. Writers from outside the Valley had been brought together in order to promote the Valley as a travel destination. It was a successful meeting as many of the Valley’s environmental groups were there and a few additional people were recruited to participate in the Arroyo WPP effort.

Ms. De La Garza announced that she was scheduled to do a presentation for the Region M Planning Group on November 20, 2004 and that she had put together a power point (PPT) presentation from the PPTs Roger Miranda had provided her. These presentations were shared with Amy Winters who was working on additional PPTs that would be designed for the general public and school-aged children.

WATERSHED PROTECTION PLAN STATUS

Ms. De La Garza informed the group that she had attempted to schedule a meeting with the Ag and Habitat workgroup leaders to discuss outreach and education for the stakeholders whom they represented. However, due the fact that they do not live in the Valley there are coordination difficulties, no meeting was scheduled to date. Ms. De La Garza suggested that O&E workgroup members attend one of the Ag and Habitat workgroup meetings.

The O&E grant proposal to be funded by the TCEQ was discussed. Ms. De La Garza informed the group that the money was committed and that Roger Miranda requested another revision to the proposal. Ms. De La Garza volunteered to re-draft the proposal, said that she would distribute it for review, and then submit it to Roger Miranda of the TCEQ.

It was agreed that the creation of a “white paper” on the Arroyo issues would be rescheduled for discussion at the next meeting due to the absence of Don Hockaday who have volunteered to draft the document. The group proceeded to build on the list of

Valley organizations currently promoting or conducting water quality outreach and education. Attached is the Excel spreadsheet identifying the organizations, resources and/or water related activities, and contact person. This list is considered a work in progress and will be distributed the O&E workgroup for review and additions.

In the process of build inventory list, the following topics were discussed:

- The need to address the Brazilian Pepper issue. It is recognized that this plant is not native and very invasive. The group agreed that the WPP should include a section that identifies the plant and an eradication plan. Tony Reisinger volunteered to draft this section
- It was agreed that PSAs could provide the biggest impact in increasing awareness about the issues concerning the Arroyo and the Laguna Madre. Mr. Reisinger stated that we needed a hook, that we needed evidence on what is going on in the Arroyo because it is a valued resource, a precious jewel. He stated that he is seeing more drift algae and less sea grasses. We discussed finding money to contract Richard Moore in producing a video. Paul Berg stated that he would not only provide video production equipment and could duplicate the tape, but also that he could financially contribute to this effort.
- The possibility of Mark Lingo taking a group out onto the waters of the Laguna Madre and Arroyo using the TPWD trawler.
- The promotion of the Arroyo being connected to something positive.
- The use of Valley residents in creating Arroyo artwork, published writings, and promotions. Don Breeden was identified as someone to do artwork. Scott and Kathy Sparrow were identified as writers and possibility of hosting a writer's competition. Rick Vasques was identified as a photographer for RUMBO.
- The need for a travel display in Spanish. Earlene Lambeth said that she would work on this.
- The need for a "canned" presentation that would be available on CDs or DVDs.
- The need to involve TSTC. Terry Bredemeyer, TSTC Webmaster, agreed to join the Arroyo O&E group and said that he would assist in getting the Arroyo brochure re-designed by TSTC students. A design competition would increase Arroyo ownership. Al Guien, program chair for the Chemical and Environmental Technology group was identified as someone who should be a member of the Arroyo group.
- The need to involve area high schools in the design of Arroyo promotion materials.

The scheduling of the next meeting was discussed. It was decided that the next meeting would be in January 2005. This meeting was adjourned at 7:30pm.

