

**To:** CRP Steering Committee Members  
**From:** Sky Lewey, Public Education and Resource Protection Associate  
**Date:** March 8, 2005  
**Subject:** 2005 Steering Committee Meetings Summary

Thank you for participating in the Clean Rivers Program (CRP) steering committee process. The steering committees that guide the CRP in the Nueces River Authority's area of responsibility held their annual meetings for 2005. The Upper Nueces River Basin committee met on February 17 in Uvalde, the Lower Nueces and Nueces-Rio Grande Coastal Basin committee met on February 22 in Corpus Christi. The meetings were well attended by a cross section of stakeholders including; water suppliers, industry and agricultural interests, university faculty, local government representatives, environmental groups, state agencies and concerned citizens. CRP goals were discussed and water quality monitoring partnerships and monitoring plans were described. The 2004 Texas Water Quality Inventory and 303(d) List and the Draft Basin Summary Report were presented and discussed. Member comments and recommendations were noted by basin and segment/water body and are presented as follows:

**Nueces River Basin:**

- The results of an extensive biological collection and assessment of dissolved oxygen on segment 2113, the upper Frio River has recently been published in the TMDL study. The study indicated that this segment is now supporting of exceptional aquatic life and will be recommended for removal from the 303(d) list in 2006. It was noted that a waste water treatment plant is located in the flood plain along this segment and permit # WQ0011683001 is currently proposed for renewal.
- The current listing of segment 2110, lower Sabinal River for nitrates was discussed. It was reported that based on visual search by the TMDL team the source of nitrates had been tracked to the Sabinal Wastewater Treatment plant and that efforts were now underway by TCEQ to assist the City in securing funds to fix its plant. The Sabinal plant is located in the flood plain of the river.
- Subsequent discussion ensued about the logic of renewing permits for wastewater treatment plants located in a floodplain or flood prone area of our rivers. Public comment in the permitting process was identified as the way to make this known and some members wanted to know why the burden of identifying a floodplain location would be placed on the public. It was noted that nowhere on the permit application is there a place to identify the location as being in a floodplain or flood prone area. It was suggested that NRA website establish a link to new permits and renewals being proposed with our area of responsibility. TCEQ contacts for these issues were identified as:

Chris Linendoll, Wastewater Permitting Section 210-239-4515 regarding discharge permits.  
Lynn Lindsay, Small Government Advocate 210-403-4039 to assist in locating funding

- Additionally it was again suggested by a member that an additional monitoring site be established on the lower Sabinal River. Since the current impairment is based on data from one station near the segment's beginning point it was recommended that an additional routine station be established at Hwy 127 near the segment's end point. It was thought that a site could be located downstream of Hwy 127 south of Sabinal near to but better situated than the inactive site. The member felt that access to an appropriate site could be arranged.
- Also relative to the lower Sabinal and again this year it was suggested that nitrates in segment 2110 could be originating from groundwater. The member reported some well water in the area having 13-25 mg/l nitrate concentrations and that perhaps this could be identified through source tracking rather than the TMDL team relying entirely on visual assessment.
- A discussion of the identified concern for nitrates in the Leona River segment 2109 was questioned by committee members. The current assessment was based on 12 samples collected between March 1996 and February 2001. It was noted that data collected from the new monitoring site # 18414 downstream of Uvalde at SH140 showed e-coli bacteria in excess of the standard and that a quick unofficial study of several sites on the upper Leona including Ft. Inge, and above and below Cooks Slough also showed e-coli bacteria in excess of Clean Water Act standards. Ten samples over five years are required for assessment. Quarterly sampling at site 18414 was begun in the fall of 2004. This data may be included in the 2008 or 2010 assessment. It was also noted that the latest bacteria data to be included in an assessment of this segment was collected through 2-2002 and was from stations over 30 miles downstream near Batesville and Pearsall. A member pointed out that this meant that a bacteria problem could have existed in the upper Leona since 2002, possibly longer and that this particular parameter has not been subject of an assessment. It was noted that CRP is a data collection program and not a pollutant tracking program. Some members suggested a special study of bacteria and nitrate in the upper Leona in order to generate data for a future assessment.
- A member at the upper basin meeting pointed out the need for study of fish tissue in the vicinity of the mouth of the Arroyo Colorado and the education of people who may catch and eat those fish.
- A general concern was also noted about recreational litter accumulating along the Headwater Rivers and called for more education to focus on visitors as well as land and resort owners.
- Segment 2114, Hondo Creek has no concerns or impairments. However, members noted that with only one monitoring site located near the segment's beginning point data on this segment is limited. The addition of a second routine site by Region 13 TCEQ on SH 173 south of Hondo was noted.

**Nueces – San Antonio Coastal Basin:**

- Segment 2471 has a concern for bacteria in oyster waters as monitored by Texas Department of State Health Services and an increasing trend for chlorophyll a. TCEQ has two routine monitoring locations in the bay and a volunteer monitoring group known as

the Rockport Sentinels continues to collect data at five other sites on the Little Bay portion of the water body under the Texas Watch Program. Following a presentation of the data collected by the volunteer program members it was noted that the Sentinels have been incorporated into local government of Rockport as an advisory committee. The city now views the group as a proactive citizens group that through monitoring and data collection can act as an early warning indicator of water quality problems. They are also active in Beach Watch and Rockport Beach has been designated a Blue Way Beach.

- Segment 2501, Gulf of Mexico has a concern for mercury in king mackerel > 43 inches in length. The size restriction is due to the bioaccumulation of mercury. TCEQ participant reported that TMDL work offshore in Louisiana waters indicate that mercury could have been precipitated from power plant emission and could have originated far from the Texas Gulf.

#### **Nueces – Rio Grande Coastal Basin:**

- Segment 2493 South Bay has no concerns or impairments. The natural condition of this water body was noted as being exceptional. It is designated as a coastal preserve has received special recognition by the US Fish and Wildlife Service and TPWD.
- On Segment 2201, the Arroyo Colorado tidal segment, TMDL studies indicated that a 90% load reduction would be required for the segment to meet Clean Water Act Standards. Therefore The Arroyo Colorado Water Shed Protection Plan is being developed to improve the overall water quality for the entire watershed. The plan has five major components; wastewater infrastructure, agricultural issues, habitat restoration, refinement of the TMDL and public education. Laura De La Garza, the watershed coordinator spoke to members and invited input in what she described as a six year planning process. She indicated that the draft plan would be available complete by January 2006.

The committee members are reminded that all water quality monitoring data, station descriptions, flow measurements and stream segment maps as well as the power point presentation given at the meetings can be found on the Nueces River Authority website at <http://www.nueces.ra.org> or can be obtained from Rocky Freund, Director of the Coastal Bend Division or Julie Lann, Information Systems Coordinator.

If you have any questions or comments about NRA, CRP, your role as a Steering Committee member, if you have additional input on the program, or identify an outreach opportunity in your community please contact me at the Uvalde Office, 830-278-6810, or by email at [slewey@nueces-ra.org](mailto:slewey@nueces-ra.org) or [info@nueces-ra.org](mailto:info@nueces-ra.org).