

Minutes of the February 21, 2002 Meeting of the  
Coastal Bend Regional Water Planning Group for the  
Senate Bill 1 Regional Water Planning Program for Region "N"

This meeting of the Coastal Bend Regional Water Planning Group (Coastal Bend RWPG) was held in the auditorium at the TAMU Research and Extension Center, 10345 Agnes Street, Corpus Christi, Texas 78406.

Judge Josephine Miller of the Coastal Bend RWPG called the meeting to order at 3:15 p.m.

A visual attendance was noted. Voting members of the Coastal Bend RWPG in attendance included Judge Miller, Mr. Jerry Kane, Dr. Patrick Hubert, Dr. Jennifer Smith-Engle, Mr. Bernard Paulson, Mr. Scotty Bledsoe, Ms. Carola Serrato, and Mr. Fausto Yturria. A quorum of the voting members was not present. (A quorum was reached when Mr. Mark Scott faxed a proxy for Mr. Ron Massey to be his designated alternate at the meeting.)

Non-voting members in attendance included Mr. Ralph Boeker. Guests included Mr. Ken Choffel, Mr. Ron Massey, and Mr. Max Castaneda.

Rather than taking up the approval of the minutes of the previous meeting, Judge Miller asked Mr. Dodson to first address Agenda Item VI: Reports – RWPG/TWDB Administrative Issues.

Mr. Dodson reported on the Infrastructure Financing Report (IFR) – Project status and schedule. Mr. Dodson stated that even though there are 23 identified water user groups with needs, only four surveys need to be sent out. Mr. Dodson said that he would try to make contact with the four entities at the Coastal Bend Council of Governments meeting scheduled for February 22, 2002, to prepare them for the survey.

Mr. Dodson then reported on the administrative expense budget for 2001. A check from Falfurrias has been received, but the Nueces River Authority is still waiting on two large checks from Nueces County and Bee County. Mr. Yturria asked if Kenedy County had paid. Mr. Dodson confirmed that they had. Mr. Dodson said that the letters for allocating expenses for 2002 had not yet been sent out except to the City of Corpus Christi. Mr. Massey informed him prior to the meeting that the Corpus Christi City Council had approved the approximate \$45,000 expense at their meeting last week.

Mr. Boeker then reported that Craig Pederson, Executive Administrator for the Texas Water Development Board (TWDB) will be resigning in about two months. TWDB also has three new board members: Mr. E. G. Rod Pittman, from Lufkin; Mr. Dario Vidal Guerra, from Edinburg; and Mr. Thomas Weir Labatt, from San Antonio. The chairman now is Mr. Wales H. Madden, Jr., from Amarillo. Mr. Dodson added that TWDB is also trying to fill the Deputy Executive Administrator position vacated by Dr. Tommy Knowles.

Judge Miller then asked Mr. Dodson to try and phone members in an attempt to reach a quorum. While he was doing that, Judge Miller moved on to Item # VII: General Public Comment. Judge Miller said that she had received a letter which contained comments about the water plan. The letter questioned if some of the models took into account the economy of water. Mr. Choffel has previously informed her that it was not a large part of the analysis. Judge Miller then raised the question of the value of water while it is sitting in storage, primarily during times when the lakes are full. Mr. Kane commented that the water really only has value if one plans to sell it. Ms. Serrato made the comment that the value could be assessed by what it is already supporting, for

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example, military bases, universities, etc. Mr. Choffel replied that TWDB did study the impact of a region having no water. The report is included as an appendix in the CBRWPG report.

Mr. Dodson returned from making phone calls, but indicated that he had not yet reached anyone. Mr. Kane then noted that some of the voting members had indicated that they needed to resign. If they resigned now, there would be quorum. Judge Miller pointed out that they needed a quorum to accept the resignation. Mr. Paulson suggested that Mr. Scott fax a proxy to appoint Mr. Massey as his designated alternate.

Mr. Scott faxed his proxy, and noting that a quorum of members was present, Judge Miller called for consideration of Item III: Approval of the minutes of the January 17, 2002 meeting. Mr. Yturria moved for approval and it was seconded by Mr. Bledsoe; Ms. Serrato pointed out that Mr. Figueroa had not been at the previous meeting. The minutes were approved with corrections.

Judge Miller then moved to Item #IV: Election of Officers and called on Mr. Paulson to present the recommendations of the nominating committee. Mr. Paulson then read the list of proposed officers: Mr. Kane and Ms. Serrato as Co-Chairs, and Mr. Bledsoe, Dr. Hubert, and himself to remain on the executive committee. Judge Miller then asked for nominations from the floor. There were none. Dr. Smith-Engle moved to accept the nominations, and it was seconded by Mr. Yturria. The motion passed. Mr. Paulson then suggested that the group pass a resolution of appreciation for the contributions Judge Miller made during her term as Co-Chair. Dr. Hubert made a motion as such, it was seconded by Mr. Yturria, and the resolution passed.

Judge Miller then moved to Item #V: Scope of Work and Budget for the next cycle of Regional Water Planning/Inter-Regional Planning Activities. Judge Miller expressed concern that Nueces County has not yet paid. Mr. Dodson concurred.

Mr. Dodson said that at the previous meeting, they were waiting on the final guidelines from TWDB for the scope of work. These guidelines and the budget guidelines have been received, along with the allocation formula and the monies that are available to be applied for above the allocated amount.

Mr. Dodson then asked Mr. Choffel to present the status of the scope of work process. After Mr. Choffel's presentation, Mr. Dodson stated that he would like to address where the group goes from here and to discuss the Inter-Regional scope of work that was discussed at their last meeting on February 15, 2002.

Mr. Choffel discussed the three funding groups. The first is the basic or formula funding. The state-wide budget is \$13.1M, of which Region N will get 3.35%, or approximately \$438,000. The second part is the initial additional funding. There is \$1.9M available state-wide to be allocated by requests from the various regions for funds to do additional evaluations of water supply and water management strategies. This money will be awarded on a competitive basis, but for discussion purposes, Mr. Choffel assumed that Region N will get 3.35%, or approximately \$64,000. Effective January 2003, there will be another \$2.4M that will be available for additional requests by the regions, also to be awarded on a competitive basis. Again for discussion purposes, Mr. Choffel will assume that Region N will get 3.35%, or approximately \$95,000. This totals \$597,000 that Region N could possibly receive in funding over the next four years.

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Mr. Choffel asked Mr. Boeker to elaborate on the terms of the competition for the \$1.9M and \$2.4M. He said that each region will be asked to compete for the money for subtasks to the scope of work. The allocations will be based on the highest priorities of each of the regions.

Mr. Kane asked what the basis was for the 3.35%. Mr. Boeker replied that it was partially based on the level of effort required for some of the tasks and each region got the same amount. The rest was determined by the number of water user groups and the number of tasks. Mr. Choffel added that TWDB used a very detailed spreadsheet that evaluated each task.

Mr. Choffel then went on to discuss the draft scope of work. He said that he first three pages of the document was a simplification of all of all of the required elements that he went over in the last meeting, and that he would not cover them in detail today.

Mr. Choffel went on to the additional money for new or reconfigured water management strategies. He said that the planning group needed to rank which of the strategies of the Task 3 and Task 4 Work Items are most important and how they want to proceed.

The first item of Task 3 is the reconfigured pipeline between Choke Canyon and Lake Corpus Christi to eliminate channel losses. This is more important now because the new model approved by the City of Corpus Christi shows the channel losses to be higher than the numbers previously used – 15% between Choke Canyon and Three Rivers as opposed to 5%. Judge Miller asked if the loss between Choke Canyon and Lake Corpus Christi can be as high as 30%, and Mr. Choffel confirmed that. Judge Miller also noted that the loss between Lake Corpus Christi and Calallen is 7%, and Mr. Choffel added that the actual loss is hard to calculate because there is groundwater inflow into the river below Lake Corpus Christi. Judge Miller emphasized the importance of this task in light of the 30% loss.

Mr. Kane said that we don't really have all the water in Choke Canyon because so much is lost due to channel losses and evaporation. He also asked about an updated model between Three Rivers and Lake Corpus Christi. Mr. Choffel explained that until about a year ago, there had been no flow gauge with which to do this. The city contracted with USGS to install a gauge at George West, but it will be ten years before there is enough data to update the model.

Ms. Serrato asked about the cost per acre foot of water for this pipeline. Mr. Choffel replied that cost calculated for the original plan was \$250-\$300 per acre-foot. Mr. Massey added that the blended cost of raw water is currently about \$225 per acre-foot.

In response to further questions from Mr. Kane, Mr. Choffel provided a description of the how the model evaluates flows between Three Rivers and Lake Corpus Christi. The model is calculated using mass balance based on historic flows. He is confident that the numbers are reasonable. In the future, they will be able to determine how much water is lost in the river and then how much is lost in the lake to the Gulf Coast Aquifer.

Mr. Dodson noted that under the current policy, water would only be transferred to Lake Corpus Christi when that reservoir is so low that it is more of a river-like system. Dr. Smith-Engle noted that there would be additional channel loss below Lake Corpus Christi during times of drought. Mr. Choffel added that 100% of the 33cfs continuous release from Choke Canyon makes it

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downstream and that the loss occurs when the gates are opened to transfer large amounts of water downstream for water supply diversions.

Mr. Choffel went on to explain how the two way pipeline could also be used to divert water from the Atascosa at Three Rivers (below the juncture of the Atascosa and the Frio Rivers) back to Choke Canyon when it has flow and Lake Corpus Christi is full. Although this would only happen periodically, it could be combined with the interruptible water from Lake Texana and after treatment, stored in the Gulf Coast Aquifer as part of the Aquifer Storage and Recovery System (ASR). The combined cost to incorporate all of these activities in the scope of work is about \$65,000. He also said that the environmental impact of reduced flows between Choke Canyon and Lake Corpus Christi would have to be studied.

Mr. Choffel then discussed the strategies under Task 4. The first item deals with installing wells along the lower Nueces River to intercept the lower quality water that discharges into the river from the Gulf Coast Aquifer. This would improve the water quality at the Calallen intakes which would improve our drinking water and allow industry to recirculate the water thus increasing conservation. The well water would be pumped into the Nueces Bay via the Rincon Diversion Project. This water could be counted towards the pass through requirements. The cost is about \$25,000.

Mr. Massey asked if this was the same aquifer that would be used for the ASR. Mr. Choffel and Mr. Dodson explain that the ASR is farther south and deeper. The portion that is discharging into river is believed to be a perched aquifer near the surface.

Ms. Serrota asked if pumping from these wells would also pump from the river. Mr. Choffel replied that the intent is only to offset the 8cfs inflow from the aquifer, and that the City would have to release an additional 8cfs from Lake Corpus Christi to make up that difference. Dr. Smith-Engle asked how many acre feet per year that the 8cfs would equate to. Mr. Choffel replied that it would be about 5,500 acre feet per year.

Mr. Choffel then went on to discuss the third strategy under Task 4. The TWDB is updating studies concerning the cost to treat brackish groundwater to bring it up to acceptable drinking water standards. Mr. Choffel recommended postponing consideration of this strategy until January 2003.

Mr. Choffel then went on to discuss the fourth strategy. He stated that the EPA has come out with new regulations concerning the amount of arsenic allowed in drinking water. This strategy includes identifying the entities that exceed the limit and determine cost to treat that water.

Mr. Choffel then went on to discuss the next item. It is a conglomeration of new ideas that have either been developed, are in the process of being implemented, or are under study since the previous plan was published. It includes additional interruptible water from Lake Texana, conjunctive use of groundwater and surface water, desalination of brackish groundwater, reuse of treated wastewater, and the extension of the Mary Rhodes Pipeline. This would allow capture of all this new information into the new plan.

Mr. Choffel briefly mentioned the next item that involves harvesting rainwater.

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Mr. Dodson emphasized that the group need to prioritize all of these strategies. That is required when applying for the extra monies.

Mr. Choffel then introduced the potential Inter-Regional strategies and asked Mr. Dodson to discuss them. The primary issue is how these strategies will be funded given the fact that most regions don't have enough allotted to fund all the strategies in their individual plans. He stated that it would be very difficult to have money to pool together with other regions to implement the inter-regional strategies. He added that the primary interest may lie in facilitating an ongoing coordination of the inter-regional concept.

Mr. Dodson stated the there was very little interest in the Palmetto Bend State II option. The Lower Colorado River option is going to be investigated by SAWS and LCRA. He stated that the Nueces Basin Yield Optimization option is of interest to this group. The city has suggested splitting it into two stages. The first stage would look into what can be developed in the basin for use in this region. The second stage would involve utilizing "surplus" storage in Choke Canyon for water brought in from outside the basin, only if the projects identified in the first stage of analysis would be unable to use the full capacity of Choke Canyon.

Mr. Kane recommended not trying to prioritize the strategies until after the public comment period. Mr. Bledsoe asked how the dollar figures for the inter-regional strategies were derived. Mr. Dodson replied that HDR had come up with those figures that would cover the minimal implementation of those strategies. Mr. Bledsoe then asked where the funding would come from. Mr. Dodson replied that they do not know where the funding will come from. He added that if the region decided that one of these was best for the region, then the region would prioritize these when applying for the additional funding.

Mr. Bledsoe stated that the group would have to prioritize the strategies that affect this region as the highest priority. Mr. Dodson agreed and suggested that the RWPG should consider making the elements of optimizing the Nueces Basin yield, including the Cotulla Reservoir project with a pipeline to transfer the water to Choke Canyon their first priority.

Mr. Kane asked if there was a difference in studying a one-way versus a two-way pipeline. Mr. Choffel replied that the difference is in the cost of analysis and a two-way pipeline would raise the cost 10% - 20%. Mr. Choffel also said that the original cost of a pipeline between Choke Canyon and Lake Corpus Christi was based on a one-way pipeline because the previous study deemed it to be the most economical. Mr. Massey asked what has changed so that the group is considering a two-way pipeline again. Mr. Dodson replied that there are two main reasons, one is the new loss rate previously discussed, and there is now five years worth of data during the new drought of record.

There was further discussion about which of the options which would be implemented and their associated costs. Mr. Dodson said they should prioritize the options, combining options B and D from page 8 of the handout. Mr. Kane said that the group needs to prioritize based on the most yield in the most cost effective way. Mr. Dodson added that these options need to be revisited because of the changed conditions.

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Ms. Serrato asked about Region M participating in the Cotulla project, and Mr. Dodson replied that Region M's position is that Laredo may pursue it independently.

Mr. Massey suggested that the group look at phases to the optimization strategy so that the most important parts could be done first and possibly save money.

The members agreed to look at the strategies and prioritize them.

Judge Miller asked for public comment and there was none.

The next meeting date was set for March 28, 2002.

Mr. Yturria made a motion to adjourn the meeting and Dr. Hubert seconded. Judge Miller adjourned the meeting at 4:50 pm.

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Minutes prepared by: Ms. Rocky Freund and Mr. James Dodson

**Minutes Submitted by:**

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Patrick Hubert, DVM  
Secretary, Coastal Bend RWPG

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Date