

**Guadalupe River Basin
Clean Rivers Program
Steering Committee
Annual Meeting**

August 13, 2002

Minutes

The annual meeting of the Guadalupe River Basin Clean Rivers Program Steering Committee was held Tuesday, August 13, 2002 at 1:00 p.m. in the Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority (GBRA) training room in Seguin, Texas. Twenty-one committee members/representatives attended as well as Linda Brookins, Laurie Curra and Andrew Sullivan representing the TNRCC's Clean Rivers Program (CRP) and Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) teams. Keith Marquart represented the Upper Guadalupe River Authority (UGRA) and Debbie Magin, Mike McCall, Hoppy Haden and Allison Koehler represented the GBRA. Also attending the meeting was Paul Jensen, PBS&J and Cinde Thomas-Jimenez, GBRA education curriculum contractor.

After introductions, Debbie Magin, GBRA Clean Rivers Program project manager, briefed the committee on the program activities in the GBRA ten-county district. Copies of the presentation is available on the GBRA website, www.gbra.org. Keith Marquart with UGRA, discussed the CRP activities in Kerr County. UGRA's monitoring activities include 11 sites for routine monitoring and 19 sites for *E. coli* analysis, collected May through August. Bacteriological analyses have found that several sites at bridge crossings have elevated fecal coliform concentrations. By process of elimination, they are fairly sure these levels are due to ducks, pigeons and cliff and cave swallows that nest on or near the bridges. Efforts are being made by UGRA to reduce the bird population under these bridges. They are talking to TXDOT and asking that they install nets and steel grates on the existing and future bridge crossings that would deter bird nesting and roosting.

Paul Jensen, with PBS&J, discussed the special study, "An Evaluation of the Nutrient Criteria Development Techniques Proposed by the US EPA." The study evaluated the methodology that EPA has suggested for establishing nutrient numeric criteria nation-wide. Using the EPA methodology, a high proportion of the waters in the Guadalupe basin would be found to exceed the criteria and thus not support the aquatic life use. Problems with using the EPA proposed methodology include lack of historical data, nutrient methodology with high detection limits, and the variability in the geographic areas that were delineated by EPA. TNRCC has opted to not use the EPA methodology and is attempting to develop a Texas-based criteria methodology for lakes and reservoirs that would be completed in 2004. Further study recommendations include the development of nutrient measurement methodology with lower detection limits and modeling of the systems to include seasonal changes

and differences in location. A copy of the study will soon be available on the GBRA website (www.gbra.org)

Linda Brookins with the TNRCC briefed the steering committee on the status of the Clean Rivers Program and projects that have been awarded through the 319 Non-Point Source Grant Program. The city of New Braunfels has been awarded a grant for stormwater management as part of this program. An excerpt from the city's proposal describes their plan:

The City is interested in establishing aquatic integrity baselines for streams and rivers within the city. This data will be used to assist the City in understanding the impact of non-point source pollution and to develop guidelines to preserve and enhance water quality in selected streams. The City also wishes to identify regional storm water projects using storm water best management practices (BMPs) that will maintain or improve the aquatic integrity of Dry Comal Creek, Bleiders Creek, the Comal River, the Guadalupe River, the North Tributary of the Guadalupe River, and the South Tributary of the Guadalupe River.

The stream assessment will evaluate stream health and will prioritize stream channels and valleys for protection and restoration. It will characterize the condition of each stream and will identify potential restoration projects so that they may be included in a drainage master plan. It will also assist in siting structural and non-structural BMPs by providing the location of resource sensitive areas.

In addition, non-point source loads for phosphorus, total suspended solids, and total nitrogen will be estimated for different land use types across the city. Understanding the impact of varying land uses on stream water quality is important to the selection of BMPs directed to preserving or enhancing stream water quality. Using a model, pollutant loads will be calculated in order to identify watersheds where BMPs may be located or where enhanced enforcement of erosion and sediment regulations may be appropriate.

Finally, all of the information obtained in the previously mentioned tasks will be used in conjunction with data obtained from flood plain mapping activities to identify projects that will mitigate flooding and improve water quality. These projects will be prioritized in terms of their need and their respective cost will be estimated and a master plan will be developed which can be used by the City to create a storm water management capital improvement program and budget.

Linda also discussed the consolidation of the water quality assessment fees with the wastewater and water permit fees. All permittees will receive one combined invoice in October. The consolidation came as a result of the last legislative session and will

generate the same amount of fees as the current process. These fees fund divisions within TNRCC that include water and wastewater permits, regional offices and the CRP. CRP is currently receiving \$5 million per year. Currently, CRP returns 70% of the fees collected to the respective basin partners for administration of the basin CRPs. In the coming months a committee will be working on a new methodology to apportion the funding for the next biennium.

Andrew Sullivan with the TNRCC discussed a TMDL project being conducted in the Guadalupe River Basin. This project was instigated to investigate the impairments to aquatic life use due to low dissolved oxygen in Basin groups D and E that includes the Guadalupe Basin. The project is being conducted by Texas A&M Kingsville. The segments in the Guadalupe Basin included in the TMDL are Cypress Creek, Camp Meeting Creek, Sandies Creek and Elm Creek. An historical data review has been completed and the project QAPP has been approved. Monitoring is currently underway at the sites.

The next portion of the meeting allowed committee members an opportunity to discuss areas of concern in the basin or suggest projects that could be funded by the Guadalupe River Basin Clean Rivers Program.

Dr. Jack Fairchild, representing the San Marcos River Foundation (SMRF) pointed out that the stream standard for sulfate for the upper San Marcos River has not been officially adopted. SMRF has opposed its change from 35 mg/L to 50 mg/L. He has seen data produced by SMRF as well as Southwest Texas State University and the City of San Marcos that show sulfate concentrations much lower than have been found by the TNRCC which indicated ambient concentrations of sulfate near or exceeding the existing stream standards.

Diane Wassenich, executive director of SMRF, suggested a monitoring project for the upper San Marcos River that would be similar to the efforts of the Upper Guadalupe River Authority to monitor *E. coli* for contact recreation in Kerr County. There was some discussion on the responsibility of a monitoring entity to post information on bacterial monitoring. UGRA issues a warning in the beginning of each recreation season that explains the hazards of swimming in an unchlorinated system and describes conditions to avoid when looking for a place to swim.

David Baker, Wimberley Valley Watershed Association, mentioned problems with filamentous algae on the Upper Cypress Creek. He also asked if a land use mapping project or a bank restoration project could qualify for 319 funding. Linda Brookins said the projects could be considered for funding through the non-point source grant program.

Chris Powell with the City of Luling asked that there be better coordination with the Texas Railroad Commission on the management and inspection of leaking and improperly maintained oil storage tanks. He voiced concerns that there are uncapped wells in the area and described these wells as "open holes". Additionally, there have

been several incidents in the past of storage tanks that go months and possibly years without inspection or clean up.

The committee returned to the discussion on the need to thoroughly investigate the development of nutrient criteria. Roger Biggers with New Braunfels Utilities, voiced the need for more development of basic data and the development of more sensitive and better methodology before nutrient limitations are imposed.

Cinde Thomas-Jimenez gave a presentation on the middle school curriculum being developed by GBRA. Approximately \$3,000 of the CRP public participation funds given the GBRA was used to include information on the CRP and its priorities within the curriculum. The basic package that will be distributed to all middle schools in the basin includes sections on water and wastewater treatment, the properties of water, watershed management, water availability, distribution and uses in the basin, pollution, non-point point issues, biodiversity and ecosystems. The curriculum includes hands-on lab activities as well as interactive computer lessons. Cinde demonstrated the wastewater treatment lesson and the watershed puzzle computer activity. She explained that the program will be distributed throughout the basin free to each school district but there may be a small charge for those outside the basin.

The meeting adjourned at 4:00 pm.