

**MINUTES - Revised 7/03/01**  
**MEETING OF THE NEW MEXICO\TEXAS WATER COMMISSION**  
**MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE (MAC) AND**  
**THE REGIONAL SUSTAINABLE WATER PROJECT**  
**STEERING COMMITTEE (SC)**  
**TEXAS AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH & EXTENSION CENTER**  
**APRIL 19, 2001**  
**9:30 A.M.**

**Welcome**

Dr. Ari Michelsen chaired the meeting and welcomed all the attendees. A copy of the sign-in sheet is attached as **Exhibit "A"**. Those members attending from the Commission Steering Committee were as follows:

John Burkstaller, for Ed Archuleta – EPWU  
John Sproul – Audubon Society  
Jorge Garcia – City of Las Cruces  
Dr. Karl Wood – NMWRRI

Tom Bahr – NMSU  
Doug Echlin – IBWC  
Dr. Ari Michelsen – Texas A&M  
Art Coykendall-USBR

**I. Review and Approval of Minutes from MAC\SC Meeting on January 12, 2001 (MAC\SC)**

Tom Bahr asked if anyone had any comments or corrections to the MAC\SC Meeting minutes dated February 15 , 2001. Tom Bahr handed Ed Fierro a copy of the minutes with grammatical and other minor corrections noted. Mr. Bahr said there were no significant corrections that warranted discussion. The minutes were subsequently approved as corrected

**II. Report on the Progress of the Paso Del Norte Watershed Council (John Sproul)**

Mr. Sproul stated that the initial meeting of the Council was held on March 29 and that its main purpose had been to provide orientation to new members. He briefly described the three presentations that were given at the meeting. He stated that the next step for the Council was to get an initial Executive Committee selected and in place that will truly represent the stakeholders, and that they are in the process of recruiting candidates for the Committee. He mentioned that the forms being used by the Council are for general membership and Committee membership application, and include a questionnaire of the applicants' opinions about Council issues. He added that copies of these forms are available and encouraged those interested to send them in. He stated that the selected Executive Committee Members would be presented at the next Council Meeting.

John Burkstaller mentioned the CARA Bill, which uses fees leveed on offshore oil revenues for funding of land-based environmental enhancement projects and which has 4 to 5 billion dollars available over the next 5 years. Some discussion followed concerning the Bill's history and the final amount of funds approved. Mr. Burkstaller advised Mr. Sproul that EPWU may be able to provide the Council with assistance in applying for some of this money for Council projects. Dr. Michelsen advised that he would also try to

find out about this funding source, adding that Texas A&M should also apply for some of these funds. Tom Haislip added that it would take some significant lobbying efforts to get money from this funding source. Mr. Haislip also mentioned New Mexico – Texas funding issues, stating that Texas may get most of the money, but that New Mexico may need it the most. He stated that New Mexico needs to go in as a partner with Texas in applying for CARA funds.

### **III. Forecast of Year 2001 Runoff, Reservoir Storage, and Surface Water Allocation (BuRec)**

Bert Cortez advised that the USBR's El Paso Offices have moved from the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor to the 7<sup>th</sup> floor within the same building located at 700 E. San Antonio.

Wayne Treers gave a overhead slide presentation on the current runoff and reservoir content forecast (no handouts of the slides were provided). The following is a summary of the information presented:

- Charts of the snow pack levels for the Upper Rio Grande Basins for the time period of October of 2000 to the present reveal snow pack levels are at about 100% of the 30 year average. The snow pack levels in these basins are “the best in the west” so far. Other basins in the west region have lower, below normal snow packs. The runoff from the Jemez Basin is already starting to appear at the gaging stations. Recent measurements show a runoff volume of about 200 cfs at Jemez Pueblo.
- Mr. Treers presented charts showing snow pack levels at various individual snotel sites in the Upper Rio Grande Basin, such as Wolf Creek and Lilly Park.
- Mr. Treers presented the National Weather Service Charts for the month of May forecasting weather trends over the next three months (May through July) for the Western United States. The forecast for the southern Colorado and northern New Mexico region calls for average temperature and precipitation over this time period, while temperatures for the lower New Mexico area are forecast to be about 10% above normal.
- The unregulated spring runoff forecast chart (adjusted for upstream operations) at the San Marcial gaging station was presented. The revised runoff forecast was revised to 300,000 AF, although the URGWOM forecast is 366,000 AF. Additional charts showing flows at other Upper Rio Grande gauging stations were also presented.
- Mr. Treers noted that it has been cooler than normal this spring, which helps with the snow pack. There has been a slow warming trend which limits sublimation of the snow pack and results in a slower melting of the snow, which produces increased runoff volumes compared to snow melt produced from a fast warming trend.
- Reservoir content tables were presented. Projected inflows for March through July are 367,000 AF. Projected storage volumes are not looking good right now. Storage at Elephant Butte reservoir is projected to bottom out at 944,000 AF at the end of October, which is the lowest reservoir content since February of 1983. Based on these projections, it is expected that there will be less than a full supply allocation for next year - probably a 35% percent reduction. Next year would be the first time in 23 years that there would be less than a full supply allocation.

- The good news is that average precipitation conditions over the winter could increase reservoir content sufficiently to allow a full supply allocation by late February or early March of 2002.
- New Mexico has a 270,000 AF credit as of this year, and Colorado has a 27,000 AF credit. Also, 300,000 AF of water in Elephant Butte Reservoir cannot be released for irrigation. This water includes 150,000 AF required for the minimum conservation pool, and it also includes water that Albuquerque has been storing downstream.

• John Burkstaller asked if attention should be paid to long term weather forecasts. Mr. Treers answered that we are at the tail end of La Nina, and that it is difficult to tell what the long term weather forecast will bring. However, he added that currently there is no indication that an above average year is coming up. Tom Haislip asked what it would take to get a full allocation by 2003. Mr. Treers answered that it would take precipitation levels of about 130% above the 30 year average over the next 2 years. A discussion followed concerning the 50,000 AF of conservation pool water and the water that Albuquerque has stored in Elephant Butte dam., and also about Albuquerque's intention to hold 100,000 AF of its credit water for Silvery Minnow releases over the next three years.

**IV. Status of the Environmental Assessment for EPWU's Jonathan Roger's Plant Expansion (CH2M Hill)**

Tom Haislip gave a slide presentation on the Status of the Environmental Assessment for EPWU's Jonathan Roger's Plant Expansion (copy attached as **Exhibit "B"** ). Mr. Haislip generally reiterated the information presented in the slides, except for the last slide entitled "Environmental Assessment – Public Comments", where he discussed at length the four comment letters and corresponding responses.

Regarding the responses to the Draft Contract comments, Art Coykendall noted that the USBR had received quite a few written comments in 1998 and 1999 regarding the two previous contracts signed by the USBR (i.e. the March, 1998 Conversion Contract and the December 1999 Third Party Contract). He added that the USBR would combine their responses to the comments for those two previous contracts with their response to the Third Party Implementing Contract and its corresponding EA. He added that it may take a week or two beyond the May 2<sup>nd</sup> target date to complete their responses, but that they did not foresee any major roadblocks.

**V. Report on El Paso County Water Improvement District No. 1's Public Meetings regarding Forbearance Policies to Convert Rio Grande Water to M&I Uses (EPCWID)**

No one from the District was present to give this report. The agenda item will be carried forward to the next MAC/SC Meeting.

## **VI. Update on the New Mexico Spaceport Project (Lou Gomez)**

Mr. Gomez gave an update on the status of the New Mexico Spaceport Project, which is summarized below:

- Lockheed Martin Corporation (LMC) was under contract with NASA to build the “X-33”, a ½ scale model of the “Venture Star” vehicle, which is one of the candidates under consideration to replace the Space Shuttle.
- The New Mexico Spaceport Project (Spaceport) was one of many parties that responded to a “Request for Statement of Qualifications” from LMC for the proposed launching facilities, which would bring with it a potential employment of up to 3,000. The Spaceport received favorable feedback from LMC, which advised that the Spaceport was among the top three contenders.
- A setback occurred on March 2<sup>nd</sup> of last year when notice was received from LMC that the NASA had canceled funding for the X-33. At that point, LMC had already spend \$400 million on the X-33. Ninety eight percent of the parts have already been manufactured, and the X-33 had been 76% assembled. An additional \$400 million is needed to finish the vehicle.
- Recently, NASA announced funding of \$4.5 million for a “Space Launch Mission” study, and issued 8 contracts to solicit concept proposals for replacement of the Space Shuttle.
- The Spaceport asked the New Mexico Legislature for funding, and the Governor signed 2 bills (one is HB 220) authorizing \$1.5 million for continue the effort to pursue the X-33.
- The Spaceport Project is now back on track. If successful, it will need 2,000 AF of water annually. The Spaceport had initially hope to start activities in 2005, but now that target date has been delayed.
- Several States are competing for the X-33 Project (New Mexico, California, Florida, Arizona, Nevada, Oklahoma, Utah, and Texas). However, New Mexico has some advantages over Florida, one of the other top three candidates, because of its higher elevation, which allows larger payloads to be placed in orbit for the same cost, and also because of its comparatively better year-round weather conditions.

## **VII. Other Business**

John Burkstaller advised that the PSB will select the consultant for the Desalination Facilities design at the next Board meeting.

Tony Tarquin brought up for discussion the issue of what the general thrust of the Commission should be from now on, especially in view of the fact that the Sustainable Water Project (SWP) is no longer aggressively pursuing a year-round water supply. John Burkstaller answered that he did not agree with that statement, and stated that a year-round supply was still the goal of the Commission, except that there is currently no target date for achieving that goal.

Tom Bahr stated that it would be nice to bring EPCWID#1 back into the fold. Tom Haislip answered that it was his hope and understanding that someone from the District be here at the next meeting. Mike advised that he would invite Mr. Fifer once again to present an update on the draft forbearance policies and procedures at the next meeting.

There were some questions concerning EPWU's proposed desalination project. John Burkstaller provided a brief update on the preliminary plans and schedule for the desalination project, including locations, capacity, and water quality parameters. Also, he stated that part of the plan is to create an interception trench to reduce brackish water intrusion into the fresh water zone, and that a big issue was still brine disposal. Plans are to look at deep well injection and other brine disposal options. Mike Fahy added that most of the source water for the initial phase would come from existing brackish wells.

Tony Tarquin asked if solar ponds had been considered. John answered that EPWU may try to set up a pilot project for a solar pond to study the concept, but solar ponds were not currently an option being considered for brine disposal. EPWU will also look at intermediate level uses of brine, such as recreational use. Mr. Tarquin asked about the target date for start-up of the desalination plant. John stated that currently EPWU was targeting the spring of 2004, but that this may be delayed 6 months to a 1 year. He added that the hope was to have the plant on-line by 2005 at the latest.

Dr. Michelsen summarized some of the agenda items for the next meeting: an update on the Watershed Council status, update by EPCWID#1 on forbearance policies and procedures, and a discussion on the future focus of the Commission. Tom Haislip suggested that EBID give a presentation on their SCADA system, and possibly arrange for a short tour of their local irrigation facilities after the meeting. Mike Fahy stated that he thought Gary Esslinger would be glad to arrange for a tour and that he would contact him about this.

### **VIII. Schedule Next Meeting/Location**

The next meeting was scheduled for June 7<sup>th</sup>, 10:00 am, at the EBID offices in Las Cruces.