GROUNDWATER RESEARCH SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING RECORD

TIME AND DATE:
9:00 AM, April 15, 2004

LOCATION:
Texas Commission on Environmental Quality Campus, Bldg. F, Room 2210, 12100 Park 35 Circle, Austin, TX 78753

PURPOSE OF MEETING:
Regular business meeting

AGENCIES/ENTITIES REPRESENTED:

Bureau of Economic Geology [BEG]
Edward Aquifer Authority [EAA]
Texas Commission on Environmental Quality [TCEQ]
Texas Department of Agriculture [TDA]
Texas State Soil & Water Conservation Board [TSSWCB]
Texas Water Development Board [TWDB]
Texas Water Resources Institute [TWRI]
United States Geological Survey [USGS]

ATTENDEES:

Bridget Scanlon	BEG, Co-chair of the GW Research Subcommittee of the TGPC
Dr. Allan Jones	TWRI, Co-chair of the GW Research Subcommittee
Mary Ambrose	TCEQ, Chairman of TGPC
Richard Eyster	TDA
Lynne Fahlquist	USGS
Joseph L. Peters	TCEQ
Robert Bradley	TWDB
Kevin Wagner	TSSWCB

VISITOR:

Geary Schindel [EAA]

MEETING SUMMARY:

Dr. Scanlon suggested that we go around the table and introduce ourselves.

A list of research topics was put together by consolidating all the research topics discussed at previous meetings. This list was distributed to all the Groundwater Research Subcommittee members so that they could rank the topics. The first agenda item was the discussion of the results of these rankings. However, there were only three respondents to the ranking exercise.

Several members indicated that they thought it was difficult to rank the important topics. Another consideration, besides just importance, is likeliness of being funded. Ms. Ambrose observed that many of the topics could be melded together to create projects useful to more people. Mr. Wagner suggested that a projects likelihood of being funded can depend on its category, for example research, nonpoint source, or water quality. Dr. Scanlon suggested that for the next meeting she and Dr. Peters might work on the list, taking into account some of the suggestions.

Mr. Schindel brought up the fact that nationally health problems with groundwater are more related to pathogen contamination than anything else.

Dr. Jones suggested that we should just come up with three or four research projects that need to be done and plan out a course of action to get them funded and completed.

Mr. Schindel spoke a little towards what was accomplished in the matter of research for the Edwards Aquifer. A group called the Technical Advisory Committee was formed. Membership includes representatives form any group that has interest in the Edwards. This includes the USGS , EAA, SAWS, Army Corp of Engineers, NRCS, TCEQ, etc. This Committee spent two years putting together a list consisting of a series of seventeen interrelated, mission-directed biologic and hydrogeologic research studies known as the Optimization Technical Studies (OTS). These seventeen potential studies were presented to the Edwards Aquifer Authority and, thus far, all bet two have been funded. All these studies are directed at determining how the aquifer works or how to optimize its use. Mr. Schindel suggested that our Subcommittee could possible follow a similar strategy creating a similar document outlining the major research needs for the state. Research projects should be ranked by importance, cost, and time of execution. Also, some studies may be dependent on others being performed first.

Dr. Jones responded with a suggestion that we should be able to come up with a list of four to six research projects. These would include research needs like, one important need for the Ogallala, one important need for far West Texas, etc. The priorities should be thought out as well as which organizations have a stake in each project and what the funding sources may be. The list needs to be geographically balanced. Also, thought should be given to common needs.

Dr. Jones also suggested that there could be a joint meeting of our Subcommittee with a number of Water Resources Groups from around the state, including the BEG to discuss the need of groundwater availability modeling for the next ten years. The focus would be on the process that will be needed. The results of the meeting should be put into a little report that could be used to go to the next legislative session. There should be some interest in groundwater in the next Legislature. The little report from this would at least cover our modeling needs.

Ms. Ambrose brought up the fact that the TGPC would be putting together their semiannual Report to the Legislature (Full Title: *Activities of the Texas Groundwater Protection Committee, Report to the 79th Legislature*). A portion of the report is dedicated to recommendations to the Legislature. The recommendations portion of this document is a good place to include

groundwater research needs.

Mr. Schindel brought up the fact that TSU would be sponsoring a groundwater conference to be held in November. It is being organized by Mr. Marshall Jennings. He suggested that this could be a forum for presenting groundwater research needs. Dr. Jones suggested that we could have a preliminary meeting before the groundwater conference that would result in a paper that could be presented at the conference. Dr. Jones stated that he would be glad to work with a group to help implement something along these lines.

Ms. Fahlquist suggested that for each major and minor aquifer we should summerize what the issues are and where we have common issues they could be set at a higher priority. Dr. Jones added that each issue or problem should be accompanied by a recommended solution.

Mr. Schindel described the document, *Edwards Aquifer Optimization Program, Optimization Technical Studies, Status Report for Period Ending: March 18, 2004*, which he had distributed to all those attending. It is basically a status report that was presented at the EAA board meeting. It is a notification to the board of the status of all the OTS projects that are ongoing.

Dr. Scanlon suggested that members need to identify white papers on which they will be willing to work. These would be brief descriptions of what the problem is and what needs to be done to solve it. These white papers would then be available to give, for instance, to legislatures. Dr. Jones suggested that we can start out with one-page white papers, each with a description of the activity and needed and a simple description of who would do it. Then we can sit down and evaluate how are we going to market these.

Dr. Jones commented on the momentum that has been created with the TWDB's Regional Water Planning Effort. This is a big driver into investigating the various concerns with water quantity and quality. If we can propose research that links into the needs that these projects address, this will give us a constituency for our research needs. We need to come up with three to five things that need to be done within the next two months, and get these reviewed within our group and with input from our colleagues, and have them ready for the November meeting.

Mr. Schindel brought up the question of the best way of getting research needs approved and funded. If you have two, three, or four important issues, you can get some funding for it from somewhere, but that doesn't do any good for the 25 other issues. The question is whether you are going to do a series of white papers and try to get one of the white papers in the hands of influential legislators or congressmen and get the project funded, or would you be better off in developing a long term research strategy for groundwater issues over the next 10 years and call it a Statewide Groundwater Research Initiative, put together by a technical advisory group. This strategy document would identify both research issues statewide and other issues of interest in certain regions or aquifers. This was the strategy followed by the EAA with their Edwards Aquifer Optimization Program. He believes that this method of presenting their research needs has helped them get so many of them funded. With this type of approach you probably would be more likely to get support from across the state.

Dr. Jones suggested that we could put together a matrix. On the outside we could put a short title for each major needed research effort. There would be ten to twenty of them. And across the top of the matrix we would have the area that would be affected and some categorization of the importance of the areas affected by each project. There would be one page for the matrix and one page for each of the projects. You could take the program forward in some context, and at the same time you could be looking for the sources of funding, say agency funding or special appropriations, for the components. You could have the program and you could have each project and simultaneously approach both of them.

And Dr. Scanlon reiterated an earlier suggestion that each of the projects could also be tied in whit existing programs such as the TWDB's GAM program.

Dr. Jones continued with asking what we can do to implement the matrix document. We will need to meet in small groups to get it developed. It was determined that we need to have it before the deadlines for the TGPC's Report to the Legislature. Dr. Jones suggested that we need to sit down together for an afternoon and get out a first draft and then circulate it for comments. Mr. Schindel suggested that we use the Groundwater Management Areas as a way of geographic organization. Dr. Jones added that the document will also need to be reviewed by the regional planning groups. He also suggested that we agree to have a first draft ready for review in a few weeks.

The meeting ended at about 10:20 AM.

Information Item: The decision was made at the TGPC meeting that the next meeting date for the TGPC, the ACS, and the GWRS will be August 19, 2004. The GWRS meeting will take place at 9:00 AM, at the same location (given above).

Action Item:

1. A draft of the research needs matrix needs to be ready for review with in a few weeks.

Minutes prepared by Joseph L. Peters, May 7, 2004

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