GROUNDWATER RESEARCH SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING RECORD

TIME AND DATE:
9:00 AM, October 17, 2003

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

PURPOSE OF MEETING:
Regular business meeting

AGENCIES REPRESENTED:

Bureau of Economic Geology [BEG]
Texas Commission on Environmental Quality [TCEQ]
Texas Department of Health [TDH]
Texas Water Development Board [TWDB]
United States Geological Survey [USGS]

ATTENDEES:

Bridget Scanlon	BEG, Co-chair of the GW Research Subcommittee of the TGPC
Mary Ambrose	TCEQ, Chairman of TGPC
Lynne Fahlquist	USGS
Ken Ofunrein	TDH
Joseph L. Peters	TCEQ
Shirley Wade	TWDB

MEETING SUMMARY:

Dr. Allan Jones, TWRI and Mr. Kevin Wagner, TSSWCB had previously indicated that they would not be able to attend the meeting. Also, since Ms. Jeanette O'Hare, TDA, had moved to a new job, the initial discussion focused on who was to replace her. It was determined that TDA had not yet designated anyone, and that Dr. Ambrose Charles of TDA should be contacted for a replacement.

At the previous meeting, August 7, 2003, Ms. Shirley Wade of the TWDB had volunteered to investigate her agencies needs in the area of groundwater research and give the TGRSC a report at today's meeting. A summary of the items she reported follows. The items were not prioritized.

Ms. Wade reported that she had held a meeting with several people in the Groundwater Resources Division of the TWDB, asking them where they saw research needs. She put these needs together in an handout. The needs expressed fell into three major categories.

1. There is a need fo the improvement in the characterization of Texas' aquifers and groundwater flow systems. This would include a better quantification of recharge, an improved knowledge of groundwater flow paths, and an improved quantification and understanding of evapotranspiration. There is a need, furthermore, to better define the structure and extent of aquifers.

2. There is a need to look at scaling issues, particularly for groundwater modeling. We need to determine what the optimal well spacing is for a well network, to get the level of information needed to answer questions about the aquifer. This would also apply in other areas such as the gathering of evapotranspiration data.

3. There needs to be a better understanding of water quality issues. For example, it may be feasible to refine the GAMs to identify well head protection areas by refining the grid, collecting additional data, and implementing MODPAD and MT3d.

It was suggested that this process continue. Each agency needs to determine what their groundwater research needs are, and report them to this subcommittee. Thus far TDA has indicated that they have a great interest in studies on nitrates. They are probably interested in pesticides as well.

It became clear from Ms. Wade's presentation that there probably is a significant overlap between the research needs of the various agencies. These topics need to be fleshed out put on the TGPC website. There would be a list of the needs and a corresponding list of agencies with that particular need. There also needs to be a list of potential funding sources.

Ms. Ambrose had some concern with putting a list of funding sources on the TGPC website, because of the problem of updating the site to keep them current. She suggested that perhaps it would be best to have links to the websites of the entities which can potentially provide funding. For instance, the USDA has very detailed information on their website on funding opportunities from their agency.

Draft Operation Plan: Dr. Scanlon provided the attendees with a draft Operation Plan to Identify Interagency Research Needs. The document needs to be edited and developed further before a final draft is put on the website. One initial comment was that research projects promoted by the GWRS need to be mostly for applied research.

Dr. Scanlon brought up the subject of educational outreach with respect to the development of a new recognized discipline with the title of Groundwater Professional. There was some discussion about the availability of continuing education units (CEUs) for the educational support of this discipline. Ms. Ambrose stated that it was too early in the development of this program and the rules have not yet adopted, making it difficult to ascertain what the education requirements may be. However, there is a potential for some of the in-house training at the TCEQ to qualify toward CEUs for this discipline.

Dr. Scanlon announced that she was serving on the National Science Foundation Hydrologic

Observatory Panel. This panel is in the process of developing templates for ten hydrologic observatories to be distributed across the country. She is pushing for the idea of making the Edward Aquifer one of these observatories.

There was some discussion about the fact that EPA has a tendency to focus on surface water much more than groundwater. The reason for this may be because most of EPA's upper management have worked their way up through Surface Water positions. However, there seems to be an increased openness to groundwater at EPA Region 6. Also, because of new interest by EPA in groundwater/surface water interactions, it may be possible to focus EPA more toward groundwater. A new acronym, GUIS, has been coined for Groundwater Under the Influence of Surface water. Ms. Ambrose informed us that there is a big interest in GUIS on the east coast because they don't want to be required to disinfect their groundwater before it goes into a public water supply. Groundwater significantly affected by surface water would need to be disinfected. In Texas it is that all groundwater be disinfected before distribution in a public water supply.

There is a map developed by USGS that shows average degrees of GW/SW interaction across the country. In many places 40% to 60% of the surface water comes from groundwater.

Switching to the subject of on-site disposal, Dr Scanlon, revealed that there was a new person at the Department, John McCray, who indicated that he can get money from EPA for some sort of on-site center. At this point Ms. Ambrose explained the two ways that the TCEQ is involved with On-site treatment.

1. TCEQ gives administrative support to the Texas On-site Wastewater Treatment Research Council. This Council funds a number of research projects with money that they receive from a fee placed on the installation of on-site systems. There is information on their website at www.towtrc.state.tx.us on how to apply for these research funds.
2. TCEQ licenses installers, and, in areas that don't have an authorized agent, TCEQ performs inspections of on-site systems. TCEQ also has over site over the authorized agents.

Dr. Scanlon, at this point indicated that she was going to email personnel at the various agencies to get them to supply the GWRS information on their research needs, just as the TWDB had. Also, Ms. Ambrose indicated that she would look into TCEQ's needs, especially those that correspond TWDB's list of needs.

The meeting adjourned at 10:08 AM.