

GROUNDWATER RESEARCH SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING RECORD

TIME AND DATE:

9:00 AM, July 26, 2006

LOCATION:

Texas Commission on Environmental Quality Campus, Building F, 2nd Floor, Meeting Room 2210, 12100 Park 35 Circle, Austin, Texas 78753.

PURPOSE OF MEETING:

Fourth quarter regular business meeting

AGENCIES/ENTITIES REPRESENTED:

Bureau of Economic Geology [BEG]
Texas Agricultural Experiment Station [TAES]
Texas Commission on Environmental Quality [TCEQ]
Texas Department of Agriculture [TDA]
Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board [TSSWCB]
Texas Water Development Board [TWDB]
United States Geological Survey [USGS]

ATTENDEES:

Allan Jones	TAES, Co-chair of the GW Research Subcommittee of the TGPC
Bridget Scanlon	BEG, Co-chair of the GW Research Subcommittee of the TGPC
Mary Ambrose	TCEQ, Chairman of TGPC
Radu Boghici	TWDB
Alan Cherepon	TCEQ
Richard Egg	TSSWCB
Richard Eyster	TDA
Lynne Fahlquist	USGS
Joseph L. Peters	TCEQ

AUDIENCE:

Chris Chandler	TCEQ
----------------	------

MEETING SUMMARY:

Dr. Jones called the meeting to order at about 9:08 AM. The meeting started with self introductions of everyone present. Dr. Scanlon arrived at about 9:15 AM.

Led primarily by Ms. Ambrose, the first main agenda item was the discussion of draft recommendations to be provided to the Legislature Report Subcommittee for consideration. Ms. Ambrose provided handouts with the draft recommendations.

The first recommendation to be discussed was **Disposal/Use of Desalination Concentrate and Drinking Water Treatment Residuals**. This is primarily a recommendation that the Legislature modify the Texas Health and Safety Code (THSC) so that a general permit could be obtained that would expedite the use of wells for the disposal of desalination and other water treatment waste streams. The change in the permitting should also facilitate the use of these waste streams for such things as enhanced recovery of oil and gas.

Along the same lines, the second recommendation, entitled **Evaluating the Characteristics of Concentrate Resulting from Desalination and Drinking Water Treatment**, calls for the study of the characteristics of these waste streams. This knowledge is becoming increasingly important with the increasing volumes of these waste streams, in dealing with their disposal or use. The major point of discussion for this recommendation is determining how much money would be needed to carry out the research. It was decided that \$250,000 a year would be necessary because of the expensive chemical analysis needed for large numbers of samples.

Dr. Scanlon interjected, at this point, the news that the site selection for the proposed FutureGen zero-emissions coal fueled power plant has been narrowed down to four possible sites, two in Texas and two in Illinois. Also, discussed at this point was the fact that EPA has ruled that CO₂ sequestration would be regulated under the Underground Injection Control (UIC) program, probably as class 5.

It was decided that some of the following recommendations in the draft document did not need detailed discussion by the Groundwater Research Subcommittee. The third recommendation, **Conversion of State Water Well Reports to Electronic Format/Database**, was one which was proposed every year and did not need further discussion. It was decided that the fourth and fifth recommendations, **On-Farm Agricultural BMP Incentives through Creation of a Water Conservation Plan Program** and **Brush Control Funding to Increase Groundwater Yield**, would be discussed between Mr. Egg and Dr. Jones outside of our meeting.

On the sixth recommendation, **High Quality Groundwater Data**, Ms Ambrose suggested that it may need some improvement in wording. The recommendation asks for funding for more full time personnel for the upkeep of the TWDB's groundwater databases.

Ms. Ambrose recommended that we try to combine some of the recommendations or group them into categories. There was some discussion about some of the possibilities. Dr. Jones mentioned the importance of having these recommendations in the appropriate agency's Legislative Appropriations Request (LAR). There was also a question as to when these recommendations would be considered by the full TGPC. Ms. Ambrose responded that, even though there would be discussion at today's (July 26, 2006) meeting, final action would be taken at the next (October 18, 2006) meeting.

In relation to recommendation thirteen, whereby agricultural producers would be trained in the use more efficient irrigation methods, Dr. Scanlon started a discussion concerning one of the possible bad side effects. The crux of the problem is that, when you have a more efficient use of irrigation water resulting in less water flowing below the root zone, you then also have less removal of salts from the root zone. You get more of a build-up of salt, especially if you irrigate with poor quality water.

There was some discussion related to recommendation seventeen, **Improve/Expand Public Use of Evapotranspiration Network**, which deals with the use of knowledge of potential evapotranspiration (ET) to optimize irrigation amounts. Dr. Scanlon brought up the interesting fact that in the Dockum area there has been a twenty foot rise in the water table over approximately two decades, in response to the conversion of range land to dry land agriculture. The exact reason for this is unknown, but it is believed that the change in agricultural practice has caused a decrease in the ET.

Ms. Ambrose brought up the discussion again that we should combine or group some of the recommendations. She recommended two categories: Conserving Water in Agriculture, and Rural/Urban Conservation. Most of the recommendations will fit into one of these two categories.

Discussion, at this point, turned to the second major agenda item, Sources of Funding, especially 319 funding, and Current Calls for Proposals.

Ms. Ambrose spoke of a newly developed document by EPA, not yet on their website, that addresses the combining of water and waste programs to achieve watershed protection. It addresses how 319 money can be used to support some of the activities. One area is surface water / groundwater interaction. Because of the TMDL connection it can be fundable by 319, if you have a watershed plan, a state groundwater strategy, or a comprehensive groundwater protection program. Ms. Ambrose stated that she has not yet discussed funding under these circumstances with the TCEQ 319 people.

Dr. Jones reminded everyone that deadlines for seeking Congressional funding for projects are imminent. One page proposals need to be submitted before the deadline. Dr. Jones also brought up for discussion the two papers being developed by Dr. Jensen at TWRI. These are entitled *Influences of Natural and Man-Made Sources of Contamination on Water Quality Trends in the Seymour Aquifer: A 2006 Status Report*, and *Desalination Research at Texas Universities – A Brief Overview*. Dr. Jones wanted to know whether our subcommittee had a continuing interest in these two papers. Ms. Ambrose responded that they do support our research needs, but they still need a little editing. She had been working on them and will have comments for consideration. Dr. Jones asked if they might be ready in three months (by the next meeting). Ms. Ambrose responded that the Seymour aquifer one should be ready, but she thought that the desalination one needed quite a bit more work.

Mr. Egg talked about available funding for projects under the Coastal Impact Assistance Program. Texas has been allocated about 60 million dollars a year for four years. The money comes through Mineral Management Services from off shore leasing. It is anticipated that the

state of Texas will receive approximately \$39 million and each coastal political subdivision will receive a portion of the remaining \$21 million. The money must be used for appropriate projects in coastal counties. This year's proposals are all in, and the selection process will be completed by the 31st of July. However, since the same amount of funding will be available for the next three years, it should be kept in mind as a possible source of funding for groundwater research projects.

Ms. Ambrose reminded everyone that any information on potential funding sources could be sent to Joe Peters for distribution to the whole Groundwater Research Subcommittee email group.

Everyone was reminded again about the need to take the Open Meetings Training.

There was a brief chance for announcements, and Dr. Jones adjourned the meeting at 10:26 AM.

Minutes prepared by Joseph L. Peters, October 12, 2006

Action Items:

1. Continue work on the two TWRI papers, *Influences of Natural and Man-Made Sources of Contamination on Water Quality Trends in the Seymour Aquifer: A 2006 Status Report*, and *Desalination Research at Texas Universities – A Brief Overview*. Comments and suggestions on the two documents should be sent to Dr. Ric Jensen at the TWRI.

I:\GROUND\Gwpcmmte\Subcommittees\Research Subcommittee\Minutes\Minutes(07-26-06)RS.doc