GROUNDWATER RESEARCH SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING RECORD

TIME AND DATE:
9:00 AM, August 8, 2007

LOCATION:
Texas Commission on Environmental Quality Campus, Building B, 2nd Floor, Room 201A, 12100 Park 35 Circle, Austin, Texas 78753.

PURPOSE OF MEETING:
Fourth quarter regular business meeting (There was no third quarter 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]

ATTENDEES:

Allan Jones	TAES, Co-chair of the GW Research Subcommittee of the TGPC
Mary Ambrose	TCEQ, Chairman of TGPC
Alan Cherepon	TCEQ
Richard Egg	TSSWCB
Richard Eyster	TDA
Jean-Philippe Nicot	BEG
Joseph L. Peters	TCEQ
David Villarreal	TDA

MEETING SUMMARY:

I. Call to Order and Introductions

Dr. Jones called the meeting to order at about 9:02 AM. The meeting started with self introductions of everyone present. The Co-Chair, Dr. Bridget Scanlon, could not be present. Dr. Jean-Philippe Nicot of BEG was present in her place.

II. Discussion of Sources of Funding and Current Calls for Proposals

1. Dr. Jones began the discussion by informing everyone of preparations being made for the FY2009 federal funding request to Congress. During the week following our Groundwater Research Subcommittee meeting there will be a meeting concerning the details of requests for various projects. Dr. Jones proceeded to describe some of the projects.

1. Texas state universities receive quite a bit of money from Congress for water projects, some of it for groundwater. One project specifically for groundwater is the Ogallala Project which is a collaborative effort between the A&M system, Texas Tech, and Kansas State. Continued funding for this project looks pretty good. The project is mainly water conservation with very little work in modeling, etc.

2. There is an ongoing project by the Texas State University System on groundwater in West Texas. The House has passed about a two million dollar appropriation for FY2008, to be shared by Texas State, Lamar, San Angelo state, and Sul Ross State, which is the lead institution in the project.

3. A University of Texas (UT) project, which has not yet come out of the House with any money for FY2008, would involve the modeling of the entire Rio Grand Basin, possibly including the groundwater.

Ms. Ambrose asked if there was any interest in funding for desalination projects. Dr. Jones proceeded to describe some of these.

1. The Transboundary Aquifer Project appears to be on track for funding because of the efforts of Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas Senators. Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas have worked informally with Mexico on the transboundary question. Some of the aquifers in question are saline or brackish. The El Paso Water Utilities has strongly pushed this project which is being carried out by the University of Texas at El Paso, Texas A&M University, Mexico State University, and the University of Arizona. Funding will be through the Bureau of Reclamation.

2. There has also been interest in working on a groundwater and surface water salinity project on the Pecos River. The idea of the project is to pump down the highly saline aquifers that ordinarily contribute to the Pecos River, so that their contribution is minimized or eliminated thus reducing the salinity in the river.

Ms Ambrose brought up that the Legislature had tasked TCEQ to facilitate a study on brush control, and she asked if anyone knew of any progress on the study. Dr. Jones informed indicated that work hasn't gotten started yet on this brush control project. It involves TCEQ, TSSWCB, and Texas Tech. Dr. Ken Rainwater of Texas Tech is working on a sampling plan. The project has 12 to 14 months to finish, which doesn't give much time beyond the review of the literature.

Mr. Egg continued by describing a couple of funding sources limited to the coast. One source is from the Coastal Management Program. Another source of funding is from Coastal Impact Assistance Program (CIAP) a program of Mineral Management Services, a part of the U.S. Department of the Interior. Texas in the first year got about 43 million dollars from this program and will be getting about the same for the next three years. The funding is primarily used for implementation and no match is required.

Dr. Jones proceeded to describe a project that the TWRI is doing with Harris County. The commissioners of Harris Co. want to fund some needed research, but do not want to manage

several small grants to researchers. They will therefore be giving TWRI a block of money with which TWRI can then fund a number of grants to do research in the areas desired by Harris Co. The funded research will be primarily oriented to understanding bacteria in streams.

Ms Ambrose brought up the subject of a facilitated processing of groundwater injection permits for certain wastes such as desalination byproducts. The permits would still be Class I, but they would be easier to obtain.

Dr. Jones discussed a proof of concept project, earmarked for funding by the House, that would show how the volume of injected saline water could be reduced by desalination. This project will take place in the Burnet Shale area. Saline water to be disposed of by injection will be run through the desalination process. Then the smaller concentrated saline water will be injected and the desalinated water will be available for some useful purpose. This could prove to be very beneficial in the oil and gas industry.

III. Discussion of Progress on Initial White Papers

Ms. Ambrose reiterated that the white paper entitled *Influences of Natural and Man-Made Sources of Contamination on Water Quality Trends in the Seymour Aquifer: A 2007 Status Report* has been completed and can be accessed on the TGPC website at http://www.tgpc.state.tx.us/Seymour%20White%20Paper-4-18-07.pdf.

The other white paper being worked on is entitled *Research into the Characterization of Brackish Water and Disposal of Desalination Reject Water in Saline Aquifers and Depleted Oil and Gas Reservoirs*. Dr. Jones suggested that he and Ms. Ambrose have a conference call the following week to try and work out the last details needed to complete this white paper.

Dr. Nicot reminded everyone that Dr. Scanlon discussed doing a white paper on heavy metal and radio nuclide presence in certain areas. She had volunteered to do a first draft and send it around.

There was some discussion about problems in meeting the new arsenic standards in drinking water. There are some technical problems to be overcome and some research projects may be necessary to move the technology to where it needs to be. Dr. Jones suggested that we could get together and asking either EPA or Congress for funding for research to provide communities recommendations that would be reasonable and feasible for them to overcome their problems in meeting the arsenic standards. Ms. Ambrose suggested that EPA had put together a lot of information when they were justifying the tightening of the arsenic drinking water standards.

Dr. Jones suggested that we do some collaboration on this possible arsenic research project study on solutions to this community problem. Perhaps a UT-A&M request to Congress or EPA for funding.

Mr. Eyster brought up the topic of in situ uranium mining. With the increase in uranium prices there is a renewed interest in mining for uranium in South Texas. This has brought up some concerns from land owners and ranchers in the affected areas. There may be a need to pursue funds for a project that would look into possible problems caused by in situ mining and educating the affected public.

IV. Information Exchange

There were no upcoming events reported.

V. Public Comments

Dr. Villarreal announced that he was named the new representative for the Region 6 states to the SFIREG Water Quality and Pesticide Disposal Working Committee.

VI. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 10:13 AM.

Minutes prepared by Joseph L. Peters, September 27, 2007

A**ction Items:**

1. Complete any remaining work to be done on the white paper *Research into the Characterization of Brackish Water and Disposal of Desalination Reject Water in Saline Aquifers and Depleted Oil and Gas Reservoirs,* including the posting of it on the TGPC website.

2. Initiate work on white paper describing a proposed project to study background heavy metal and radio nuclide presence in certain areas including the use of the resultant data to put together a fact sheet for local residents.

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