

Environmental Advisory Committee

FY 2020 - 2021 Q2 Mtg. Notes

3/12/2021

Virtual Meeting

Bexar County

EAC Attendees:	EAC Absent:
Wilfred Korth	Jason Katscmorak
Deepti Kharod	Stephan Lucke
Annalisa Peace	David Reichart
Connie Waters	Joe Baker
Glynis Strause	Bree Jameson
Heather Hansen	
James Dodson	San Antonio River Authority staff attendees:
Janis Bush	Charles Lorea
	Zoe Nichols
Guests	Steven Schauer
Jenna Wadman – TCEQ	Shaun Donovan
Rebecca DuPont – TCEQ	Alicia Ramsey
	Karen Bishop
	Katy Brought
	Adrian Reyna
	Karen Sablan

1. Welcome

Wilfred Korth (WK) called the meeting order. Introductions of committee members, San Antonio River Authority (River Authority) staff, and guests

2. Approval of December 11, 2020 Minutes

Deepti Kharod (DK) calls for approval of December 11, 2020 minutes.

Glynis Strause (GS) made motion to approve the minutes, **WK** seconded motion; **DK** calls for vote, minutes approved by consensus.

3. Clean River Program (CRP) – Charles Lorea (CL)

Heather Hanson (HH) asked in chat: What is a benthic community?

Zoe Nichols (ZN) in chat: Hi Heather! A benthic community consists of organisms living on the riverbed - macroinvertebrates such as insects, crustaceans, or freshwater mussels. Here is a SARA blog that was just published if you are interested in more information

<https://www.sariverauthority.org/whats-new/blog/benthic-macroinvertebrates-river-health-indicators>

DK When you talk about the costs that have increased due to COVID-19, do you feel that some of it might be decreasing. Referenced example of taking two trucks.

HH asked similar question in the chat - Chuck, do you expect pricing for supplies/equipment to stabilize again once COVID-19 is under control?

CL Cost of supplies increased was prevalent, but it was also a matter of time. It was noticeable in data sound units that take 24-hour data sound readings. The unit had a 2-3 week turnaround time, but during COVID it was delayed 4 months due to a delay in distribution. Things are beginning to ease a little bit.

WK In regard to Wastewater Treatment Plants (WWTP) and San Antonio, the amount of treated water volume is increasing through time. Are you seeing any impact from the increase flow into the river from those sites; constant flow because of the plants?

CL I don't have anything solid to point to that, but we're monitoring those sites much more closely now to monitor for issues.

HH in chat: Or, from WWTPs, is the recycled water usage taking some of that outflow away?

CL We're monitoring the discharge SAWS is putting into the upper river below the Witte Museum because it affects the canoe chutes. A decrease has been noticed in the frequency of low water. Where that water is going to, I can only say they're using it for important things. There's a demand for recycled water but can't answer more than that.

DK What are some of the impacts expected from the winter weather we had on our rivers?

CL The colder the weather gets, the more that nonnative fish die. In the upper San Antonio River, there are Plecostomus and Tilapia. As the colder weather hits us, we see a lot more fish kills that affect the exotics more than the native species. Zoe will be talking about the apple snails, but we're hoping to determine the effects of winter on these species. It's like the Plecostomus and tilapia, I don't see a solution to truly eradicate them. I was hoping the winter weather would help with that.

4. **Summary of Freshwater Mussel Studies and Apple Snail Removal – Zoe Nichols (ZN)**

Glynis Strause (GS) in chat: What is the source of copper?

ZN It's really hard to say and we can't really track why it's high in some storm events. It may come from vehicles and pollution from urban environments.

CL I used to run a landscape company and a lot of the chemicals we used to prevent fungus, like fertilizers, all have copper. An important issue to address is how to correctly apply the

chemicals, especially during the right times of the year. Studies in the past have shown copper miles downstream from the source. This instance turned out to be a golf course using a mister to fertilize with a fertilizer containing copper. There are no rules or regulations to stop companies from doing so but I've heard some are taking an effort to try other chemicals. A lot of the fertilizers out there still contain copper. Quick note to anyone who has influence over aquariums and kids with fish: please be conscientious with what you buy. The apple snails caught us by surprise. The Plecostomus is a staple in any aquarium but have a detrimental effect on established fish populations and undercut banks which cause erosion. It's something we need to continue to educate the public on.

HH in chat: Are the snails herbivores or omnivores?

ZN I believe they are herbivores.

5 min break

DK Reminder of the River Authority's EAC webpage with updated presentations, mins, etc: <https://www.sariverauthority.org/public-services/environmental-sciences>

5. Resilient Rivers Blueprint

Karen Bishop (KB) Opened up discussion.

DK I remember rating it as a recurrent. I also remember often feeling ambivalent that I could have seen it going to cultural/spiritual. With the river's origin being at University of Incarnate Word (UIW), we often talk about the cultural & spiritual heritage so there's a strong component there. Then I think of, for instance, the average person on the Riverwalk and their connection to the river. There are also the recreational uses along the river that I don't know how closely people feel about. A different perspective is when I visited Canada. Presentations will always start with their connection to the land leading me to think we're on the way but not there yet.

KB Asked for additional feedback from the committee. Call for Steven to chime in.

Steven Schauer (SS) I don't have other questions, I wanted to make sure the members who took the survey had an opportunity to listen in to the results.

HH in chat: I don't recall which category the survey placed my answers into, but I do recall it put me into categories that I didn't expect. I would classify the San Antonio River as very utilitarian and as very culturally significant. Do we need a larger survey population to go through the River Journey and Personality quizzes to get a better view of how San Antonians/Texans see the San Antonio River? Are these surveys open to the public? It would be interesting to see the results of a much larger population.

SS To address some of Heather’s questions and to give additional background, the River Authority participated in this specific survey at the request of the International River Foundation. This is a new tool they created last year and designed for river systems that are in less developed countries. We were asked to take this survey as a calibration and to compare our results to their predictions. Dr. Bill Dennison, University of Maryland, a well-established international name within the realm of river basin report cards helped create this tool with the International River Foundation. The River Authority report card was based on some of his work. He thinks highly of our efforts here in San Antonio and sought our help for feedback for this tool. As a point of clarification this is how we got involved but will not be rolled out to our own communities.

HH in chat Thanks for the explanation, Steven.

6. **Trash Outreach Creative – Steven Schauer (SS)**

SS Acknowledges comments coming through. (Chat comments below) Clarifies WK’s comment that Don’t Be Trashy has different connotations to it. WK agrees.

SS Don’t Be Trashy was recommended by our external marketing firm as the way to grab somebody’s attention.

GS I think the Don’t Be Trashy would resonate more with the folks likely to litter.

Annalisa Peace (AP) I’m not sure if you want the Don’t Be Trashy to be linked to the San Antonio River Authority. I agree it targets a certain group of people, but I would be nervous about the reputation that would be linked to Be Proud and the River Authority, personally.

WK Along with that, I always think about the Don’t Mess With Texas campaign having been in the tourist industry for over 40 years. As Texas we get that, but as a non-Texan it can be offensive. I got that a lot over the years from tourists. It’s a good slogan but has a lot of additional meaning.

Conversation chat regarding the Trash Outreach Creative:

11:47 AM

Janis Bush to Everyone

I like litter quitter the best!

11:47 AM

Deepti Kharod to Everyone

Litter quitter, too.

11:48 AM

Wilfred Korth to Everyone

Same here. “Trashy” has many definitions to deal with.

11:48 AM

Adrian Reyna to Everyone

I like the Littler Quitter as well!

11:48 AM

Annalisa Peace to Everyone

I like the "Don't be trashy"

11:48 AM

Glynis Strause to Everyone

Litter Quitter

11:48 AM

Janis Bush to Everyone

I think both clean shots and the litter shots.

11:48 AM

Deepti Kharod to Everyone

Don't be trashy made me chuckle - and I appreciated that. But I like the rhyming sound of litter quitter

11:48 AM

Annalisa Peace to Everyone

ditto re Janis

11:48 AM

Heather Hansen to Everyone

be a Litter quitter made me laugh, so that for a catch-phrase. But the pictures and style of wording for Don't be trashy is more attractive.

SS Heather, for clarification, do you prefer the more attractive photos along with the Litter Quitter phrase?

GS I think for me to show the river with litter and a clean river following it is a good visual impact of what the litter can be.

SS Utilize both trash ugly pictures & attractive pictures.

JB I agree with that. Before & after shot.

AP Your target audience is young men from what I read on the statistics of people who are littering. I think Litter Quitter is too cute and wouldn't resonate with that demographic.

DK Annalisa, I think that is a good point. It's not the people here that will be doing the littering. I personally prefer Litter Quitter for the positive messaging rather than the don't messaging in the other one. It will catch someone's eye long enough to read the next line for the people who are littering if we had Don't Be Trashy.

11:49 AM

Alicia Ramsey to Everyone

I think trash pictures would resonate more - I'm not sure if people realize how badly it impacts the river

11:50 AM

Deepti Kharod to Everyone

the economic impact of cleaning litter was good;

Janis Bush – don't be trashy linked to SARA

WK – Don't mess with Texas ... tourists, not Texans don't have an impact and can be insulting

11:50 AM

Glynis Strause to Everyone

I see Litter Quitter as something children would like to say and remind their parents to not litter.

Janis: clean river following, visual good impact

Glynis S: before and after shot

AP: target audience is young men, litter quitter is too cute and won't resonate

Deepti K: prefer litter quitter bc of positive messaging,

11:52 AM

Glynis Strause to Everyone

I think a trash picture in contrast to pristine picture would show the impact that quitting littering would have

11:52 AM

Heather Hansen to Everyone

Agreed with her comments!

11:52 AM

Deepti Kharod to Everyone

yes

11:53 AM

Heather Hansen to Everyone

(sorry I can't get mic to work today...)

Janis – suggest other focus group other than EAC

JB You might try another focus group, the people on this meeting the river is near and dear to their heart. A focus group that can address the impact of those slogans.

SS We have done 5 average citizen focus group meetings. We're collecting feedback from the San Antonio River Foundation board, Communications Committee board members, Bexar Regional Watershed Management, Texas Children in Nature, and the River Warrior volunteer group. We're also meeting with Visit San Antonio given that their focus is largely on Public Relations and Marketing and will serve as a 3rd party professional input. We are trying to get a variety to include southern basin members as well. The issue of trash is largely an urban issue but not exclusively a southern issue, so this messaging will be shared with the southern basin when the message is launched in the next fiscal year. Is there interest to have this item back on the agenda in June? Janis Bush & Annalisa Peace agreed. If there are other collaborative organizations we should reach out to before we go live to meet with, we will add those to our list. At a minimum, we want to make sure everyone knows we are doing this, at a maximum the more voices we could get to share the message with their network will be better with reaching more people. If there are other groups we should be engaging with, please send them to me or Jeanette to add to our list of potential collaborators.

11:54 AM

Heather Hansen to Everyone

the provocative nature of "Don't be trashy" - it would induce someone to read on

11:57 AM

Deepti Kharod to Everyone

Would it be possible for me to share these slides with my students on Wednesday and get their feedback? It's about 20 people...It could be part of my lesson for the day.

SS Deepti, sure if you would like to share the presentation with your students, getting that younger voice will be welcome.

11:59 AM

Glynis Strause to Everyone

Will you be sharing the mussel slides?

11:59 AM

Janis Bush to Everyone

I would be glad to share it with our students. We could do a Qualtrics survey to get their input.

7. Budget & GM search update – Steven Schauer (SS)

No discussion

8. Future meeting dates and items for future consideration

WK Call for suggestions for next meeting

Jeanette will send out meeting date options via email to get feedback from all committee members including those not present.

AP I received a letter from the River Road Neighborhood regarding environmental concerns with the project. Would it be possible to share with the group to determine if this is appropriate for the agenda as a discussion item? Steven agreed to share.

AP It would be interesting to have an update from the San Antonio groups of the Regional Flood Planning Groups from the Texas Water Development Board. Since the River Authority facilitates that, it should be easy to arrange. It is interesting what is going on.

SS I will offline with co-chairs to decide if this should be added to the agenda for June. We try to keep the agenda items related to the environmental sciences department, but we can find a way to add it since flooding has an environmental impact as well.

DK What is the timeline for the trash initiative campaigns? Will an update be given at the next meeting?

SS We'll be able to provide a comprehensive plan of the option that was selected with a preview of the timeline over the course of the next year.

DK Interested to hear the impact of the freezing weather on invasive and native species.

SS A presentation will be given to the full board next week. We can send it as a link to the committee to watch as members of the public or we can present it at our next EAC meeting. No response.

WK adjourned meeting.