

San Antonio River Authority Environmental Advisory Committee (EAC)

December 15th, 2023 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. (Q2) Meeting Notes

San Antonio River Authority Mission Reacg

EAC Attendees:	EAC Absent:
Connie Waters (Virtual)	Jason Katcsmorak
Joedy Yglesias	James Dodson
Glynis Strause (virtual)	Dr. John Hooker
Dr. Janis Bush	Bree Jameson
Mary Lozano	Stephen Lucke
Carl Clapsaddle (virtual)	
Annalisa Peace	San Antonio River Authority Staff Attendees:
Dr. Heather Hansen	Steve Graham
	Minna Paul
	Kayte Brought
	Shaun Donovan
	Wayne Tschirhart
Citizens to be heard:	Rebecca Reeves
	Dr. Sheeba Thomas
	Nicole Marshall
	Amanda Spencer
	Ramiro Ortiz

1. Welcome

- Introduction of committee & River Authority staff.
- Approval of June 16, 2023 EAC Minutes
- Dr. Janis Bush (**JB**) calls for approval of minutes. Joedy Yglesias (**JY**) motioned to approve the minutes, motion was seconded, **JB** calls for vote, and minutes approved by consensus.
- Minna Paul conducted a 'My Story Tree' team building activity for members and staff to get to know our EAC members better.

2. Cibolo Watershed Modeling

Dr. Sheeba Thomas

Post Presentation topics discussed:

- Texas Water Development Board has a poll on how GI can be implemented in the regional flood planning process, poll closes on September 29th. For more information please see article: [TWDB explores nature-based solutions](#). Take the poll here: [Nature Based Solutions Questionnaire](#)
- City of San Antonio has purchased conservation easements over the Edwards Aquifer Recharge Zone to protect areas from development. (Conserved land can be an example of GI as it allows for natural filtration and land protection).

- Discussed how we can bring more green infrastructure to Bexar, some suggestions:
 1. identify areas where encouraging recharge would be a flood mitigation measure. How can we select areas of particular interest and target which are the best areas to protect within the region. Discussed Camp Bullis flooding – a retention structure exists on the property that SARA personnel is looking at to take information and share data to add layers on the Watershed Master Plan Viewer. Having multiple layers on these master plans can create multi-purpose plans incorporating recreation, soil, pollution, etc.
 2. Presentation to the Camp Bullis Sentinel Landscape GIS group on the modeling Dr. Sheeba Thomas is doing, to better inform, creating a lecture series.
- Discussed including input from local communities surrounding Cibolo Creek.

3. NASA ISS Education Downlink

Katye Brought

Post Presentation topics discussed:

- National Cave and Karst Research Institute of NM doing studies of caves to understand what life would be like on other planets.
- Working with *Communities in Schools*, an organization to serve underfunded school districts and at-risk students, could be a great opportunity for engagement.
 - Dr. Janis Bush suggested connecting with Dr. Angela Speck (UTSA, Chair of Physics and Astronomy) big into eclipses and a great contact for outreach.
- When exploring space, highlighting that some excursions are focused on finding water. This can highlight why water is so important, why it needs to be preserved. Water is a rarity in the observable universe and is a cornerstone to life.
- Looking for opportunities for engagement and how to inspire activity from schools, museums, and libraries to host Downlinks of their own.

4. Detention Dams

Wayne Tschirhart, P.E.

Post Presentation topics discussed:

- Discussed how development has occurred in and around dams that are now high hazard, this does not imply that the dams are risky in terms of failure but if in the case that it did, there will be significant loss of property or life, although the benefits far outweigh the risk.
 - Discussed the process of dam inspection. The State of Texas requires for dams a full engineering walk-thru and report sent to TCEQ every 5 years. Alongside this, the SARA has Watershed Parks Operation staff do dam maintenance that observe the dams on almost a monthly basis to check for security, vandalism, or proper/improper use of the dams.
 - Discusses how the Upper Guadalupe River Authority was engaging rural landowners in building check-dams and if this could be a possible strategy to reduce flow. A watershed study would have to be conducted to analyze the benefits and where they could be sited in a holistic way to avoid adverse impacts.

-Discussed unpermitted structures established by citizens or ranchers. There are in-stream barriers that are not tracked or maintained. It is an impediment to healthy active fish or ecological communities. The dams discussed in this presentation refer to ephemeral water bodies and are closely maintained and monitored.

Regarding Otilla Dam (SA River at Bluewing Rd.), we enjoy the benefits of backwater for fishing, canoeing although it affects fish passage, etc., SARA is working with the owner to modify the dam to find a balanced solution.

5. Future meetings dates and items for future consideration:

Discussed next meeting time, date, location:

Q2 (December 15th, 2023) Location: will be at (MROC) Mission Reach Operations Center so we can offer a tour of the Mission Reach environmental restoration project after the EAC meeting. Rebecca discussed Q3 (March 15, 2024) – will be in Bexar County, Clean Rivers Program stakeholder meeting. Requirements: permission from TCEQ to coordinate that date so that the Clean Rivers Program Manager will be available. Questionnaires will be sent out for subjects to be covered.

Q4 (June 14, 2024) – suggested to be downstream. Possibly Conoco, Karnes (Escondido), Wilson, Location TBD. EAC members were asked to brainstorm the location options for this meeting.

Discussed Volunteer Mixer at Ruby City on November 10th. The EAC along with all our volunteers and committees, board members were invited to join us.

Meeting adjourned at 12:00 PM