

Environmental Advisory Committee

FY 2021 - 2022 Q2 Mtg. Notes

12/10/2021

Virtual Meeting

Bexar County

EAC Attendees:	EAC Absent:
Deepti Kharod	Joe Baker
Connie Waters	Stephen Lucke
Glynis Strause	Bree Jameson
Heather Hansen	
James Dodson	
Annalisa Peace	
Janis Bush	San Antonio River Authority staff attendees:
Joedy Yglesias	Amy Zola
Wilfred Korth	Steven Schauer
Jason Katscmorak	Carrie Merson
	Chris Vaughn
	Shaun Donovan
	Jeanette Gonzalez

1. Welcome

Wilfred Korth (WK) called the meeting order and started introduction, followed by committee members, guests, and San Antonio River Authority (River Authority) staff.

2. Approval of September 17, 2021 Minutes

WK calls for approval of minutes.

Janis Bush (JB) made motion to approve the minutes, **Annalisa Peace (AP)** seconded motion; **WK** calls for vote, minutes approved by consensus.

3. Clean River Program (CRP) Update – Chris Vaughn (CV)

WK asked question regarding the sites mentioned at the Lower SAR I-Plan Meeting. Sites 190201 & 190102 had increase in geo mean. Is this due to river flow?

CV Hard to give a specific answer due to the dominance of agriculture and livestock in the area. Shaun will be able to give a better answer on the I-Plan work.

SD A good rule of thumb on geo means with minor increases means there's a good chance that there was increased rainfall over a period of time. If there are greater swings, that is not attributable to stormwater for that analysis. It is really hard to attribute to specific causes like point and non point sources. Positive differences are likely due to land management sources

whereas large decreases in water quality mean something negative is happening in the watershed.

4. **San Antonio River Basin Report Card 2021 – Steven Schauer (SS)**

Joedy Yglesias JY Question asked about locations where swimming standards are consistently good.

SS In the southern basin there are some locations. SS defers to SD for additional information. We're in year 2, moving into year 3 of an intense study of the Mission Reach for an in depth dive of the water quality in the urban limits of the city.

JY In Goliad, are people consistently able to go recreational swimming?

SS From a water quality perspective that would be. Most access to the river is private property however, there are signs of recreational swimming in forms of rope swings that can be seen from the paddling trail.

JY Regarding trash on the Mission Reach, is there consideration for Spanish language outreach?

SS In regards to the Don't Let Litter Trash Your River campaign, we are doing Spanish outreach that includes Spanish radio and advertising. We're in process of putting additional information in Spanish on our website to increase the quantity and quality of our Spanish outreach. In regards to reaching people on the Mission Reach, there are plans to launch a docent program through Minna Paul our volunteer coordinator within the next fiscal year.

JY Recognized the aquatic biologists for their efforts on the Mission Reach including water quality studies and invasive species removal.

AP Kudos to the media coverage of the release of the San Antonio River Basin Report Card. Question was asked in regards to engaging the RiverAid group in clean up and future partnerships.

SS Through the volunteer program, Minna has engaged with RiverAid and provided areas and city parks on Leon Creek & Salado Creek that need more attention. We can get together with Minna to talk strategy and ways to further partner with them.

5. **Education & Engagement Team Update – Carrie Merson (CM)**

JB Commended Carrie and team on great work. Invitation extended to see UTSA's Living Laboratory. The facility is on the edge of Maverick Creek and would be great to have students out to talk about the Edwards Aquifer.

Glynis Strause (GS) Offered the education team the use of the Conoco facility located near the Escondido Creek Parkway as an opportunity in the Spring.

JY Does the education team engage with schools with ESL students and does the team have someone that can engage with them? JY offered his assistance.

CM Some of our implementations are visually in addition to the use of chaperones and teachers that can translate for the students when available. One of the challenges the team faces is the inability to know about students in advance and therefore difficult to ascertain quickly. A few resources we have on hand is the watershed poster and the Confluence Park virtual tour video.

JY Is there a way to ask the teachers some general questions when the field trip is being coordinated?

CM We usually offer the materials up front and look for the response from the teacher.

JY Question for Janis Bush regarding the Living Laboratory and the possibility of the local Master Naturalists visiting the facility to which she responded in agreement of the idea.

DK Offered students to help with any Spanish translations in reference to JY's earlier questions.

Heather Hansen (HH) Can you speak to what types of programs that were done in Wilson and Karnes counties. Are any of the field trip programs applicable to these areas as well?

CM The programming we had was live and virtual during COVID and held at local libraries. These programs regarding the water quality and food webs program were used in the studies for Virginia Tech. Some upcoming events include LaVernia visiting Confluence Park and a Third Grade Water Festival through the partnership with AgriLife. We have previously hosted field trips at Helton Nature Park and Branch River Park and new opportunities at Escondido Creek Parkway. Through other partnerships with Floating Classroom, NRCS, Nueces River Authority we're able to engage teachers and students in the southern basin.

HH Thanked CM.

DK While looking through the Education page, is there a video or virtual tour from the origin of the San Antonio River to the bay.

CM Deferred to SS to talk about the videos he created of the San Antonio River.

SS I would suggest the 26-minute video from the headwaters to Seadrift that includes major points of interest and history. Another option is a 60-minute documentary that is more about the trip and the lessons of being on the river.

JY Another great visual tool is the 3D model of the watershed that is used in education programs.

CM That is a very successful model that is deployed during Confluence Park field trips and in classrooms.

6. Review River Authority's Fiscal Year 2021/2022 Budget – Amy Zola (AZ)

HH Are external and internal links available?

AZ Yes, the external link is the Basin Report Card. The internal link is available to staff due to licensing, but we are able to share screenshots.

HH Inquired what trail counters mentioned presentations are.

AZ The trail counters or vehicle counters are units that count people that pass by and sends data every fifteen minutes on the number of counts just like a trail camera would count points of activity. It is counting how many vehicles come in the parking lot and people that pass by and will count both directions.

SS These counters will make a differential in whether it's a person passing by or a bicycle and will give directional data.

AP & GS Requested slides.

7. Open discussion by EAC regarding project and/or policy recommendations for consideration in the River Authority's Fiscal Year 2021/2022 budget and strategic plan

Conversation ensued between committee members in attendance. SS presented and discussed list of projects on the current fiscal year budget to assist in devising strategy.

Agreement to include the following topics to present at the Communications Committee:

- Clean Rivers Program and water quality monitoring and related water quality studies
- Support for floodplain mapping & planning
- Support for educational outreach K-12 and college level
- Volunteer program including outreach efforts to grow knowledgeable constituents
- Continued support of Operation & Maintenance
 - For the San Antonio River, tributaries and agency parks
 - For the Mission Reach and the team who helps clear log jams from paddling trails
- Support for River Authority integrated expertise into City of San Antonio Green Infrastructure projects, including upcoming bond projects and the Broadway project

8. Future meeting dates and items for future consideration

DK Agenda item for proposed June visit to the bay.

James Dodson (JD) Offered assistance to help plan the committee meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 11:59.