

Environmental Advisory Committee

FY 2022-2023 Q1 Meeting Notes

September 16, 2022

Virtual Meeting

Bexar County

EAC Attendees:	EAC Absent:
Wilfred Korth	Jason Katcsmorak
Annalisa Peace	Joe Baker
Glynis Strause	Stephen Lucke
James Dodson	Bree Jameson
Heather Hansen	Joedy Yglesias
Connie Waters	
Janis Bush	San Antonio River Authority staff attendees:
	Steve Graham
	Carrie Merson
	Rebecca Reeves
	Paul Martinez
	Karen Bishop
	Michelle E. Garza
	Minna Paul
	Kristen Hansen
	Tommy Mitchell
	Shaun Donovan
	Brian Mast
	Citizens to Be Heard
	John Hooker (EAC Nominee)

1. Welcome

Wilfred Korth (WK) called the meeting order and started introduction, followed by San Antonio River Authority (River Authority) staff, committee members, and guests. **Carrie Merson (CM)** introduced **Dr. John Hooker (JH)** as the nominee to replace Dr. Deepti Kharod.

2. Approval of June 10, 2022, Q4 Minutes

WK calls for approval of minutes.

Heather Hansen (HH) noted that dates needed to be modified to reflect previous Q4 meeting. **CM** noted she will make changes. **Connie Waters (CW)** motioned to approve the minutes, **Glynis Strause (GS)** seconded motion; **WK** calls for vote, minutes approved by consensus.

3. Nature Based Project Identification and Evaluation - Karen Bishop (KB) and Michelle E. Garza (MG)

Steve Graham (SG) – clarified that the scoring criteria is reflective of the Triple Bottom Line Fiscal, Social, and Environmental, presented previously to the EAC.

JH – How feasible is it to use the scoring tool for properties around the city or generalize this approach?

KB – There is an opportunity to use this tool and others to be used in specific situations. Used in River Authority’s (SARA) review the City of San Antonio bond projects to assess connectivity, based on city’s

goals. Watershed and Park Operations (WPO) developed an assessment tool for projects. This tool is similar to other scoring tools used state and nationally and has a broad use potential.

Janis Bush (JB) (from chat) – Good work. Thank you.

SG (from chat) – reiterated that it was a triple bottom line approach.

HH (from chat) – Kudos for leading by example.

GS (from chat) – Does TxDOT or SARA build the pedestrian walk over?

SG – On Roosevelt Ave? That is a joint effort with the City of San Antonio with TXDOT review.

MG – The whole project is a city project. TxDOT will turn right of way to the City.

4. John William Helton San Antonio River Nature Park Area Update and New Boat Ramp – Tommy Mitchell (TM)

WK – reiterated how much Canoe Trail Goliad and Goliad appreciates WPO support on assisting with keeping the river clear for paddling.

TM – Thank you, we have plans to extend paddling trail up to Hwy 239 and is working with TXDOT and County.

SG – Often asked about motorboats by community for activities like fishing?

WK – The state park and the county judge have been approached about the ability to put in flat bottom boats.

TM – Given that community members historically used the Riverdale area to put in boats, SARA will look at that area with engineers to assess potential access points for public recreation or motorized boats opportunity. Please let him (TM) know if there are areas that should be looked at. Will need to keep safety top of mind.

WK – New Game Warden for the Goliad County noted there wasn't an emergency access point in the area for rescues.

TM – Inquired about setting up a meeting with potential partners, such as the city or county

WK – Talk to Jared at Goliad State Park. Will send the Game Warden contact.

HH – Have there been more trees falling into the river this summer, after all the droughts?

TM – Yes. We frequently leave some brush/root ball along embankment to prevent more erosion. If we can move a large tree to the side, we use cable to secure it and allow natural sediment collection to take place for more natural rebuild of bank.

HH - Was it easier to construct this summer since the river was lower than normal due to drought?

TM – Yes. It provided some opportunities, but a rain event caused a week delay on a project, but overall, the low water elevation provided construction opportunities.

HH - What's the black stuff under the blocks?

TM – It is a filter fabric laid down for erosion control. Also do this with concrete pours.

HH – Thank you. HH has been fascinated by the construction when driving near it.

TM - Look for those sites to green with vegetation and will send progress photos to Carrie for dissemination.

WK – Noted that he uses the SARA website 'current conditions' to monitor flow and water quality.

TM - It is a great resource we share to constituency, and we utilize on-site management.

WK – We were down to about 50cfs, we may need to start looking at closure to due to low flow.

TM - We had similar situation in SASPAMCO. May need to utilize a warning as some paddlers enjoy certain low-flow conditions, as they find it challenging. Was Ferry St repair satisfactory (portage point)?

WK – Have not heard anything.

5. Apple Snail Visualization Dashboard – Paul Martinez (PM)

SG – What is the data comparison between our Warriors versus the Mission Kayak company?

PM – Mission Kayak shows marginally more, but Warriors make a comparably sizable impact.

STG – Noted citizen scientists and warriors are making an impact.

SD – Stated the number of removals by SARA and contract vs partners is about 60%-40%, almost half of the removal this year. Noted a great job by the Brand and Communications Department and volunteer coordinator **Minna Paul (MP)** for trainings and getting people out to help. We hope to have continued program.

STG – Grassroots effort for creating an ‘army of advocates’ is showing that they are making positive impact in this snail program.

CM – Minna is on the call today.

WK – Has there been work to see if snails have moved further south than Mission Reach?

SD – Explained- not further than the Mission Reach, Confluence Park area. No reports from further south. Hope that since they thrive on aquatic vegetation, especially algae on the sides of the concrete channel, if they go further south, they won’t have food available and won’t thrive, as the river isn’t a heavily vegetated system.

CW (in chat) – Does this come close to eradicating this species?

SD – Last year in total had 17,500 (approximately) egg cases and 3,500 adults. This year there was more. We are limiting as much as we can, but the species is most likely here to stay. The hope is that we are working to mitigate. If we didn’t the walls of the river walk would be lined with egg cases. Eradication is not a realistic goal.

CW (in chat) – Are the snails showing up in other parts of the state?

SD – Houston, Galveston, Austin, Dallas. The visualization tool nas.er.usgs.gov/default.aspx is interesting.

6. **Clean Rivers Program (CRP) goals and the River Authority’s actions for meeting CRP objectives – Rebecca Reeves (RR)**

WK – Solar Farms – concerned about 5 solar panel projects that are proposed for Goliad County that could potentially impact 22,000 acres of land. What is the impact of the runoff from those farms going to do to the water quality in our streams and rivers? Not certain how to build that into the CRP framework. Given that it is a new industry, are there any materials/silt that could runoff?

RR – Are the solar farms on public land?

WK – All on private land, leased from landowners.

RR – Will follow up after discussing with team. It is outside of the CRP, but stormwater team information is plausible.

WK – Would like to look into gaining a baseline to tell us of changes within the river.

GS – (in chat) Is there research on what solar does to the soil?

RR – We looked into this and did not find information on what it does to the soil. What does come up is the use of water and manufacturing which is not done in Goliad but is a source of pollution. Also, making sure when panels are replaced that the panels are disposed of properly. If you think of anything in the next 2 weeks, before we start contracting with TCEQ, that would be good. Send your thoughts to Carrie.

CM – Reached out to UTSA Sustainable Energy department, to inquire, and if we don’t hear back, there is another person we will inquire with. Inquired with **HH** to check that the email regarding solar energy webinar that **HH** sent, was an intended email.

HH – Yes. Thank you for checking.

7. **Future meeting dates and items for future consideration**

WK – Noted that some joined us a bit later and introduced them (they are listed as attendees in these notes).

SG – Invitation to SARA appreciation mixer on evening of September 23, 6pm to 8pm at Tobin. Invitation to River Symposium at Confluence Park on September 24.

WK – Will there be a film at the Mixer?

SG – We will get back with you.

WK – Future date – Usually next meeting December 9.

SG – Dec 16 - Would like to do something at the coast? Is this something that the EAC would like to do?

James Dodson (JD) – Has reached out to the Texas Floating Classroom, bay and estuary education program that introduces students to sampling, estuary concepts, and protection. They have indicated that they might be able to operate out of Rockport on December 16 on the Aransas Bay system. Could hold a meeting at a facility near-by and go out on the vessel in afternoon.

SG – Could start meeting later, 10am or 11am, and then either return that Friday late afternoon, or stay over, bring significant other, enjoy coast next day. We need a commitment from members to proceed.

Annalisa Pease (AP) – Can family members come on tours/other activities?

JD – Yes. Believes the vessel can hold up to 30 people.

SG – Hold the meeting in an office or class, and then recess to activities. No reason family, friends can't join then.

JD – There is a meeting center in Rockport he'll look into.

CM – Confirmed that it was December 16th for proposed next meeting.

WK – Polled for interest. **CW, GS, JB, JH, JD, AP, and GS** confirmed interest. As a majority, confirmed they would like to move forward. **JD** – will continue planning. **CM** is point of contact to build agenda and logistics.

Meeting Adjourned at 10:41am