

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 Reach Operations Center, San Antonio Tx 78214

EAC Attendees:	EAC Absent:
Carl Clapsaddle (virtual) (CC)	Annalisa Peace
Dr. Heather Hansen (HH)	Bree Jameson
Dr. Janis Bush (JB)	James Katcsmorak
Joedy Yglesias (JY)	
Glynis H. Strause (virtual) (GS)	
Mary Lozano (ML)	San Antonio River Authority Staff Attendees:
James Dodson (JD)	Amanda Spencer (AS)
Dr. John Hooker (JH)	Minna Paul (MP)
Connie Waters (virtual) (CW)	Samantha Villanueva (SV)
	Ramiro Ortiz (RO)
	Rebecca Reeves (RR)
	Brian Mast (BM)
	Nicole Marshall (NM)
Citizens to be heard:	Dr. Sheeba Thomas (ST)
Sara Ramirez (SR)	Steve Graham (SG)
Rachel Cywinski (RC)	Mitch Magruder (MM)
	Mario Siller (MS)
	Shaun Donovan (SD)
	Emily Rew (ER)

1. Welcome

- Introduction of committee & River Authority staff.
- Approval of September 21, 2023 EAC Minutes.
 - Dr. Janis Bush **(JB)** approved of minutes. **JB** calls for a vote, and minutes approved by consensus.

2. Mission Reach Fish Surveys

Mitch Magruder

Aquatic biology reports on an environmental restoration project in which they are sampling the fish species in a recently restored portion of the river.

- Noted some species that have had a reintroduction since before the restoration, and an increase in fish biodiversity.
- Majority of the fish surveyed were of native species, and very few non-natives.

Post Presentation topics discussed:

- Found that stream restoration projects have significant impact on aquatic communities. Continuous monitoring and holistic understanding better helps inform management decisions.
- **(RC)** – How do you establish a baseline for restoration project? How have things changed in Mission Reach?
 - Pre-Restoration surveys will document initial populations and ecological conditions.
 - Currently conducting surveys at San Pedro Creek and other locations.
 - Taking a more proactive approach to restoration. Removing dams and creating passageways for fish.
 - Other teams going out to do plant surveys alongside the fish surveys.
- **(JY)** – What are the numbers of non-native fish that are found? What effects do they have on aquatic life? How do we mitigate that?
 - There were very few native species that were found, most of which would not have much of an effect on the aquatic ecosystem.
 - Common Carper – not a concern ecologically, more naturalized fish.
 - Sunfish – impacting Sunfish species.
 - Armored Catfish, Blue Tilapia – low numbers
 - Non-Native Fish – around 7% of total species surveyed.
- **(JH)** – How do you achieve this environmental work and maintain flood control?
 - Flood control work is not technically in the hands of the Aquatic Biology team, more so on the engineering side
 - There are currently barriers to certain restoration areas – have to work around houses and neighborhoods.
 - Include primary flood control methods. Placing trees where they are appropriate and removing those that are not. Plant species involved are very intentional.
 - This particular project took place on a more minor scale.
- Discussion about the processes and effects of the project and how it affects floodplains and river ecosystem.

3. Cibolo Creek Watershed Study

Dr. Sheeba Thomas

- **Presentation:** Analysis of the Cibolo Creek Watershed, recognizing issues regarding water quality, impervious cover, and E.coli levels. Identified water quality improvement areas.
 - There are numerous concerns regarding water quality and safety. Proposal to develop comprehensive model of the creek and predict the effects of development and how to mitigate existing and future damage.
 - **SD** speaks on the Camp Bullis Sentinel Landscape and how the SARA is working alongside them to mitigate flash flooding
 - Developing a holistic management plan. Project scheduled for just a little over 3 years. Edwards Aquifer Alliance has agreed to fund a portion of the project.

Post Presentation topics discussed:

- **JB** – Recommends the identification of the source of E.Coli issues in Boerne. We are working with the CO Boerne to identify. Suggests partnering with the Cibolo Preserve to collect information, which may have value to the project.
- **JY** – Suggests collaborating with JBSA (Lackland and Randolph) and Medina Base. He has connections with the Environmental departments with JBSA.
- **(SD)** – mentions good connections with JBSA and how they are currently involved with SARA and their understanding of the Creek.
- **(HH)** – Recommends talking to water quality people at JBSA. Has connections with that department.

4. Clean Rivers Program

Rebecca Reeves

- **Presentation**
 - Program is tasked with gathering data on water quality for TCEQ reports. Continuous collection, management, analysis, and reporting of data. CRP is monitoring all the way up into the lower and upper parts of the watershed, even outside SARA district.
 - Partners with Bandera River Authority and Groundwater District, City of Boerne, and G-B River Authority, and TCEQ
 - 81 conventional sites, 15 Fish sites, 7 macroinvertebrate sites, and 20 diurnal DO sites between the 5 partners.
 - More stakeholders will be invited to the next EAC meeting. Questionnaire will be sent out to current stakeholders about topics to discuss, water quality concerns, and future locations to sample. Asks to review the draft report of the Basin highlight report.
 - Other sites monitored through SARA: Calaveras Creek, Zoo Discharge #1, Woodlawn Lake Boat Dock, Apache Creek @ San Luis St, Salado Creek at Loop 13, Salado Re-Use, Cassin Lake Headwaters, Cassin Lake Dam
 - Continuous monitoring at other spots. Data available via hydrosphere.
 - Stormwater monitoring – Medina River at Hwy 16, Elmendorf Lake Park, Atlanta St BMP, San Antonio River at Floresville, Calaveras Creek at Helton Nature Park

Post Presentation topics discussed:

- **JY** – asks about GBRA water monitoring.
 - GBRA is an active participant in water quality monitoring
- **GS** - Asks about connections with other River Authorities such as Nueces, GBRA, Bandera and how they collaborate to collect data. Is there a state-wide River Authority Organization. Are we working with Coastal Bay and Estuaries program?

- **BM** – there are a number of opportunities to work alongside other counties and RA's to promote environmental partnerships.
- **SD** – We work closely with surrounding RA's to collect sample data about the watersheds. We can maybe look at water from a more holistic perspective about how it would affect the coast.
- **GS** – How will the recently passed Texas Water Act impact the future river boards.
 - **BM** – none of those funds are coming directly to RA's. Many other entities that will receive that funding that could implement new programs.

5. Future meetings dates and items for future consideration:

Discussed next meeting time, date, location:

Q3 (March 15th, 2024) Location: held at the Guenther SARA office Boardroom

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.

- Conoco would be a good location – **JB** suggested and others agreed. Escondido Park tour.

JD – February 16th – 24th will be the San Antonio Bay Area Abandoned Crab Trap pickup.

February 22nd – 24th Annual Whooping Crane festival

- Both events are supported by the River Warriors

MP – We have 3 walks in January, February, and March for iNaturalist trainings. There will be virtual trainings for these walks.

Meeting adjourned at 12:00 PM