

# San Antonio River Authority Environmental Advisory Committee (EAC)

April 18th, 2025. 11:00am-1:00pm (Q3) Meeting Notes

San Antonio River Authority Boardroom (100 E. Guenther St, San Antonio TX, 78204)

<b>EAC Attendees:</b>	
Joedy Yglesias ( <b>JY</b> )	
Glynis Strause (virtual) ( <b>GS</b> )	<b>Absent EAC Attendees:</b>
Dr. Janis Bush ( <b>JB</b> )	James Dodson
Carl Clapsaddle (virtual) ( <b>CC</b> )	Jason Katcmorak
Connie Waters (virtual) ( <b>CW</b> )	
Annalisa Peace ( <b>AP</b> )	
Christopher Fullerton ( <b>CF</b> )	<b>San Antonio River Authority Staff Attendees:</b>
Heather Hansen ( <b>HH</b> )	Rebecca Reeves ( <b>RR</b> )
Dr. John Hooker ( <b>JH</b> )	Brian Mast ( <b>BM</b> )
Peter Hernandez ( <b>PH</b> )	Samantha Villaneuva ( <b>SV</b> )
Mary Lozano ( <b>ML</b> )	Salem Farner ( <b>SF</b> )
<b>CRP Stakeholders:</b>	Amanda Spencer ( <b>AS</b> )
Kalista Mitchell (virtual) ( <b>KM</b> )	Caille Marshall ( <b>CM</b> )
Mary Michael Zahed ( <b>MZ</b> )	Rebecca Krug (virtual) ( <b>RK</b> )
Dave Mauk ( <b>DM</b> )	
Clint Carter ( <b>CCarter</b> )	
Veronica Cantu ( <b>VC</b> )	
Charles Blank ( <b>CB</b> )	
Judit Green (virtual) ( <b>JG</b> )	
Lissa Martinez ( <b>LM</b> )	
Cheryl Wallek (virtual) ( <b>CWallek</b> )	
Jenna Wadman (virtual) ( <b>JW</b> )	
Brianna Chang (virtual) ( <b>BC</b> )	
Jorge Salazar ( <b>JS</b> )	
Carly Rotzler ( <b>CR</b> )	
Rachel Cywinski ( <b>RC</b> )	

## 1. Welcome

- Introduction of Committee & River Authority staff.
- Introduction and Welcome of new member, Peter Hernandez
- Approval of January 24, 2025 minutes

## 2. Texas Clean Rivers Program Overview and Update

Rebecca Reeves, River Authority Senior Quality Assurance & Monitoring Scientist, CRP Project Manager

This committee meeting is a requirement of the Texas Clean Rivers program, the program is statewide and administered by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality and collects data for the state and local users and acts as a gateway for executing projects associated with water

quality. The Bandera County River Authority & Groundwater District monitor in the upper portion of the basin with routine monitoring and biological monitoring.

**Post Presentation topics discussed:**

**CF** – What is the reason TCEQ has their own sites

Review of parameters tested for including field observations.

Seasonal/Biological sampling beginning in March and ends in October, done during the warmer part of the year.

Data is important and has helped us identify the source of certain bacteria. 50% of the bacteria is wildlife. This allows us to better address and suggest best management practices.

**GS**- Do you test for uranium, radiation?

**RR** – We do not, and we do not have the capability in our lab.

**RC** – Lake Elmendorf has huge swings in conductivity that are unusual, there is a lot of industrial use there and air pollution. Sometimes oily type substances in the water. How would airborne issues be addressed?

**RR** – We do not have any current tools to monitor for that but are actively currently looking into this. Elmendorf will possibly a site for that.

**BM**- Give examples of past events in the EAC comments have come to fruition.

**RR** – A previous EAC member who lived around River Road made suggestions for monitoring, so additional sampling was done to provide sampling to that member.

**JG**- Is the *E. coli* from wildlife from mostly hogs?

**RR**- Our data is not that specific.

**CF** – Do any of the sampling stations borrow data from any of the other data sources such as USGS and take into consideration low water flows?

**RR** – Our stations are close enough to USGS Gauge stations that we will mark that down. Some of those are too far away from a gauge that team members will measure the flow themselves.

**PH** – Are we conducting any tests regarding plastics in our waterways?

**RR** – We don't have the expertise in that area. Universities have people working on master's and PhDs specializing in plastic research, so we work with them to receive data and information.

**JY** – Can we get a report on the plastics data that the universities students are working on?

**RR** – We will be able to get that information when the reports are complete.

**CF**- Persistent low levels of pharmaceuticals can impact ecology, are there any pharmaceuticals, heavy metals, or other materials to be tracked when there is low water flow?

**RR** – Several years ago we funded a study with USGS on pharmaceuticals to get a baseline. We haven't done anything recently, but we can bring that up.

**JH** – What is the breakdown of avian and non-avian feces in the water?

**RR** – If you go to our website, we have a breakdown by county of that information.

**3. A Clean Rivers Program Update of the Upper Medina River Watershed**

Dave Mauk, General Manager of the Bandera County River Authority and Groundwater District  
Clint Carter, Field Operations Manager, Bandera County River Authority and Groundwater District

**Post Presentation topics discussed:**

**JY:** Do you know anything about the documentary regarding Medina Lake? I saw drone footage online that looked very similar.

**GS:** I saw the same footage online; it broke my heart.

**CF:** Are there any air quality problems due to the exposed lakebed?

**CCarter:** There are, but issues seem to be coming from the west rather than the draught.

**DM:** Thanking the San Antonio River Authority for collaboration, knowledge, and friendship.

**4. Coordinated Monitoring in the San Antonio River Basin**

Caille Marshall, San Antonio River Authority, Aquatic Biologist

**Post Presentation topics discussed:**

**CF:** How many, if any, of sites were being used 15 years ago during the last major drought?

**CM:** I do not know the data off the top of my head, I can get it for you after the meeting.

**HH:** How is there flow downstream if the river is dry upstream?

**CM:** They are driven by effluent flows.

**PH:** How is data from citizen science utilized?

**CM:** We don't use it at the River Authority, but it can be used by TCEQ at their own discretion for the integrative report.

**RR:** We also look at that data with our basin highlight reports.

**RC:** I think it is worth considering separation of church and state and the disregard for culture.

SARA has made efforts to build relationships with our community, and much of the community is unable to attend the meeting due to it being scheduled on a holiday. Cultural sensitivity is important to make sure we don't disenfranchise marginalized groups. Voices frustration that the meetings are not bilingual.

**LM:** Came to speak on behalf of stream team and personal reasons. Thanked River Authority for providing resources for local stream team monitoring. Voiced disparity between resources/availability and enthusiasm. We have 28 sites in 410, 7 are inactive. Outside of 410, 1 is inactive. SARA has 3 kits, RASA has 1 kit, UTSA has no kits, TAMSA has a few kits, some monitors have their own kits. Training is just the start; auditing happens every 2 years. The percent of trained people that are active monitors is 15%. Asking SARA to provide guidance, would like to know where to monitor, realistic about amount of support to provide, looking for additional local training facilities. Message: I want the experience of being a Texas Stream Team member to be rich, robust, and rewarding.

**JB:** What are you measuring and what is in the kit?

**LM:** Observations, physical measurements, conductivity, pH, and turbidity.

**JB:** Who told you there are no kits at UTSA and who are you working with?

**LM:** Working with graduate student, Paulina at UTSA.

**JB:** I ordered 8 kits. Talk to their professors (Dr. Hutchinson), students use them for their watersheds class.

**LM:** Once the reagents go out of date and you don't know where they come from it can be a major barrier for volunteers.

**JB:** How is this data used?

**LM:** It is submitted to Texas Meadow Center, and they are integrated with TCEQ. I can support quality assurance because of our passion.

**JB:** How are sites chosen?

**LM:** I chose my own site, and it is not regulated.

**JB:** We need to monitor sites that are blind spots for the River Authority.

**LM:** People will pick sites that they have personal connections to. Expanding the number of monitors will help cover the River Authority's blind spots.

**JB:** Who is in charge?

**LM:** Meadow Center.

**JB:** You should go to them for organization.

**LM:** We have a good relationship with them but there is a need for coordination on a local level.

**AP:** We have a new staff that would love to work with you and offered to put in grants for equipment.

**MZ:** We have ordered some kits in the past and we can bring them into our project. EPA won't accept data so we can't use them for TWRI, but we can use them to help fill in blind spots in our data.

**LM:** The kits are available through only one commercial source.

**RC:** Lisa worked with Meredith Miller at Eco Centro, tried to get training for people there but only showed videos. Minna at SARA created the stream team training and now there are four people supporting the program. We don't have any *E. coli* testing sites here. I would not be able to do this volunteer work if it were not supplied by SARA.

**JB:** My suggestion is that the small groups in town get together and collaborate with Meadow Center. Maybe create committee with all partners.

**LM:** There is interest in having a meeting in June. This is a matter of organization, because there is a need from the public.

**JB:** Coordinate with Meadow Center.

**BM:** As for as site selection, we are happy to provide guidance.

**LM:** I understand that, thank you.

**SV:** Thank you for your experience. We are happy to support you. We want all our volunteers as engaged as possible; I look forward to talking with you further.

**CF:** Kudos to Lisa and the Stream Team, if the primary function of this committee is to be a public participation group, should we be open to public?

**JB:** Yes, it is, we just did public comments at the end.

**BM:** The River Foundation is hosting a cleanup tomorrow if anyone is interested. Nirenburg is going to be there. Hosting Fiesta Flotilla on April 27<sup>th</sup>. It's free if anyone wants to attend.

**RC:** There are three areas of information I would like clarification on. The relationship between surface water, groundwater, and drought. State climatologists predict Texas is heading toward a 50-year mega drought. What can we do to prevent this? Confusion regarding use of smoke

bombs and sounds to scare birds at Lake Elmendorf. Concerns about Egyptian geese population has growing. Wondering if the River Authority or the City of San Antonio is behind this.

**BM:** It is the City of San Antonio. Please speak with Parks and Rec.

**CB:** I can confirm that those contractors are the City of San Antonio. They are trying to switch to drones to be more effective.

**JB:** To speak on climate change, we are experiencing rapid desertification.

Send survey to committee members that joined online, about future issues.

**5. Future Meeting Dates:**

**Q4:** July 18<sup>th</sup>

**Fiscal Year, 2025-26 dates:**

**Q1:** October 17<sup>th</sup>, 2025

**Q2:** January 16<sup>th</sup>, 2026

**Q3:** April 10<sup>th</sup>, 2026

**Q4:** July 17<sup>th</sup>, 2026