

Texas Clean Rivers Program

Upper Basin Steering Committee Meeting

Minutes for April 22, 2003 Meeting
UCRA Office – 512 Orient -- San Angelo, Texas

Meeting convened at 10:00 a.m. with Fred Teagarden, Upper Colorado River Authority (UCRA) welcoming the committee. David Cowan and Alicia Reinmund, Lower Colorado River Authority (LCRA) provided an overview of the Clean Rivers Program (CRP), its current status and the input desired from the Steering Committee for this particular meeting.

Fred Teagarden (UCRA) reiterated the role of this committee in providing a strong citizen input presence into the program specifically as related to the draft workplan for the next biennium (FY04 & 05).

LCRA staff explained the evolution of current program funding and while confidence was expressed regarding upcoming funding it was stated that there are no guarantees towards the amount of money Clean Rivers will actually receive. Funding for CRP has been combined with other water quality monies and is no longer exclusive. There is more freedom towards larger programming allocations into other arenas besides CRP. Staff encouraged members of the committee to use what avenues they had available to communicate the needs and importance of the Clean Rivers Program to decision makers. Those in decision making positions need to understand that CRP has been and continues to work for water quality.

LCRA staff addressed the main purpose of the meeting, which is to provide input into the draft workplan for the Upper Colorado Basin. A list of tasks and descriptions provided in previous correspondence was reviewed with emphasis on steering committee contributions towards Task 3: Monitoring, Task 6: Public Education & Outreach, and Task 7: Special Projects.

Major Questions for the meeting are: (1) How do we reach stakeholders? (2) How do we educate the public in regards to CRP and water quality issues? (3) What special projects would best be served by CRP? Teagarden stated that the influence of the committee on CRP cannot be underestimated. Programs originating from CRP steering committee input such as Brush and NPS projects have had a direct impact on water quality past and present. This committee has also allowed for local interests to be maintained within the Upper Colorado basin.

Discussion by committee members ensued and some of the comments are as follows:

“People are not concerned unless something is going on or there is a problem that directly effects them”

“We need to realize that we represent so many people in this area and have direct effect on them”

“Our objective should be to look at our data and make determinations regarding our studies, which should have a impact on future funding in regards to program viability”

“Public awareness should be first and foremost”

“Money can be stagnated if we don’t decide what we want to do specifically, and will be given to someone else”

“We need to prioritize and decide what is most important for CRP”

Reports:

Chuck Brown, UCRA and Wendell Barber, CRMWD were present to discuss their monitoring efforts for Clean Rivers Program and to provide a bigger picture to committee members in regard to Task 3.

The Coordinated Monitoring Meeting was held April 1, 2003 at the UCRA offices. This is an annual meeting in which Upper Basin partners get together to determine if their monitoring schedules are on target and being operated in the most efficient manner. The system also helps avoid overlapping areas between agencies. This is web based scheduling in which partners can cross-reference their data. UCRA & CRMWD both post their own data on their individual websites and LCRA references the information and provides links.

Complaint Investigations:

General Discussion was held regarding complaint investigations.

Scott McWilliams (UCRA) reported on current complaint investigations involving salinity issues. UCRA is currently monitoring three sites, Christoval, Baker Street (San Angelo) and Dove Creek.

Comment was made as to the lack of support from the local Railroad Commission office when it comes to complaints. While it was pointed out that a big part of the difficulty may come from staffing issues, it was mentioned that perhaps we could try mobilizing the Railroad Commission (local San Angelo Office) into action by publicizing some of the problem areas.

One committee member suggested using The Texas Water Well Drillers Board (if still active) as a resource for funding, or partnering with other entities that could take an active role in this process.

The question came up as the responsibility of the river authorities beyond preliminary investigation. Where could additional funding come from to conduct studies on these areas? More discussion ensued, but nothing was determined at this time.

Outreach and Special Projects:

Comments included the following;

“What about a moisture efficiency program, or incentives for proper rangeland management?”

County Commissioner Easingwood addressed educating county commissioner’s courts regarding parameters for sub-divisions and the role CRP could play in assisting with this; *“Government leaders must be properly educated in order that they may fully understand the water quality issues we face as well as viable organizations that are making a difference, they must understand the value of CRP.”*

Teagarden stated that UCRA currently works as an education and services division in conjunction with its’ various grants.

The overall contention is that people must be educated about CRP. Approach could be *“If it were not for the program there would not be water quality protection of this caliber in place.”*

LCRA staff reiterated that the funds for CRP are currently there, but allocations are not committed at this time. No commitments have been made past ’05.

Comment: *“Educate the people who matter to ensure funding”.*

Several informal commitments were also made to form a sub-committee of people willing to provide outreach and develop a pilot program for educating officials regarding CRP and water quality issues.

Comment; *“Only the people who believe in the program can support it and build it up”.*

Conclusion:

Copies of the minutes will be sent to all committee members.

Committee will meet again in 6 months for status of projects.

Committee members were thanked for their valuable time and commitment to this committee.

Respectfully Submitted:

Ellen Groth
Upper Colorado River Authority