

Biology Committee Meeting, Paso del Norte Watershed Council May 17, 2012; 11:00 am
Dona Ana Government Center, Las Cruces, NM

Brian Hanson, the chair of the Biology Committee, asked the general question about topics that the Biology Committee could be addressing. Topics could be:

- Environmental flows in the Rio Grande
- Watershed plan for the entire area
- Sediment transport
- Tie biology with human improvements
- Develop and implement new projects
- Wetland development
- Identify important areas
- Sponsor a summit on biology
- Develop funding for projects and activities (suggest asking for year-end funding from Federal agencies)
- Address binational participation
- Suggest a field trip to get to know the Rio Grande downstream of El Paso especially including the Mexico side (Binational Conference is scheduled in El Paso and Juarez September 27, 28)

We identified several areas where work is being completed:

- Ongoing management at NM State Parks – including 4 local parks
- La Mancha Wetland near Las Cruces, Southwest Environmental Center
- Rio Bosque Wetlands Park, El Paso
- Keystone Heritage Park, El Paso
- Broad Canyon Ranch, Selden Canyon (Audubon, State Parks, U.S, Fish and Wildlife Service)
- Wetland Investigation at Sunland Park, Center for Environmental Resource Management, UTEP
- IBWC restoration sites in the Canalization Reach, Caballo Dam to El Paso

We briefly discussed the most recently approved work plan for the Watershed Council (2012-2016)
The Biology Committee has the following responsibilities; discussion during the meeting is in italics:

Goal A. Promote and Implement Watershed Planning and Management

Objective 1 – Compile existing information about natural resources

- Action c. Develop a baseline natural resource inventory of extant or remnant native floodplains.
The Boykin report identified habitats associated with the Watershed Restoration Action Strategy of 2007.
- Action d. Coordinate with Technical Committee to develop layers reflecting biological information into the coordinated database
Suggestion was made to talk to Chris Brown and find out what they have first.

Goal B. Support Restoration and Enhancement Projects in the Watershed

Objective 1 – Create and prioritize recommendations for watershed restoration and enhancement

- Action b. Develop a robust portfolio of large and small scale restoration projects

Could be a funded study or developed during meetings. The group suggested prioritizing projects.

- Action c. Assist with coordinating stakeholders, funding sources, and potential projects
No specific suggestions
- Action d. Develop “Integrated River Restoration Plan”
This was supported by the group; a proposal was previously written in 2010 by the Biology Committee.

Objective 2 – Review, provide recommendations, and perform other tasks as authorized for restoration, mitigation, and enhancement projects related to the El Paso-Las Cruces Regional Sustainable Water Project and other regional watershed programs, agencies, initiatives, and groups

- Action a. Review the “Integrated watershed management plan” and set priorities
Not written yet, the group supported this.
- Action b. Analyze relationships between current restoration activities in the historic floodplain of the Rio Grande utilizing restoration project portfolio
It was suggested that historic may mean old oxbows.
- Action c. Create an inventory of all areas that have potential for restoration along the Rio Grande
The group supported this, similar to the above inventories.

Participants: Brian Hanson - Chair, Corey Durr - Bureau of Land Management, Ari Michelsen-Texas AgriLife Research Ctr, Bill Hargrove-UTEP CERM, Conrad Keyes, Jr.-Corps consultant, Gilbert Anaya-USIBWC, Kevin Von Finger-Keystone Heritage Park, Mike Landis-USBR, Sue Watts-ecologist, Zhuping Sheng-Texas AgriLife Research Ctr, Kevin Bixby - Southwest Environmental Center, Chris Canavan - NM Environment Department, Janet Kirwan – Mesilla Valley Bosque State Park, Hilary Brinegar – NM Department of Agriculture.