



Tentative Agenda
PdNWC Annual Meeting

02 December 2020, 10:00 am – 12:00 pm

Web and call-in info:

[Microsoft Teams Courtesy of U.S. Bureau of Reclamation](#)

Officers:

Chair
Gill Sorg
City of Las Cruces

Assistant Chair
Conrad Keyes, Jr
Retired, NMSU and USIBWC

Treasurer
Girisha Ganjegunte
*Texas A&M Agrilife Research
Center at El Paso*

Secretary
Delbert Humberson

**Executive Committee
Member Organizations:**
City of Las Cruces

High Desert Native Plants, LLC

Sierra Club

*New Mexico State University,
Department of Geography*

University of Texas at El Paso

*Universidad Autonoma de Ciudad
Juarez*

U.S. Bureau of Land Management

*U.S. Section, International
Boundary and Water
Commission*

*Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y
Tecnología*

*Other Federal, State, and Local
involved agencies with PdNWC*

Other Private Citizens

Paso del Norte Watershed Council
Texas A&M AgriLife Research
1380 A&M Circle
El Paso, TX 79927-5020

Website: www.pdnwc.org

- 1) Introductions & Determination of Quorum – Keyes, et al.
- 2) URGWOM 2020 Update – Phil Carrillo
- 3) Rincon Subbasins 319 Project and the Hatch and Mesilla Valley Watershed Plan – Connie Maxwell
- 4) Election of Executive Council Members
- 5) Reports by PdNWC Committees
 - a. Technical Committee
 - b. Environmental Committee
 - c. Website Committee
- 6) PdNWC Draft 2021-2024 Strategic Plan
- 7) Adjournment

Attendees

Via Zoom:

- Kurt Anderson – Sierra Club
- Christopher Brown – New Mexico State University (NMSU)
- Phillip Carrillo - U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)
- Katie Goetz – New Mexico Department of Agriculture (NMDA)
- Delbert Humberson – International Boundary and Water Commission, United States Section (USIBWC)
- Girisha Ganjegunte – Texas A&M Agrilife (TAMU)
- Saurav Kumar - TAMU
- Mike Landis – USIBWC
- Mariana Lopez – U.S. Geological Survey (USGS)
- Connie Maxwell – New Mexico Water Resources Research Institute (MWRRI)
- Alex Mayer – University of Texas El Paso (UTEP)
- Jerry Melendez – U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (USBR)
- Nabil Shafike – USACE
- Zhuping Sheng – Private Citizen
- Mark Sidlow -USACE
- Gill Sorg – City of Las Cruces
- Greg Torell – NMSU
- Liz Verdecchia – USIBWC
- Jennifer Wilson - USGS

1) Introductions & Determination of Quorum – Sorg, et al.

Quorum was achieved with the following nine members of the EC:

- Kurt Anderson
- Christopher Brown
- Girisha Ganjegunte
- Saurav Kumar
- Connie Maxwell
- Alex Mayer
- Zhuping Sheng
- Gill Sorg
- Greg Torell
- Elizabeth Verdecchia

2) URGWOM 2020 Update – Phillip Carrillo

Phillip Carrillo, the URGWOM program manager, provided an overview of URGWOM in FY2020 and described future planned updates.

Phil showed forecasted versus observed 2020 flow at several gaging stations and forecasted versus observed usable storage, and overall the URGWOM team felt it was a decent forecast. We have been in article 7 conditions since June 17, 2020, which means reservoirs in New Mexico and Colorado built after 1929 are not allowed to increase storage. Article 7 is triggered when total useable storage in Elephant Butte and Caballo drops below 400,000 acre-feet. It should be noted that total useable storage is total project storage minus Compact Credit and San Juan-Chama waters.

In 2020, USACE held bi-weekly URGWOM training sessions in partnership with USBR, for a total of nine sessions. Participants included a range of Federal, State, and Private Sector personnel. They are now planning to expand it into a more extensive training program that is designed to be web-based and open to more interested parties.

Regarding URGWOM itself, the database was updated with the most recent available data, which included weather, flow, diversion, storage, and ET data. The databases for Colorado, Middle Rio Grande (MRG) and

Lower Rio Grande (LRG) were combined into a single database, and seepage data along the MRG and LRG were compiled.

In addition to the database updates, the model was expanded into Hudspeth county in Texas and Cd. Juárez in Mexico. Deep aquifer head objects were added in the MRG and LRG regions of the model, more of the riverside drain network in MRG was added, and Municipal and Industrial pumping were added in the MRG and LRG. These changes will be incorporated into the official model at a later date.

Delbert Humberson (USIBWC) asked for more information about the expansion into Juarez. USACE replied that they are looking to expand groundwater and surface water aspects of the model. USIBWC and USACE will follow up offline to discuss how the agencies could work together on this aspect.

CADSWES reports a new aquifer object to simulate deep saturated groundwater flow, it connects in 6 directions and can solve at any timestep. This update removed the need to run a separate MODFLOW model to handle deep groundwater interactions. There have been some quality of life upgrades as well, which include color coded Riverware Policy Language (RPL) warning statements and a search function within the object list. These updates will eventually be rolled out for all RiverWare users.

In FY21, USACE plans to continue development of the deep aquifer objects in URGWOM, further develop the Hudspeth portion of the model, refine MRG and LRG crop types/consumptive uses, and recalibrate diversion constants with lower Rio Chama data.

On the public website, the official URGWOM documentation will be undergoing a redesign to improve access and understanding for the program:

<https://www.spa.usace.army.mil/Missions/Civil-Works/URGWOM>

Further questions can be directed to:

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URGWOM Program Manager
USACE Albuquerque District
(505) 342-3352
Phillip.d.carrillo@usace.army.mil

3) Rincon Subbasins 319 Project and the Hatch and Mesilla Valley Watershed Plan – Connie Maxwell

Connie provided an overview of four recently funded projects in the Paso del Norte area. Two of the projects address the region of Hatch and Mesilla Valley, and the other two the priority project of the Rincon Arroyo watershed.

The first project, funded by Reclamation's WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program, is titled *The Stormwater Coalition of Southern New Mexico: Furthering Watershed Restoration Planning and Project Design for the hatch and Mesilla Valley – "Keeping the water and the soil on the watershed"*. This project is funded by a \$100,000 grant for two years (\$50,000/year). The goal is to develop a community-based comprehensive watershed plan and 5-10 priority projects, with a current focus on convening a Technical and Stakeholder Task Force to build the foundations for plans and wide participation for workshops. The Stormwater Coalition is the funding recipient, but they are partnering with the Jornada Resource Conservation & Development Council as their fiscal agent, the New Mexico Water Resources Research Institute, the Doña Ana County Flood Commission, Elephant Butte Irrigation District, and the Alamosa Land Institute.

The second project, directed and funded through the NRCS's Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Program, is titled *Rincon Arroyo Watershed Stabilization Project*. This project is in the planning phase and involves \$450,000 to an NRCS consultant for planning. The project is sponsored by Doña Ana County, and includes partnerships with the Bureau of Land Management, Elephant Butte Irrigation District, New Mexico Water Resources and Research Institute, and the Caballo Soil and Water Conservation District. The NRCS hopes to complete the plan within two years, and the sponsor's and partners' goal is to create a watershed plan that addresses the root cause of flooding that overwhelms flood control infrastructure, and vegetation loss in the uplands results in erosion that clogs downstream riparian areas. The idea is to use small-scale flood control measures due to the Rincon Arroyo watershed being sub-optimal for dam placement.

The third project, funded by the New Mexico Environment Department through EPA 319 funds, is titled *Rincon Subbasins 319 Project*. This project is a three-year grant with \$397,052 of funding and a \$264,701 match. The goal is to implement a watershed restoration plan with the primary objective of reducing transport of sediment/*E. coli* to the impaired reach of the Rio Grande through small, low impact approaches. The lead is New Mexico Water Resources Research Institute with partnerships with the Doña Ana County Flood Commission, Elephant Butte Irrigation District, Bureau of Land Management, and the Caballo Soil and Water Conservation District.

The fourth project, funded by Reclamation's WaterSMART Drought Program, is titled *EBID Drought Resiliency Priority Projects: Watershed-scale Stormwater Monitoring and Capture*. This project is a 2-year project with up to \$300,000 funding from Reclamation (with a 50% required match). The goal is to increase reliability of water supplies through infrastructure improvements, and to improve water management using decision support tools, modeling, and measurement. The team involves Elephant Butte Irrigation District as the lead with New Mexico Water Resources Research Institute working on the decision support tool.

The first three projects all kicked off in September, but the fourth project hasn't started yet. During discussion, Gill Sorg thanked Connie and stated that he's excited about these long-standing ideas finally coming into fruition. Katie Goetz asked for more details on small scale flood prevention measures. Connie replied that the basic approach is to slow the water down with porous structures before it reaches the arroyo, and therefore reduce sediment transport. Ways to slow the water include use of small rock dams no more than 10" tall and use of brush. Delbert Humberson asked about strategies to combat sedimentation that could affect the effectiveness of these small structures. Connie mentioned sedimentation isn't necessarily a negative for this approach. She showed examples from other parts of the world, and the sedimentation behind the structures spurred vegetative growth which further helps with slowing the water down. Gill Sorg mentioned that we see similar structures installed by the CCC around Doña Ana County, and Connie Maxwell further elaborated that this micro-catchment concept is applied across the world.

Discussion ended with enthusiastic congratulations from the Council to Connie Maxwell on earning her doctorate!

4) Election of Executive Council Members – Delbert Humberson

There have been two new additions to the Council since the last meeting in September: Alex Mayer and Mariana Lopez.

Alex Mayer, director of UTEP's Center for Environmental Resource Management (CERM), was approved for membership by the PdNWC Executive Committee through email vote.

Alex Mayer has been involved with CERM and Texas A&M Agrilife on many water scarcity projects in the past, and the Paso del Norte area grew on him so he applied when a UTEP position became available. His expertise is water systems analysis and hydrology, and his past involvement with watershed groups and securing funding for those projects will be beneficial for the PdNWC.

Mariana Lopez is the U.S. Geological Survey's new employee in El Paso. She graduated with a geology degree from UTEP and has been involved in groundwater projects in White Sands. A motion was made and approved to add Mariana Lopez to the PdNWC Technical Committee.

Regarding the PdNWC Chair position, Gill Sorg has volunteered to continue serving as co-chair with Conrad Keyes. Further discussion after the meeting resulted in Gill Sorg serving as Chair and Conrad Keyes as Assistant Chair according to the PdNWC Bylaws, and no objections were raised by Council members when prompted by email.

5) Reports by PdNWC Committees

- a. Technical Committee – Chairs were not present to report updates.
- b. Environmental Committee – Liz Verdecchia noted that USIBWC's revised draft of the aquatic habitat environmental assessment has been delayed. It likely will not be out for public comment until after the new year, and she will let the Council know once it's available and the notice is published in the Federal Register.
- c. Website Committee – Chris Brown informed the Council that the instability in the PdNWC website for the last couple of months is a result of the site being tucked away behind the firewall to improve security. Chris is working with their IT to fix the website, and it is now stable but there are some

compliance issues with NMSU's web policy. Currently Chris is working with Zhuping Sheng and Delbert Humberson to improve the website so that it meets NMSU criteria. One benefit of this work is that it will result in the cleanup of broken links and stale content that inevitably results on a 20-year-old website. This effort will be ongoing for the next couple of months. Katie Goetz will continue to be the conduit for web updates while Liz continues serving as Co-Chair. The committee asks that all request for edits and updates be channeled through Katie Goetz.

6) PdNWC Draft 2021-2024 Strategic Plan

- a. No changes were suggested to the strategic plan. Revisions were last done December 2018, and a motion was made and approved to reaffirm the strategic plan as is.

Chris Brown thanked everyone for the good meeting turnout, especially during these times, and Gill Sorg seconded the comment.

7) Adjournment

Gill Sorg made the motion to adjourn at 11:20