



**Minutes of the
Westside Creeks Restoration Oversight Committee (WCROC) Meeting
December 11, 2012**

The meeting was called to order at 6:05 pm in the San Antonio River Authority's Boardroom, 100 East Guenther Street, San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas.

Committee Members Present:

Olga Lizcano, Co-Chair
Lourdes Galvan, West SA Chamber
Abigail Kinnison, Beacon Hill NA
Rod Radle, San Antonio Alternative Housing

Robert Ramirez, Co-Chair
Abel Ramirez, San Antonio Wheelman
Gabriel Velasquez, Avenida Guadalupe

Elected Officials Present:

Mr. Roberto G. Rodríguez, San Antonio River Authority Board Director, District 2

Staff and Members of the Public Present:

Rudy R. Farias, SARA
Rosemary Geyer
Jerry Geyer
Dr. Garri Dryden
Gloria Rivera Rodriguez, SARA
Andi Rodriguez, Kell Muñoz
Danny Allen, US Army Corps of Engineers
(Teleconference)
Mark Judson, Stock Yards Commercial
Properties

Suzanne B. Scott, SARA
Shiva Sandrana, Bexar County
Linda Whitaker, SARA
Steve Tillotson, Kell Muñoz
Brice Moczygamba, Pape Dawson
Claude Harding, SARA
Russell Persyn, SARA
David D. Garza, COSA
Susan Powers, Lone Star H.A.
Theresa Gold, Bexar Co. Historical Commission

AGENDA ITEM NO. 1: Welcome

Ms. Olga Lizcano and Mr. Robert Ramirez welcomed everyone. Mr. Roberto Rodríguez thanked everyone for being there and recognized Ms. Suzanne Scott, General Manager of the San Antonio River Authority.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 2: Approval of Minutes for October 9, 2012

Ms. Lizcano presented the minutes to the Committee and asked if there were any corrections. After Mr. Ramirez mentioned two minor corrections, the minutes were approved as presented.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 3: Update on US Army Corps of Engineers Feasibility Study

Ms. Lizcano introduced Mr. Danny Allen, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE). Mr. Allen reported that a meeting was held with the vertical team (USACE Fort Worth District, Dallas Region, and Washington D.C. Headquarters and SARA) via telephone the week after Thanksgiving where they proposed their plan alternatives to go forward. Originally, the selection of a recommended plan was scheduled for tomorrow but had to be rescheduled due to Headquarters request for additional information in the summary report. The level of documentation requested caused tomorrow's planned meeting to be rescheduled to a later date. This documentation should be finished by this week or early next week and submitted to them; however the meeting will have to be rescheduled until after the holiday season.

Ms. Lizcano thanked Mr. Allen and asked if there were any questions.

Mr. Ramirez asked Mr. Allen to elaborate on the requested additional information.

Mr. Allen explained headquarters wanted more justification for the cost of constructing pilot channels versus the cost of stopping at the addition of riparian meadows. Headquarters wanted the pilot channel's justification tied back to the Avian Index of Biotic Integrity (IBI) model.

In order to rewrite the justification and have it reviewed by the project team, more time was needed.

Mr. Rodríguez thanked Mr. Allen for the Corps interest, participation and studies regarding the WSC project. He said the committee is very excited about the progress and is looking forward to the core's involvement next year.

Ms. Lizcano thanked Mr. Danny Allen and asked if there were any additional comments. Since there were none, she introduced Mr. Brice Moczygemba.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 4: Update on San Pedro Creek Preliminary Engineering Report

Mr. Moczygemba thanked Mr. Ramirez, Ms. Lizcano and Mr. Rodríguez for having them tonight. Mr. Moczygemba handed out the Project Status Briefing which summarized the progress made since October 9.

He reminded everyone that the purpose of the project is to develop a preliminary engineering report that identifies the feasibility of designing and constructing the project.

Mr. Moczygemba described the surveying conducted by Poznecki-Camarillo. Poznecki-Camarillo has established project survey controls, detailed bridge sections and clearances, channel cross sections and field cross sections. Other survey work being conducted is right-of-way (ROW) and easement research.

SEA completed a Structural Evaluation Preliminary Report based upon an evaluation of 17 bridges, 2 culverts and 6 typical channel sections. The preliminary report is being reviewed and the final report is due by the end of December.

Data collection and field mapping on all of the utilities has been completed. The primary utilities are: AT&T, CPS, Grande Communications, SAWS, Time Warner Cable, Verizon, and COSA storm drainage.

The Geotechnical Desktop Study by Raba Kistner is complete. The desktop study consists of 13 past Raba projects within one to two blocks of San Pedro Creek.

The Phase I Environmental Site Assessment (ESA) by Pape Dawson is complete. The field investigation and database review are complete and the draft report is under final review.

Pape Dawson completed the Endangered Species Assessment. The site does not appear to contain habitat that would be regularly occupied by any federally-listed threatened or endangered species and there does not appear to be any potential impacts to federally-listed threatened or endangered species, candidate species, and species under review are anticipated as a result of activity occurring on the referenced site.

The existing conditions Hydrology and Hydraulic Study is completed. Detailed cross sections & measurements of the channel were taken. The model was remodeled re-establishing the existing channel conditions for evaluation to determine what modifications can be made to the channel. The water recirculating system is being evaluated to determine if it needs to be retrofitted and the amount of water needed for recirculation is also being evaluated. Water Recirculation Evaluation and Retrofit report of engineering findings is due mid-January.

In compliance with Section 106 Evaluation of Texas Antiquities Code, Raba Kistner's field survey investigations are underway and have consisted of shovel testing and trench testing with backhoe. They are waiting on a few right-of-entries to test on private property. A draft Texas Historical Commission (THC) report will be written in December, reviewed by THC, Bexar County, SARA, City of San Antonio Historic Preservation Officer, with a final draft submitted mid-February.

Mr. Moczygemba introduced Mr. Steve Tillotson to discuss the project's design.

Mr. Tillotson proceeded to sum up the historical portion of the project. He had photographs of the walls to be included in the documentation for the THC report. He said almost the entire hard infrastructure for San Pedro Creek was built before WWII so because of the age of it, it statutorily comes under review by the THC to see if there is anything that would be eligible for listing and if it is deemed eligible what would the mitigation process be if it had to be removed.

Mr. Tillotson then described the design portion of the project as supporting the engineering results with illustrations on project opportunities.

Mr. Tillotson presented diagrams showing various placements of walking paths in relation to the creek. He described the scenarios which illustrated interaction with the creek at top of bank as well as near the physical water. The challenges are with the conveyance of flood waters and bridge clearances. Additional work is being evaluated to better understand what the cost implications are and what kind of environment can be produced.

Mr. Tillotson asked Mr. Moczygemba if he had anything else to add. Mr. Moczygemba pointed out the future project meeting schedule. He noted that the next meeting will be February 12 at SARA. The future meetings are scheduled as follows:

WCROC briefing December 11, Executive Committee Briefing in January, San Pedro Creek Subcommittee Briefing February 7; WCROC Briefing February 12; SARA Project Managers Go/No Go Meeting February 18; Executive Committee Briefing March 7, Bexar County Commissioners Court Go/No Go Presentation in March, more than likely late March, Executive Committee briefing March 27

Mr. Moczygemba stated that the goal is to meet with Bexar County Commissioner Court in March however the exact date is not set. The purpose of the meeting is to provide them with a go/no go update regarding what they have found and what they have come up with.

Mr. Rodríguez asked if all of the endangered species were listed on the endangered species assessment. Mr. Moczygemba responded that they have looked at the potential downstream impact and have gone through the listed species and some that are potentially listed. Mr. Rodríguez said the species on the list that he remembered were the golden-cheeked warbler and black-capped vireo. Mr. Rodríguez asked about the karst-dwelling invertebrates. Mr. Moczygemba said that karst-dwelling invertebrates are basically cave spiders, typically found in caves. There are none in the project area.

Mr. Rodríguez asked how does the ownership of the bed and banks of the creek and river by the San Antonio River Authority play into the studies of the creek channel and the possible discovery of Native American treasures. Mrs. Scott said in the actual downtown area within the original city limits of San Antonio that the city of San Antonio and private owners at the time retained the ownership before the existence of the River Authority. SARA's ownership is outside of what they define as the original city limits at the time when the state of Texas gave SARA the ownership of the bed and banks of the rivers and tributaries.

Ms. Lizcano asked how trenching on private property affected the project. Mr. Moczygemba said they are attempting to acquire the right of entry to private properties to allow trenching since protocol calls for trenching within so many feet of project. If the property owner absolutely refuses to let us go onto the property then they will note that in the report and just move forward with the state.

Ms. Lizcano asked if that would affect the design in any way. Mr. Moczygemba said he couldn't speak specifically on the behalf of this project but his experience has been that he had to realign a project because of archeological findings. Also as a requirement of their permit with the THC, they had to write into their specifications the presence of an archeological observer during construction. He said he believed similar conditions existed on this project. Mr. Moczygemba said the key is to properly identify that in the construction documents and specifications so that there are no surprises causing a huge change-order.

Mr. Ramirez asked Mr. Moczygemba about the go/no go at the March Commissioners Court. He wanted to know if county staff will be making the formal recommendation or was the burden of persuasion entirely on the committee? Mr. Moczygemba responded that there have not been discussions regarding who would make the recommendation to Commissioners Court.

Mr. Russell Persyn said they will brief staff and have committee input by March and believe that the leadership at the county would probably do some individual briefings of their leadership in advance of the Commissioners Court meeting.

Mrs. Scott said the county staff would have to make a recommendation and their recommendation would ultimately determine where they go next and how much it would cost and how much funding they would have available to support the next phase.

Mr. Ramirez said he assumed that the Phase 1 ESA work had been done from an environmental standpoint primarily on research and Mr. Moczygemba answered that was correct. Mr. Ramirez asked when the report would be ready concerning this and Mr. Moczygemba answered at the next meeting. Mr. Ramirez asked if they anticipate having to obtain any borings or test results because of the report and Mr. Moczygemba answered yes. Mr. Ramirez asked if it was very expensive and Mr. Moczygemba answered that they don't know the exact cost. He said they are going to have discussions this Friday with SARA staff and a full report will be available at the next meeting.

Ms. Lizcano asked if anyone had any questions.

Ms. Kinnison asked of the bridges rated fair to poor, who is responsible for bring them up to TXDOT standards and once the project moves into implementation, could project funds be used to rehabilitate the bridges. Mr. Moczygemba answered that filed documents, particularly on the abandoned bridges, may determine ownership and yes, Mr. Moczygemba thought funds from the project could be leveraged to bring poor rated bridges up to standard.

Ms. Lizcano thanked the committee and asked if there were any other comments.

Mr. Rudy Farias briefed on the establishment of the San Pedro Creek Subcommittee based upon input from the Executive Committee. Jerry Geyer and Michael Cortez are the subcommittee co-chairs. Organizations that have agreed to serve on the subcommittee included Bexar County Historical Commission, San Antonio Conservation Society, Alameda Theatre, Lone Star Neighborhood Association, The Vistana, Marty's, General Services Administration, Marriott Courtyard, Saldana and Associates, and Judson Lofts. There are three other entities that have been contacted and responses are pending.

Ms. Lizcano asked how many are there in total? Mr. Farias said there will be 15 members; 13 organizations plus the two co-chairs. Ms. Lizcano asked if the board could be provided with these names and Mr. Farias said he would.

Ms. Lizcano asked if there were any other questions.

Mr. Ramirez commended Mr. Geyer for his constant push for San Pedro Creek and Mr. Tillotson for being a believer and for his helpful presentation.

Mr. David Garza with the City of San Antonio thanked Ms. Scott and the consultants for a successful meeting and stated the City of San Antonio is ready to be their partner in this project.

Ms. Lizcano asked Mr. Jerry Geyer for a few comments.

Mr. Geyer said the San Pedro Creek subcommittee is not fully assembled, however they now have the second co-chair identified and accepted. They also have 10 of the 13 stakeholders and will contact them and set up an orientation so that all stakeholders are at the same level of knowledge about this project. This meeting will probably be led by Mr. Tillotson.

In January the subcommittee will have their orientation meeting and the first subcommittee meeting is scheduled for February 7, 2013, when it is anticipated the public will have an opportunity to review the project.

Mr. Geyer complimented the San Antonio River Authority staff and the diligence that has been applied by SARA, the city and the county at this point. He complimented the staff and contractors for achieving so many items in a fairly short period of time.

Mr. Rodríguez commended Ms. Scott for her belief in the vision for the Westside Creeks. He said he would like to have an open house in the future with an exhibit of historical pictures so the public can see what the River Authority is all about.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 5: Citizen to be Heard.

Mr. Ramirez called for citizens to be heard. Hearing none, Mr. Ramirez moved to item 6.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 6: Miscellaneous Items.

Mr. Ramirez called on Mr. Farias for an update on Elmendorf Lake Park.

Mr. Farias reported to the oversight committee that eight consulting firms submitted proposals, and three were selected for interviews. Following the interviews, Terra Design Group was selected. Currently, SARA and the consultant are negotiating the project scope and fee. It is anticipated Terra Design will be under contract in late December or early January.

One of the first items will be to host a charette for Elmendorf Lake Park. It is anticipated that there will be three community meetings, one in February, one in March, and the last one in late April or early May, however this is still being negotiated. The hike and bike trails are part of this same contract and the trails have been broken up into segments 1A and 1B. Segment 1A is the Apache Creek from Elmendorf Lake to the confluence with San Pedro Creek, and onto the confluence with the San Antonio River. Segment 1B is both the Alazan and Martinez Creeks because these trail segments are in close proximity. On Martinez Creek, the trail would start at Fredericksburg Road and end at Cincinnati, and on Alazan Creek, the trail would start below Woodlawn Lake Park at Josephine Tobin and extend to Lombrano Street. Instead of having design charrettes for the trails, there will be two public meetings. An initial meeting is to introduce the trails and show some preliminary designs, with a follow-up meeting to share the final design.

Mr. Ramirez asked if the intent was to get the subcommittee for those creeks moving again.

Mrs. Scott asked the committee if they wanted informal subcommittees like they had during the concept plan or did the committee want to have structured subcommittees for the other creeks. Right now, other than the Elmendorf Lake Park, it's a trail alignment which is pretty limited in the alternative because the ROW is limited. Therefore, the opportunities for input will probably not be as significant as it is for San Pedro Creek or Elmendorf Lake Park, but SARA can proceed based upon the Committee's recommendation.

Mr. Ramirez asked if they could explore that before the next meeting and perhaps contact the subcommittee chairs to get their thinking on that as well.

Ms. Kinnison asked if Terra Design Group will be on board for the public meetings in the spring or are they already on board. Mr. Farias said that they are negotiating the contract and hope to have an executed agreement by the end of this month or early January. Based upon an executed agreement occurring soon, meetings could possibly occur as early as February.

Ms. Kinnison said she believed from the Martinez Creek standpoint, the time for input is during the charrette. She agreed with Mrs. Scott that there may not be a lot of input due to limited ROW but definitely wanted to keep the community engaged.

Mr. Ramirez said Martinez Creek has a very active and vocal subcommittee.

Mr. Farias said the charettes would focus on Elmendorf Lake Park and the public meetings would be specific to trail segments 1A and 1B.

Ms. Galvan said there was a lot of input from people and the subcommittee during many meetings at Our Lady of the Lake University and the charettes. She asked if there will be another public meeting.

Mr. Farias said the Westside Creeks Restoration Conceptual Plan would serve as the starting point. There were three community charettes, and input received from each creek subcommittee as well as the oversight committee. The conceptual plan was approved by the SARA Board of Directors in June 2011. Following the approval of the Conceptual Plan, there was a pending bond election which required better cost estimates and greater detail for Elmendorf Lake Park. That led to the concept for Elmendorf Lake Park, which again was largely based upon the Westside Creeks Restoration Conceptual Plan, input from Our Lady of the Lake, City of San Antonio, Bexar County, and SARA. That plan was first shared at a public meeting at Our Lady of the Lake University which was very well attended. The Elmendorf Lake Park Concept will serve as a foundation in the next design charrette and will be refined based upon public input received. Based upon the shared vision, the park will enter a design phase followed by construction. Construction will have to be phased because the initial estimate in the concept is \$20 million. Currently, \$7.5 million has been allocated for design and construction for Elmendorf Lake Park.

Ms. Galvan said that after all the discussions and public input is received, can a timeline be created? Mr. Farias replied yes, a timeline will be developed as soon as the consultants are fully onboard with an executed agreement.

Following the Elmendorf Lake Park discussion, Mr. Ramirez announced there would be a kick-off event on Saturday, for a national registered landmark on the Westside at the Esperanza Peace and Justice Center, 922 San Pedro, across the street from VIA.

Mr. Ramirez asked if there was anything else under miscellaneous.

Ms. Kinnison announced February 23 is the annual Basura Bash. Ms. Kinnison is the tributary chairman for the cleanup of Martinez Creek. The boundaries encompass the trail segment from Fredericksburg Road the Oak Farms side and downstream to Sabinas. So if you are interested in volunteering Saturday morning the 23 of February, from 8:00 to 11:00, there will be breakfast tacos before the event and bags and gloves will be provided.

Ms. Lizcano asked if the committee was going to discuss today or at another time about the makeup of the committee. She requested that they revisit the makeup of the committee.

Mr. Ramirez said it is an ongoing discussion. He said he talked to Mr. Farias about that before the meeting. He said they have a list of 24 entities that were approved by the board and they have first shot at any vacancies on the committee. Then they will take whatever other entities that would be interested and they would also have to be approved by the SARA Board of Directors. It is an item Mr. Farias and I are working on

Ms. Lizcano requested that they consider a representative from the monument committee on this committee.

Mr. Ramirez said it had been noted. The interest of the monument committee at Elmendorf Lake is interested on being on this committee. Mr. Ramirez asked if there was anything else.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 7: Next Meeting.

Mr. Ramirez announced the next meeting will be Tuesday, February 12, 2013.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 8: Adjourn.

Since there were no other comments or statements, the meeting was adjourned at 6:55pm.