

GROUNDWATER RESEARCH SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING RECORD

TIME AND DATE:

3:00 PM, August 7, 2003

LOCATION:

Texas Commission on Environmental Quality Campus, Bldg. B Room B201A, 12100 Park 35 Circle, Austin, TX 78753

PURPOSE OF MEETING:

Regular business meeting

AGENCIES REPRESENTED:

Bureau of Economic Geology [BEG]
Lower Colorado River Authority [LCRA]
Texas Commission on Environmental Quality [TCEQ]
Texas Department of Agriculture [TDA]
Texas Department of Health [TDH]
Texas State Soil & Water Conservation Board [TSSWCB]
Texas Water Development Board [TWDB]
Texas Water Resources Institute [TWRI]
United States Geological Survey [USGS]

ATTENDEES:

Bridget Scanlon	BEG, Co-chair of the GW Research Subcommittee of the TGPC
Dr. Allan Jones	TWRI, Co-chair of the GW Research Subcommittee
Mary Ambrose	TCEQ, Chairman of TGPC
Alan Cherepon	TCEQ
Lynne Fahlquist	USGS
Steve Musick	TCEQ
Ken Ofunrein	TDH
Jeanette O'Hare	TDA
David Parmer	TCEQ
Joseph L. Peters	TCEQ
Shirley Wade	TWDB
Kevin Wagner	TSSWCB
Mary Etter	LCRA

MEETING SUMMARY:

Dr. Scanlon, Co-chair, in her introductory remarks, summarized the Groundwater Research Subcommittee's goal to produce a document that describes the procedures which we will be using in the Subcommittee. The initial charge to the subcommittee is to create an action plan, or procedures document that will guide the Subcommittee's activities in promoting groundwater

research. In the past there has been no formal mechanism to link the various agencies and entities that need research performed with other agencies or entities that can perform the research. The ultimate charge of the Groundwater Research Subcommittee will be to use the procedures document as a guide in identifying interagency research needs and facilitate a linking to identified corresponding funding sources. It was determined that while there is a surfeit of research needs there will always be a paucity of funding sources.

Dr. Jones, Co-chair, in continuing the opening remarks, expressed his opinion that the development of this process, in the action plan/procedures document, that links researchers with those who need research – universities with the appropriate potential funding sources, will be a big step over present practice. We will be able to institutionalize these important connections.

Ms. Ambrose reiterated that it would be very helpful if we could establish this procedure. She also brought up the need of establishing a procedure for notifying research entities of potential funding opportunities. Dr. Scanlon asked whether we could post this type of information on the Texas Groundwater Protection Committee's (TGPC) website. Ms. Ambrose responded that it would probably be possible, perhaps with links to corresponding Requests for Proposals (RFPs). Dr. Jones offered that the email news letter, *WaterTalk*, could be used as an avenue of communication as well. It is already a frequent practice to send out RFP information through *WaterTalk*.

The problem of excessive email was mentioned. Because of this some people may prefer that the announcements or information be placed on the website, and interested individuals could go there and see what's available. Ms. Fahlquist reminded us that *WaterTalk* is for subscribers. If you don't subscribe you will not receive it.

Mr. Musick expressed his opinion that it is important to make a commitment to identify a significant or important set of RFPs and put them on the website, so that the subcommittee members and other interested parties can access them. There should be a centralized priority list of research needs and funding sources. As a process the subcommittee could, at a quarterly meeting or through a monthly email exchange, announce recent occurrences of research needs and funding sources and the secretary of the subcommittee could put it on the website.

Dr. Jones described a TWRI approach of pursuing projects. It's a little different than the usual approach of working through competitive grants. What TWRI has found to be very productive is to work with federal agencies to increase their appropriations from Congress to fund projects. TWRI helps them to secure these additional funds which are then passed through the federal agency, such as ARS, to state agencies or universities. This type of approach of securing funds requires having a couple of research organizations or universities seriously sit down and commit to spending a year or two working together with Congress or the State Legislature, or with agency personnel at a high level. To make this work you need a recognized problem to solve, so that you can make the case to the people that have the resources. A strong argument could be made for the Texas A&M Agricultural System and the University of Texas System working together on groundwater, especially if they can work with the USGS. In this way we can get the federal-state connection and two universities working together, which is very appealing to the Legislators. TWRI has had experience pulling together these types of approaches in a wide

variety of situations.

Problems in the High Plains – West Texas together with New Mexico or Kansas – are considered important right now. Projects such as developing policies and technologies to reduce pumping and promote conversion to dry-land agriculture should have a good chance of garnering interest. In West Texas there are also opportunities in desalinization, use of brackish groundwater for communities, removal of radio nuclides, removal of arsenic and other constituents, and removal of salt cedar.

Ms. Ambrose suggested that another important research topic would be the problem of how atrazine is getting into the groundwater in the Panhandle. Some of the other High Plains States, which have even worse atrazine problems, should also be interested in this. Ms. Fahlquist described some studies that the USGS did in this area, but they were far from exhaustive.

Dr. Scanlon described a recent project by the TWDB to enhance recharge from playa lakes. The study includes monitoring what chemicals go into the playas.

At this point in the meeting there was discussion on the development of white papers on research needs and how this would fit into the process. It was the general consensus that white papers would be useful but that they should be kept to one or two pages.

Dr. Scanlon asked if the agencies have identified their research needs. Ms. Ambrose responded that a definite list has not come to fruition. Dr. Scanlon suggested that it would be good for the agencies to work-up their research needs and prioritize them. Ms. Fahlquist suggested that the *Groundwater Protection Strategy* already identified many of the needs. Even so, Dr. Scanlon, suggested that it wouldn't hurt the agencies to go through the process of identifying their research needs. It would get them to thinking and they could prioritize their needs.

The need for long term baseline monitoring was discussed. The difficulty of getting funding for long term data collection was pointed out. The USGS gets funds to do this type of monitoring but even their funding is drying up.

It was also pointed out that the river authorities had a lot of research needs and some available funding and that partnering with them in research projects would be of mutual benefit.

Some discussion returned to the need of identifying common research needs among the agencies. Combined projects have a greater chance of securing funding.

Dr. Scanlon reiterated the Subcommittee's need to develop the operating procedure document. A draft should be developed and sent around for comment. After revision it should be circulated again and finalized. The document does not need any details on research needs or funding, just the procedures of how they will be identified and how connections will be accomplished. It was decided that a draft of procedure document should be completed by the next meeting. It was also decided that a document identifying specific agency research needs should be completed by September 15th.

Ms. Falquest, before the meeting ended, wanted to introduce some USGS documents that she thought may be of interest to the Subcommittee members.

1. Strategy Directions for the U. S. Geological Survey Ground-Water Resources Program – Report to Congress, 1998.
2. Circular 1217, Ground-Water Level Monitoring and the Importance of Long Term Water Level Data.
3. Circular 1186, Single Resource – Sustainability of Ground-Water Resources.
4. Circular 1139, Ground Water and Surface Water

The Subcommittee members decided that subsequent meetings should always be held on the same day as the TGPC meeting. In the final comment, Dr. Scanlon reiterated with Dr. Jones that the two of them will work on the procedures document and sent it around to everybody for review.