

## **Tijuana River Valley Recovery Team**

Policy Committee Meeting

April 24, 2009

10:00 a.m. - Noon

San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board Conference Room

9174 Sky Park Court, Suite 100

San Diego, CA. 92123-4340

### **DRAFT MEETING NOTES**

#### **1. All were welcomed.**

#### **2. Introductions.**

- a. In attendance were, Tracy Cline (County of San Diego for Cid Tesoro), Steve Smullen (IBWC), Mike McCann (SDRWQCB), Clay Phillips (California State Parks), Oscar Romo (NOAA), Kris McFadden and David Wells (City of San Diego for Tony Heinrichs), and Carl Nettleton (Nettleton Strategies).
- b. Karen Bane from the California Coastal Conservancy joined the committee to provide background on an agenda item regarding the Recovery Team's future structure.
- c. Also in attendance were Bart Christiansen (State Water Resources Control Board) and members of the public Carolyn Powers (C.A.R.E.), Daniel Tynan, and Alberto Pombo (Colegio del Frontera Norte).

#### **3. Updates.**

- a. NOAA grants were briefly discussed. David Wells was thanked for his efforts to oversee the URS work to submit the grant (despite having to delay his vacation to do so). It is believe a decision will be made by early May. (Grant applications for this and others will be posted on the web site).
- b. Assemblymember Mary Salas has introduced legislation that would create a Tijuana River Valley Conservancy. The legislation was submitted as a spot bill in the event that the Recovery Team wished to formalize itself in that way. No decision has been made on the ultimate structure of the Recovery Team.
- c. The \$700,000 Cleanup and Abatement Grant application to the State Water Resources Control Board will be heard at the May meeting. Mike McCann will likely travel to Sacramento to support the bill and thought it would be helpful if Cid Tesoro from the County joined him. The funding will be utilized through the County.
- d. Border Action Team (Smullen, McFadden, Wells). Primary activities lately were completing the NOAA grant process. The City has applied for an EPA grant to do a feasibility study of concepts for the trash capturing devices.
- e. Cleanup Action Team (McCann, Cline) The URS characterization study is moving forward and should be completed by June. A map of historical channels has been produced and a map of sites where trash has been

found is also coming together. Right-of-entry permits from the County are being applied for. The County is paying for them.

- f. Restoration Action Team (Phillips). The grant to complete the beach sediment study is now moving back on track after being delayed by the state bonding freeze. Unfortunately, the baseline for the project had already been started. When funding froze the team was demobilized. Now the project has to be started again and the permit process has to be redone. The delay requires another \$500,000 to repeat the lost work. The EPA Estuary Grant process has not given the green light to fund yet, expected in two weeks. Sarah Emerson is leaving the Reserve to go back to school and will be a great loss both to estuary projects and the Recovery Team.
- g. Binational Committee (Romo). The committee has invited several Mexican/binational agencies to become part of the Recovery Team, including the National Water Commission, Border Environmental Cooperation Commission, State Water Board, and others. The first Los Laureles Canyon public advisory committee meeting will be held in May and there is hope this may become an advisory committee for the Tijuana River where it flows in Mexico. The committee is also working to arrange a meeting between some of the Mexican agencies and the Policy Committee, perhaps sometime in late May or June. The EPA has funding for translation services.

#### **4. Project List Discussions.**

- a. A primary need to move forward with completing an overall concept for the Recovery Team is the completion of the list describing each project that will be needed to move forward. A draft list was circulated for comments and a draft format for a one-page description of each project was provided. Discussion followed. Changes were made to the list so that it only included action projects (not necessarily staffing grants or other peripheral funding).
- b. Additional projects were added. Clay will provide the appropriate projects to be listed from the SWIA EPA Estuary Grant. Oscar will provide a list of projects that Mexican agencies are doing or considering. Part of the meeting with Mexican agencies will include a briefing on their plans for related projects on the Mexican side of the border. They include sedimentation basins, characterization studies, recycling redemption programs, and other trash and sediment related projects. At the next full meeting of the Recovery Team, he will make a presentation with maps, etc. Any projects should be forwarded to Carl for inclusion in the data base.

#### **5. Other pending grant opportunities.**

- a. Due to time, this item was tabled. A draft list of opportunities was presented for review by the committee. Tracy noted that Army Corps of Engineers funding should be added to the list.

#### **6. Discussion of Structure.**

- a. A very spirited discussion of structure took place. A short list of guiding thoughts was used. The pros and cons of a conservancy were discussed.

And some overall thoughts were recorded. Please see the attached sheet for details. This was the first discussion about structure. AB687 is a two-year spot bill by Assemblymember Mary Salas to create a Tijuana River Valley Conservancy. The group was assured this bill was initiated to be of service to the Recovery Team should a conservancy be an option. It will be a two-year bill that will be available pending any need for that kind of legislation. As can be seen by the attachment. Initial thoughts by the group were to move slowly regarding structure, focus on the work and fully defining the concept, and see what evolves.

#### **7. Old Business**

- a. The [www.tjriverteam.org](http://www.tjriverteam.org) web site will continue to grow. Attendees were encouraged to submit information about past and current projects, reports, etc. that would be helpful to informing the group and web site visitors.
- b. The “glossy brochure” will evolve to be the defining document. The one-page project descriptions will be helpful to developing that document.

#### **8. Other Business**

- a. Oscar asked to be able to make a presentation at the next full Recovery Team meeting about projects in Mexico. This will be added to the agenda.

#### **9. Public Comment.**

- a. Dick Tynan, Tijuana River Valley resident, asked why permits were so hard to get for the City to clean out the channels. Kris advised him that a programmatic permit was nearing completion that would be good for five years and would be renewed at the end of that time.
- b. Alberto Pombo, Tijuana resident, advised that structurally it would be important to have the Recovery Team composed of organizations rather than just people, because with buy-in from organizations it will last. If it is based on people, then it will have less resiliency.
- c. Carolyn Powers, with C.A.R.E., suggested that equestrian uses be listed. She was advised that all uses were addressed in the Recovery Team’s vision. She also stated she would like the Recovery Team to be a partnership, perhaps with an MOU, and that the co-chair position be formalized.

#### **10. Next Meeting.**

- a. The next meeting will be held on May 29, 2009, at 10 a.m.

#### **11. Adjourn.**

- a. The meeting was adjourned at approximately 12:30 p.m.

## The Structure of the Tijuana River Valley Recovery Team

### Some Initial Guiding Thoughts

1. Will the structure bring us together and keep us together?
2. Does it need to be a fiscal agent?
3. Will it achieve completion of the action items/capital projects/operation and maintenance?

### The Conservancy Option

#### Pro

Provides a direct way to obtain state money

#### Cons

- Only funds capital projects
- Requires much time and energy for setup, which could detract from the work product
- Its only a funding entity, not really a force for creating a community of agencies
- The California Coastal Conservancy can fund and do what a site-specific Tijuana River Valley Conservancy could do

### Overall Thoughts

1. The complete scope of the Recovery Team's work is not fully developed yet
  - a. Take a comprehensive look at your plans (in concept)
  - b. Finish identifying what you need to do before determining your structure.
2. The energy to develop a significant structure will take away from the work
3. Keep it simple. Three simpler alternatives are:
  - a. A memorandum of understanding (MOU)
  - b. A simple letter of agreement
  - c. An individual letter from each agency
  - d. Any of these could contain language along the lines of "recognizing that the alternative to participating in the Recovery Team could mean . . . (cleanup and abatement orders, etc.)"
4. In the end, the part that might most need structure is some kind of interagency agreement to fund and conduct operation and maintenance of the improvements made. That could be an MOU or a Joint Powers Authority (JPA)
5. Having a less formal structure might work better for binational funding
6. Letting this evolve might be a better way to do it