

BRAZOS RIVER CONSERVATION COALITION HOOD COUNTY CHAPTER NEWSLETTER

Issue No. 8

June 15, 2007

The June 12th BRCC Meeting

The chapter's June meeting brought to mind the adage that "an ounce of protection is worth a pound of cure". Bill O'Quin, Hood County District Conservationist for the USDA, gave a very informative talk about one of nature's self preservation methods, the Riparian Buffer. He explained that the area between the banks of any waterway and the "uplands" is the Riparian buffer zone. In its natural state this zone has unique topographical features, plant species and sediment deposits that tend to preserve it. The zone includes the flood plane. The native vegetation and sediment serve to reduce runoff and filter and purify the river water and bankside woody debris serves to reduce erosion by slowing the water flow and dissipating water energy. Once destroyed by natural catastrophe or human activity it can take decades or centuries to restore the natural balance. Damming, riverside commercial and residential development and upland development will negatively impact the Riparian buffer. The affects of these human necessities can be diminished by implementing appropriate reclamation plans.

The USDA programs Mr. O'Quin directs are large area land management programs not suited to residential lots, however, he said that he can assist groups of small land owners united in a reclamation effort. He said he wants to encourage anyone with land conservation issues to contact his office at 305 Western Hills Trails or phone 817-573-1666 ext. 3.

Upcoming July 10th Meeting

The July 10th open meeting of the Brazos River Conservation Coalition-Hood will feature a presentation by Denny Kleber, M.S., Robert Rodgers, CPG, PG, and Stonewall County Judge Bobby McGough, Col. USAF, Ret., on the Salt Fork Water Quality Project. The salt content of the Brazos River below the Salt Flats in Stonewall County is a problem effecting a variety of water use applications. The SFWQP seeks to remediate the problem by extracting the salt from the source springs at Dove Creek and Salt Croton Creek. This is expected to be a very informative presentation on a subject of vital interest to Granbury area residents. *This is a do not miss meeting.*

Since 1992 Denny Kleber, founder and president of Terra Associates, has served as subcontractor and contractor on several state projects developing applications for treatment of brackish ground water under the auspices of the Brownsville Navigation District, Texas Governor's Energy Office and the Texas Water Development Board.

Mr. Rodgers was a faculty member at the University of Texas-Pan American, Department of Physics and Geology. for thirty-three years before retiring in 1994. His experience includes a variety of geologic projects in the U.S.A., West Africa and Mexico. He is founder and president of RWR ASSOCIATES, water and energy resources consultants.

Judge Bobby McGough is a lifelong resident of Stonewall County serving as county Judge since 1991. His interest in the control of the saline level of the upper Brazos River basin goes back to the 1990's.

Chairman's Activity

Chairman Josh Rosenfeld has been busy meeting with several area organizations resulting the recruiting of a dozen or so new members. On the 27th of June he will address the Wednesday Breakfast Club at Pecan Plantation. Preparatory to that he authored the following article published in the June issue of the Pecan Plantation *Columns*. It is hoped that the Josh's talk and the article garner a lot of support for the BRCC within Pecan Plantation. This community has about residential 200 lots, three parks and the Club House on the Brazos River.

The "Historic Brazos River" ***By Josh Rosenfeld***

Pecan Plantation is an island of tranquility with its unique location across the Brazos River from "the rest of the world". The river provides beautiful scenery, recreational opportunities and some measure of protection from encroaching development. All PPOA members can access the river from our parks, and floating the river in a canoe, kayak or tube is a great way to enjoy it. An example of the natural setting is the section of the river near Plantation Beach [see photo].

We've all seen the "Historic Brazos River" sign at the front gate of Pecan, but do we really know why it is historic? Sure, the first capital of Texas was about 200 miles downstream from here, but what's historic about this area? Well, I just read John Graves' book "Goodbye to a River" which chronicles the wildlife, culture and history of the area between Possum Kingdom and Glen Rose; the Comanche raids, outlaws, gunfights and hangings. It's quite a story.

*The Brazos between Lakes Possum Kingdom and Granbury is designated as the John Graves Scenic Riverway [see map] which restricts certain industrial activities along the river. A local citizens' group, **The Brazos River Conservation Coalition (BRCC)**, was instrumental in passing the enabling legislation and is now working to have the Riverway designation extended through Hood County, including the stretch around Pecan Plantation. Check out the BRCC website at www.brcchood.org to keep abreast of the organization's activities and how to get involved.*

Pending Federal Legislation

The following information was brought to the attention of those in attendance at the Tuesday meeting. The content was copied from the website: www.texascattleraisers.org/daily. The BRCC has not taken an official position on the matter. To quote a phrase, "We report. You decide."

Legislation introduced to expand the Clean Water Act

Yesterday, the U. S. House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Chairman James Oberstar (D-MN), Energy and Commerce Committee Chairman John Dingell (D-MI) and Congressman Vernon Ehlers (R-MI) introduced legislation HR 2421, the Clean Water Authority Restoration Act. The legislation has 158 co-sponsors.

The National Cattlemen's Beef Association opposes its passage, stating that this legislation is not about clean water, but is about expanding federal Clean Water Act jurisdiction and inhibiting the authority of state governments and private property owners to locally manage land and water resources.

NCBA gives the following reasons for opposition to the bill:

This bill seeks to remove the word "navigable" from the CWA and replace it with a new definition of the term "waters of the United States."

It is clear that Congress in 1972 intended to use the term "navigable" when it passed the CWA, and taking the term out of the statute would be the exact opposite of what Congress intended.

The term navigable preserves a critical balance of power with the States. Deleting the term "navigable" from the statute would call into question Congress's intent under the CWA for States to have primary responsibility for land and water decisions. Few, if any waters would be controlled by States.

This new definition could grant the federal government unlimited regulatory control over most wet areas within a state by providing that "all interstate and intrastate waters and their tributaries" are subject to CWA regulation "including lakes, rivers, streams, (including intermittent streams), mudflats, sandflats, wetlands, sloughs, prairie potholes, wet meadows,playa lakes, natural ponds."

As there are no recognized exclusions, and because of the way courts interpret the word "including," the definition could easily be interpreted to cover groundwater, ditches, pipes, streets, gutters, manmade ponds, ephemeral drainages, drain tiles, treatment ponds, and other wet areas.

In addition, the legislation would for the first time regulate virtually all "activities" that may affect waters of the United States. The definition of "activities affecting these waters" doesnot exist in current law, regulations, or the proposed legislation. It, therefore, provides significant opportunity for broad interpretation.

On our cattle ranches, federal permitting could be required for activities that affect streams, streams and drainage ditches that are only wet during certain times of the year or during precipitation events, road ditches, and water released from tile lines and vegetated filter strips.

NCBA is sending letters to all members of Congress urging them not to support this legislation.

Date released: 5/25/2007

Membership

The efforts of the JoAnn Matthews and the Membership Committee continue to produce great results. The BRCC membership now stands at 240, seventy two of which have signed-up since April. The goal is 500 by years end. Tell a friend. Add a member.

Important Websites and E-mail Addresses

U. S. CONGRESS

Senator Kay Bailey-Hutchinson:
<http://hutchison.senate.gov> (e-mail via website)

Senator John Cornyn:
<http://cornyn.senate.gov> (e-mail via website)

Representative Chet Edwards:
Chris.kelly@mail.house.gov

STATE ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES

BRA-Tiffany Morgan:
www.brazos.org
tiffanym@brazos.org

HOOD COUNTY

Judge Rash:
knace@co.hood.tx.us

County Environmental Health Office:
James McAusland, Director
jmcausland@co.hood.tx.us

TEXAS LEGISLATURE

State Senator Kip Averitt:
becky.dixon@senate.state.tx.us

State Representative Jim Keffer
trent.thomas@house.state.tx.us

Texas Commission on
Environmental Quality (TCEQ)
www.state.tx.us
fespino@tceq.state.tx.us

Commissioner Dick Roan:
joviex@charter.net

County Extension Agent:
Marty Vahlenkamp
hood-tx@tamu.edu

Published by:

Jack D'Amario, Chairman
Programs and Publicity Committee
jndamario@alltel.net

To unsubscribe do a *REPLY* and write cancel in the subject line