WATER QUALITY PROTECTION DIVISION &
GULF OF MEXICO PROGRAM OFFICE
ALL BRANCH WEEKLY ACTIVITY REPORT - WEEK ENDING 3/6/15

WATER QUALITY PROTECTION DIVISION

IMMEDIATE OFFICE

DOI DEPUTY DIRECTOR MEETING WITH URBAN WATERS MIDDLE RIO GRANDE (UW MRG) ROUNDTABLE: Jennifer Gimble, Deputy Director from Department of Interior (DOI) visited a handful of UW MRG stakeholders and Federal Partners on March 4, 2015. Mrs. Gimble met to energize the DOI federal partners to continue to support and participate actively in the remaining two years of this project location. All DOI federal partners participated in the roundtable discussion. **Adele Cardenas Malott, P.E., 665-7210**

ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS BRANCH

EPA REGION 6 AND THE OKLAHOMA INDIAN HEALTH SERVICE (IHS) OFFICE CONDUCT INSPECTION of PROJECTS THAT RECEIVED FUNDING FROM EPA's CLEAN WATER INDIAN SET-ASIDE (CWISA) PROGRAM: In FY 2013, the Seminole Nation of Oklahoma received $351,200 from EPA's CWISA program to correct deficiencies associated with their non-functioning pump control system. Additionally, in FY 2013, EPA's CWISA program provided $98,000 to the Iowa Tribe Water System for the construction of a new pump house and renovation of their water well and storage tank. On March 5, 2015, representatives from EPA R6's Water Division visited the Oklahoma Indian Health Service (IHS) field office in Shawnee, and then (EPA and IHS) conducted a field inspection of the Seminole Nation's project referenced above. On March 6, 2015, EPA and IHS conducted a field inspection of the Iowa Tribe's project. EPA and IHS's collaborative efforts continue to benefit the tribal lands in Oklahoma! **Diane Taheri, 665-7460; Maurice Rawls, 665-8049; Dena Hurst, 665-7283**

EPA R6 WILL CONDUCT ON-SITE REVIEWS OF ARKANSAS's CLEAN AND DRINKING WATER STATE REVOLVING FUND PROGRAMS: Staff from the SRF and Projects Section will be conducting their annual on-site evaluations with the Arkansas Natural Resources Commission (CWSRF and DWSRF) and the Arkansas Department of Health (DWSRF set-asides) on March 9-13, 2015 in Little Rock, AR. The reviews will encompass programmatic, financial, and engineering reviews of both of the SRF programs for SFY 2014. In FFY 2014, the CWSRF program received $8,722,000 and the DWSRF program received $12,743,000. Both the CWSRF and DWSRF programs are working on funding projects to improve water quality and ensure the sustainability of the SRF programs. The DWSRF program is also working on reducing unliquidated obligations (ULOs) to achieve the September 30, 2016 goals set by EPA Headquarters. **Diane Taheri, 665-7460; Maurice Rawls, 665-8049; Ashley Howard, 665-7597; Gregory Parrish, 665-6586; Miriam Varnado, 665-7171**

REGION 6 BLACK HISTORY MONTH CELEBRATION: February marks the annual celebration of National Black History Month. In commemoration of this year's National Black History Month, EPA Region 6 joined with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Perot

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Museum of Nature and Science in hosting two aviation legends – Colonel Benjamin Alvin Drew, U.S. Air Force officer and NASA Astronaut, and Lieutenant Calvin J. Spann, Tuskegee Airman and fighter pilot – for our celebration *Aiming for the Stars*. This was a once in a lifetime opportunity to meet two incredible individuals. The event occurred February 26, 2015, in the twelfth floor conference center at 1:30-3:00 p.m. **Dena Hurst, 665-7283; Angela Restivo, 665-7123; Paula Selzer, 665-6663**

ECOSYSTEMS PROTECTION BRANCH

LOUISIANA DRAFT RECREATIONAL CRITERIA REVISIONS: Amendments to the Clean Water Act by the Beaches Environmental Assessment and Coastal Health (BEACH) Act of 2000 require states with coastal recreation waters to adopt any new criteria for "pathogens or pathogen indicators" developed by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) within 3 years of EPA's publication of the new criteria. In December 2012, EPA released new recreational water quality criteria recommendations, including criteria for the fecal indicator bacteria known as enterococci. Accordingly, the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality (LDEQ) is preparing to move forward with rulemaking to adopt enterococci criteria for Louisiana coastal primary contact recreation waters. On March 3, 2015, staff from the Ecosystems Protection Branch provided review comments on a draft version of the rule in response to a request from LDEQ. Formal rule proposal and a comment period are anticipated to occur in late spring-early summer 2015, with final state adoption occurring by the close of 2015. **Melinda McCoy, 665-8055; Mike Schaub, 665-7314**

ACTION ON LOUISIANA 2014 SECTION 303(D) LIST OF IMPAIRED WATERS: On February 26, Region 6 partially approved and proposed to partially disapprove Louisiana's 2014 Section 303(d) list. Louisiana's 2014 listing of waterbody-pollutant combinations and associated priority rankings was approved. However, a disapproval was proposed because of Louisiana's decision not to list 43 waterbodies failing to attain current numeric water quality standards, including three coastal segments failing to meet dissolved oxygen marine criteria. Region 6 is proposing to add these 43 waterbodies to the LA 2014 303(d) list. Public comment on the proposed additions is solicited through March 30. Comments will be considered before finalizing the Louisiana 2014 Section 303(d) list. **Robert Cook, 665-7141**

ALUMINUM SITE-SPECIFIC WATER QUALITY STANDARD FOR WILLOW FORK BUFFALO BAYOU, TEXAS: The Watershed Management Section completed its technical review of a study for site-specific aquatic life criterion in Texas. The study was based on EPA's guidance for developing water effect ratios. The Igloo Products Corporation facility in Waller County discharges treated wastewater to Willow Fork Buffalo Bayou, which is a tributary of segment 1014 – Buffalo Bayou in the San Jacinto River basin. A site-specific aluminum criterion was developed from toxicity tests using an invertebrate species (*Ceriodaphnia dubia*). EPA has sent a letter to TCEQ stating that the site-specific aluminum criterion is "approvable," following completion of public participation. **Shannon Snyder, 665-3134**

WEBINAR ON REGION 6 WATER PROGRAM BEST PRACTICE: Brian Fontenot of the Watershed Management Section gave a presentation during a national webinar hosted by EPA's Office of Water and Region 4 on February 26, 2015 to discuss a recent Best Practice from EPA's National Water Program that was developed in the Region 6 Nonpoint

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Source Program. The Watershed-Based Plan (WBP) Tracking Tool is an innovative approach to tracking the development and implementation of WBPs. This Excel-based tool has been invaluable in assisting EPA staff and managers in quickly assessing eligibility for CWA Section 319 funds. The presentation was well received, and the audience had several good questions. For further information contact **Brian Fontenot. 665-7286**

NATIONAL OCEAN POLICY: On February 27, 2015, staff participated in a conference call meeting with the EPA Office of Water and coastal Regions to discuss the status of EPA work on the National Ocean Policy (NOP). An update on over 200 reportable NOP actions was recently completed but has yet to be released by the White House Council on Environmental Quality. Discussions are underway regarding a revised process for future reporting on a smaller set of actions which would highlight a stronger link with the various Regional Planning Bodies (RPB). In the next several weeks, a highlights report is expected to be released, covering FY 2013-2014. The next meeting of the Gulf of Mexico RPB will likely be during the June meeting of the Gulf of Mexico Alliance in Biloxi, MS. **Barbara Keeler, 665-6698**

PLANNING & ANALYSIS BRANCH

DATA FOR COMMENTS WETLANDS JURISDICTIONAL DETERMINATIONS RULE, FEBRUARY 27, 2015: A member of the Surface Water Center worked with Alison Kitto of the Ecosystems Branch, Wetlands Section, to identify data sources for you use in review of EPA Headquarters proposed rule and automated process to determine 1) Jurisdictional Wetlands, and 2) Other Wetlands, which could be evaluated. The Surface Water Center used by-county extractions of high-resolution National Hydrography Dataset (NHD) digitized ephemeral streams, updated by-state downloads of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) National Wetlands Index (NWI) wetlands delineations, current and 1996 Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) 100 year Flood Plain data, and US Census Bureau County polygon data. The FEMA Floodplain data was extracted from the ESRI Flood Risk Landscape Map Service with their feature extraction tool. The flood plain and NHD stream data will be buffered to determine the areas under EPA jurisdiction.

Selection of wetlands within EPA jurisdiction by this method will be limited by availability the coverage of FEMA Floodplain data (availability usually limited to urbanized counties), and the scale at which high-resolution NHD streams can be delineated (less than 50% of ephemeral streams have been delineated due to this limitation). **Bob Kirkland, 665-6798**

MAPPING OF FREEPORT NEW WORK OCEAN DREDGED MATERIAL DISPOSAL SITES (ODMDS) BOUNDARY, FEBRUARY 27, 2015: A member of the Surface Water Center mapped NAD 83 Texas State Plane South Central (US Feet) projected data obtained from Jessica Franks of the Ecosystems Branch, Marine and Coastal Protection Section. These four points obtained from the contractor represent the dumping boundaries for the Freeport New Work ODMDS Site. **Bob Kirkland, 665-6798**

OSAGE NATION GIS AND GPS QAPPS, MARCH 2, 2015: The Surface Water Center reviewed the GIS and GPS program QAPPs for the Osage Nation. The QAPPs, which outline the requirements of the Tribe's GIS and GPS programs, were reviewed page by page for syntax, grammar, procedures, and references. The reviews of the QAPPs were forwarded to Nicole Witt of Region 6's Office of Environmental Justice and Tribal Affairs, who will forward them to the

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Tribe for comments. This is part of an ongoing effort of the Surface Water Center to provide reviews and critiques of geospatial grants and QAPPS. **Angel Kosfiszer, 665-2187; Bob Kirkland, 665-6798; Patty Taylor, 665-6403**

KAW NATION GIS/GPS QAPP, MARCH 2, 2015: The Surface Water Center reviewed the GIS/GPS program QAPP for the Kaw Nation. The QAPP, which outlines the requirements of the Tribe's GIS/GPS program, was reviewed page by page for syntax, grammar, procedures, and references. The review of the QAPP was forwarded to Nicole Witt of Region 6's Office of Environmental Justice and Tribal Affairs, who will forward it to the Tribe for comments. This is part of an ongoing effort of the Surface Water Center to provide reviews and critiques of geospatial grants and QAPPS. **Angel Kosfiszer, 665-2187; Bob Kirkland, 665-6798; Patty Taylor, 665-6403**

ENFORCEMENT AND WATER QUALITY DIVISION COLLABORATION PROJECT: A member of the Surface Water Center is collaborating with the Enforcement Division in the targeting of violators of permits of the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) program that may discharge to waters that have been designated by the State as source of drinking water. Using Geographical Information System (GIS) technology data was acquired and compiled, and a map was produced, showing the NPDES ID and location of multiple times effluent violators in the last three years, and how many times in the last five years EPA initiated a formal enforcement action, if any. The violators were chosen if they discharged within 1 mile of a State designated drinking water stream. **Angel Kosfiszer, 665-2187**

JUDGE AT FIRST ROBOTICS COMPETITION: A member of the Surface Water Center was a Judge at the FIRST Robotics Competition for high-schools students in the Irving Convention Center, Dallas, on Feb 27. This year's theme was "recycle rush" and the game was played in "landfill zones" with recycled materials (tots and recycling containers). This competition is a high-tech sporting event that pits robots, each designed by one of 48 teams of high school students and professional engineers during a six week period. In addition to the "robot athletes" participating in the competition, cheering fans, pep bands, parents and referees give the event the feel of an intense sporting event. FIRST mission is to inspire young people to be science and technology leaders, by engaging them in exciting mentor-based programs that build science, engineering and technology skills, that inspire innovation, and that foster well-rounded life capabilities including self-confidence, communication and leadership. NASA and many Fortune 500 companies are FIRST sponsors. **Angel Kosfiszer, 665-2187**

ARCGIS EXPLORER FOR SOLE SOURCE AQUIFERS (SSA), MARCH 3, 2015: A member of the Surface Water Center worked with Omar Martinez of the Source Water Branch to install and configure ArcGIS Explorer as a tool for determination locations being near Sole Source Aquifers (SSAs). ArcGIS Explorer was installed by the help desk and base map files were added from the Region 6 GIS Share 1 server to help with identifying location features. The SSA files were provided by Mike Bechdol who is now retired. ArcGIS explorer was configured, after the addition of the basemap and the SSA files, with a Find window allowing the user to zoom to specific locations. Additional data can be added to Explorer is needed to support additional analysis. **Bob Kirkland, 665-6798**

INSTALLATION OF GRAPHICS PROGRAMS FOR THE NEW COMPUTER IN THE GRAPHICS ROOM: A member of the Surface Water Center is happy to announce the

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completion of the installation of several graphics programs for the new computer in the graphics room. The installation of any program that is not installed on "standard computers" needs to be requested through the support desk, and the disc (CD, DVD) and licenses need to be provided to the installer. The following programs are now available: Adobe Photoshop 13, Adobe Premiere Elements 8.0.1, Google Earth Pro, Adobe Lifecycle Designer ES2 version 9.0, Camtasia Studio 7, ESRI ArcGIS 10.2, and Roxio. **Angel Kosfiszer, 665-2187**

NPDES PERMITS AND TMDL BRANCH

MS4 DESIGNATION IN LOS ALAMOS COUNTY NEW MEXICO: In response to a petition by Amigos Bravos, Region 6 is in the process of making a preliminary determination to designate portions of Los Alamos County, NM as a small municipal separate storm sewer system (MS4) requiring an NPDES permit. The preliminary designation, based primarily on potential to cause or contribute to water quality impairments listed by the State of New Mexico, would affect Los Alamos County, NMDOT, and operators of the Los Alamos National Laboratory. Once signed by the Regional Administrator, notice of the preliminary designation determination will be published in the Federal Register starting a 30 day public comment period. **Nasim Jahan, 665-7522**

CONFERENCE CALL REGARDING DRAFT WASTEWATER PERMIT FOR LOUISIANA OFFSHORE OIL PORT (LOOP): EPA and the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality (LDEQ) are drafting a joint reissuance permit for LOOP. On March 4, 2015, EPA Region 6, LDEQ, and LOOP discussed the need for whole effluent toxicity testing at Outfall 004, which is proposed to discharge brine from the Brine Storage Reservoir into waters of the State. Monitoring for toxicity is a standard National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit requirement for discharges such as this one and updated requirements have recently been issued for two similar, yet smaller, U.S. Department of Energy, Strategic Petroleum Reserve facilities in Texas. Biomonitoring is used to ensure the state's water quality standard for "no discharge of toxics." This deepwater port receives and temporarily stores significant amounts of crude oil from tankers carrying foreign and domestic crude, as well as domestic crude produced in the Gulf of Mexico. Also, the facility operates considerable onshore storage facilities and pipelines. Significant amounts of brine water are utilized to manage the oil reserves. The facility will discharge into Federal and State waters. **Paul Kaspar 665-7459, Isaac Chen 665-7364, Taimur Shaikh 665-7181, Kay Schwab 665-6635**

ILLINOIS RIVER WATERSHED MODELING PROJECT PEER REVIEW: On March 3, 2015, the technical documents associated with the Illinois River Modeling Project were provided to EA Engineering, Science and Technology Inc. for dissemination to external peer reviewers. The peer reviewers have been charged with eight questions. For example, one of the questions is: "As developed, are the HSPF and EFDC models able to reasonably represent the physical conditions of the Illinois River Watershed?" The peer reviewers will formulate their conclusions in a Statement of Findings. The peer reviewers have 30 days to complete their review after which the Statement of Findings will be drafted and submitted to EPA for review. The peer review assists in providing an independent review of the technical merits of the project. **Taimur Shaikh, 665-7181**

NEW MEXICO NPDES DRAFT CAFO GENERAL PERMIT: Public notice for the reissuance of New Mexico (NMG10000) was closed March 2, 2015. Comment evaluations and

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responses will be forthcoming along with the final permit. **Paul Kaspar, 665-7459; and Michael Carrillo, 665-7381**

LOCAL FOODS, LOCAL PLACES WORKSHOPS FOR LOUISIANA AND ARKANSAS COMMUNITIES: On February 18th and 25th, Region 6 sustainability staff in 6WQ and 6SF participated in the final planning calls for the Local Foods, Local Places technical assistance workshops which will be held in Lafayette, LA on March 4-5, 2015, and in Osceola, AR on March 17-18, 2015. Each workshop will bring together many key community, state and federal stakeholders to develop an action plan that clearly identifies priorities, next steps, roles and responsibilities to meet the goals for each community's local food projects.

Local Foods, Local Places is a partnership among USDA, EPA, USDOT, the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC), the Delta Regional Authority (DRA) and the CDC. The initiative draws on the Administration's Partnership for Sustainable Communities, USDA's Seven Strategies for Economic Development and other place-based strategies to address regional challenges. **Suzanna Perea, 665-7217; Eugene Thilsted, 665-2782; Karen Peycke, 665-7273; Mary Kemp, 665-8358**

BUILDING BLOCKS TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE FOR BENTONVILLE, AR: On February 20, 2015, 6WQ-PP staff participated on a planning call with the EPA Office of Sustainable Communities (OSC) and Smart Growth America (SGA) to discuss Bentonville's request for technical assistance and review project expectations. As requested, SGA will provide a Planning for Economic and Fiscal Health Workshop for Bentonville, AR on April 1-2, 2015.

Bentonville, AR is one of 14 communities selected to receive technical assistance under a Building Blocks for Sustainable Communities grant that EPA OSC awarded to Smart Growth America. **Suzanna Perea, 665-7217**

CONFERENCE CALLS TO DISCUSS THE TEXAS AND NEW MEXICO DRAFT PRIORITIZATION FRAMEWORK DOCUMENTS: On February 26, 2015, Region 6 TMDL staff held two conference calls with the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) and the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) to provide feedback on their Draft Prioritization Framework documents. The Framework aims to outline the States' plan for prioritizing waters for TMDL development as well as alternative restoration and protection approaches under the new 303(d) Vision. The priorities chosen by the states reflect what they plan to accomplish by 2022. **Miranda Hodgkiss, 665-7538; Linda Adams, 665-6546**

TPDES PERMIT NO. TX0047791: The EPA issued a follow-up "Interim Objection" letter dated February 27, 2015 (request for additional information) to the TCEQ for the proposed TPDES permit (Permit No. TX0047791) for TXI Operations, LP. The TCEQ submitted the revised permit package February 9, 2015, in response to a previous "Interim Objection" letter dated May 10, 2012. The outstanding issue is the omission of permit conditions and requirements for the operation of the cooling water intake structure (CWIS) in accordance with Section 316(b) of the Clean Water Act (CWA). The facility is located in the City of Streetman, Texas, and the discharges are directly to Richland-Chambers Reservoir, Segment No.0836 of the Trinity River Basin. **Kilty Baskin, 665-7500**

LOWER RIO GRANDE WATERSHED INITIATIVE TECHNICAL GROUP MEETING

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AND SYNOPTIC SAMPLING: On March 5 and 6, 2015, Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ), International Boundary and Water Commission, and Mexico Technical Group members met to finalize field sample planning for the weeks of March 9 and March 16, 2015. The purpose of this Technical Group meeting is to organize sample teams, distribute sample equipment and protocols, and finalize logistics related to packing, shipping, and sample analyses. The Mexican field teams will begin sampling the Rio Grande River and Mexican tributaries, drains, and wastewater discharges beginning March 9, 2015. The TCEQ field teams will begin sampling the US tributaries, drains, and wastewater dischargers beginning March 16, 2015. All field activities are expected to be complete by the end of March 2015. **Katrina Higgins-Coltrain, 665-8143**

SOURCE WATER PROTECTION BRANCH

BAYOU CORNE SINKHOLE QUARTERLY SCIENCE WORKGROUP UPDATE: On February 18, 2015, EPA participated in the quarterly conference call regarding the Bayou Corne Sinkhole, located in Assumption Parish, Louisiana. Participants in the call included the Louisiana Department of Natural Resources (LDNR), Louisiana Department of Transportation & Development (LaDOTD), University of Memphis, CB&I (LDNR's contractor), and GW/UIC staff. The current status of the sinkhole response was reported. The central portion of the sinkhole was reported to be shallowing (-182 feet at latest measurement, up from -233 feet in October 2014). The Oxy 2 cavern was reported to be slowly shallowing as well, possibly due to seismic activity. Currently, the Oxy 2 cavern is undergoing pressure bleed down events, to manage the increased cavern pressure. There has been a recent increase in episodic micro earthquake activity (MEQ). The sinkhole is currently in Activity Code 3, which is the highest level of MEQ activity. BTEX (benzene, toluene, ethylbenzene, and xylenes) concentrations in monitoring wells situated in the shallow Mississippi River Alluvial Aquifer (MRAA) have increased in the fourth quarter of 2014, with a reported benzene concentration of 3.41 mg/L (parts per million (ppm)). This is above the drinking water Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL) for benzene, which is 5 parts per billion (ppb). Monthly air monitoring, including indoor air quality, continues. Subsidence monitoring also continues, with monthly data submitted to LDNR. The next quarterly conference call will take place on May 20, 2015. LDNR will be providing electronic monthly updates until the next conference call. **Lauren Ray, 665-2756; Mike Overbay, 665-6482; Brian Graves, 665-7193**

UPDATE ON STMV'S LA PALANGANA AQUIFER EXEMPTION EXPANSION APPLICATION: The Region is currently drafting the approval package for this application. The applicant, South Texas Mining Venture (STMV), has successfully resolved its current use issue of one drinking water well and the mineral producibility of the production area authorization PAA-5. We anticipate to complete the approval package this week and forward it to 6RC for their comments. **Phil Dellinger, 665-8324; Lisa Pham, 665-8326**

UIC MEETING WITH LAGUNA CASINO: On March 5th, three members of the Groundwater/UIC Section met in Dallas with representatives of the Laguna Pueblo, about constructing a UIC Class 5 Disposal Well. The well is planned to handle waste from a reverse osmosis water treatment system, which is being constructed as part of their hotel and casino development. **Bill Hurlbut, 665-8305; Philip Dellinger, 665-8324**

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REQUESTED RECOMMENDATIONS PROVIDED TO OKLAHOMA CORPORATION COMMISION: On February 26, a representative of the Ground Water/UIC Section presented recommendations to expedite seismicity review to Oklahoma Corporation Commission (OCC) technical staff. The presentation was at OCC's request following discussions at the Ground Water Protection Council meeting in Austin earlier in February, and following on their acceptance of EPA's offer of assistance several months earlier. The primary purpose of the presentation was technical support for OCC obtaining additional resources needed to evaluate the significant seismicity issue they are dealing with. Following the presentation, EPA staff was requested to repeat the presentation to a slightly wider audience on March 9th in Oklahoma City. **Nancy Dorsey, 665-2294**

INFORMATION REQUEST UNDER FOIA BY AUSTIN LAW FIRM IS SUCCESSFULLY SATISFIED AS TEXCOM'S STATE PERMITTED INJECTION WELL IS FOUND TO LACK MECHANICAL INTEGRITY: The Austin law firm of Kemp Smith sent the Regional Office a request for information related to the Region's role in monitoring TCEQ's handling of TexCom's permit application for non-hazardous Class I commercial injection well WDW-410, located near the city of Conroe, Texas. The FOIA request from Kemp Smith, which represents parties opposing the operation of the TCEQ permitted well, has been successfully satisfied. In the meantime, the Region has received copies of state correspondence addressed to the operator, TexCom, indicating that the WDW-410 well failed its December 2014 mechanical integrity test (MIT). So far, this well has never been used as a disposal injector. **José Eduardo Torres, 665-8092**

GULF OF MEXICO PROGRAM OFFICE

ORD RARE PROJECT UPDATE: As part of the RARE funding awarded by ORD through the Region 4 competition, the project partners met at the USDA office in Bay Minette, AL, on March 6th. At this meeting the partners chose monitoring sites in the Fish River/Weeks Bay watershed and in Big Escambia Creek on the Poarch Band of Creek Indians' wildlife reserve. These will be the sites where phytoplankton monitoring plates are deployed to determine the effects nutrients on phytoplankton communities. Project partners include EPA (GMPO & GED), NRCS, ADEM and the Poarch Band of Creek Indians

GULF OF MEXICO ALLIANCE WORKSHOP: On March 4-5, staff attended and represented the EPA at the "Gulf of Mexico Alliance (GOMA) 101: Coordinator and State Lead Workshop, Ocean Springs, MS." The workshop provided the opportunity for the state team coordinators and the federal co-facilitators to meet and discuss the current priority issue team re-organization, the development of a third strategic plan/blueprint; and, the annual "All Hands Meeting" scheduled for June 16-18, 2015. **Contact: Lael Butler**

RESTORE PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT WORKSHOPS FOLLOW UP: Background: Each RESTORE Council Member had the opportunity to submit a maximum of 5 projects/programs for consideration on the DRAFT Funded Priorities List, scheduled to be released the summer of 2015. The Ocean Conservancy partnered with the GMPO to host public meetings in each of the Gulf Coast states to gain input from the general public on the 50 projects/programs currently available for review on the RESTORE Council's website. The last of these Gulf-wide engagement meetings occurred last week.

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During the meetings, the participants were given an overview of the RESTORE Council and shown how to access the projects/programs on the Council's website. Participants were then broken into groups with facilitators for an open discussion of individual priorities for restoring and revitalizing the Gulf of Mexico.

As a member of the RESTORE Council, GMPO will use the feedback collected to inform EPA's decision to support specific projects/programs on the Council's Draft Funded Priorities List.

TRIBAL COORDINATION WITH REGION 6: GMPO and Region 6 Tribal Coordinator, Randy Gee, and General Assistance Program Coordinator, Nikole Witt, are working with The Chitimacha Tribe of Louisiana's Tribal Historic Preservation Officer, Kim Walden, on a possible partnership to complete assessment of water quality issues affecting the Tribe. It was agreed that Region 6 and GMPO as a first step would review some previous Chitimacha water quality preliminary assessments to determine how best to move forward on the tribe's needs for a robust assessment and determination of impacting sources. **Staff Contact: Troy Pierce**

TULANE ENVIRONMENTAL LAW SUMMIT – Update: Staff attended Tulane Law School Environmental & Energy Summit. Each year the Summit brings together prominent advocates, policy makers, and environmental minds. This year summit focused on Environment 2015: Energy, Water and Wildlife and discussed issues at the local, regional, national and international levels. Fifteen panels and two keynote speakers presented their views on pressing critical environmental issues, such as groundbreaking lawsuits, water planning, and endangered species protection. The summit occurred February 27-28 and were 525 registered attendees.
Staff Contacts: Jerry Boos and Rachel Houge

UPCOMING:

TRIBAL COORDINATION – RESTORE: On March 12, the GMPO Chief Scientist is meeting with the Poarch Band of Creek Indians Tribal Historic Preservation Officer (THPO) and Environmental Director to discuss RESTORE Tribal project ideas for the next round of request for proposals. Poarch has hosted the last two RESTORE Tribal Engagement meetings and Robert Thrower, THPO at Poarch, has been key in getting a process in place with the RESTORE Council that has allowed tribes an avenue to submit proposals through the Federal Trustees.
Staff Contact: Troy Pierce

GOMA HABITAT TEAM MEETING: Staff will attend The Gulf of Mexico Alliance's (GOMA) Habitat Conservation & Restoration Team Practitioners Forum Next Week (March 10-11 2015) in Biloxi, MS. The meeting objectives include the following: Opportunity to network and share best practices and lessons-learned among restoration practitioners; Share examples of on-the-ground restoration projects that utilize sediments; Discuss challenges to using sediment in restoration activities and identify opportunities to overcome them; Identify innovative science, engineering, and sediment transport and placement methods for incorporating sediment into restoration projects and Brainstorm objectives for future workshop opportunities. Approximately 43 participants representing industry, ports, dredgers, resource managers, State and Federal Agencies are expected to attend the two day event.
Staff Contacts: John Bowie and Jerry Boos.

NRCS MEETING: USDA NRCS State Technical Committee Meeting, Auburn, AL, on March 11th. The GMPO Chief Scientist will be participating. **Staff Contact: Troy Pierce**

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