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The Center for  
Environmental  
Resource  
Management

January 20, 1999

Mr. Steve Pullen  
Geologist  
New Mexico Environment Department  
P.O. Box 26110  
Santa Fe, NM 87502

Dear Mr. Pullen:

Enclosed are the agenda for the upcoming RAB meeting, a map with directions to the meeting site, and the minutes of the November 17, 1999 meeting held at Las Cruces, New Mexico. I am looking forward to seeing you there. If you have any questions, please call me at (915) 747-8699. Thank you.

Sincerely,

*R. Gonzalez*  
Raul E. Gonzalez  
CERM

# Fort Bliss Restoration Advisory Board Meeting Agenda

Location: El Paso County Community College, Trans Mountain Campus,  
Room 1005 Dean's Conference Room, Administrative Building.  
Date: Tuesday, February 9, 1999  
Time: 7:00 pm

Introduction of Board members and meeting participants.

## Old Business

1. Discussion and motion for adoption of minutes from the November 17th 1998 RAB meeting.

## Follow Up

1. Locating report related to Holloman AFB sewage lagoon and dead birds.
2. Discussion of Air Force RAB guidebook.

## New Business

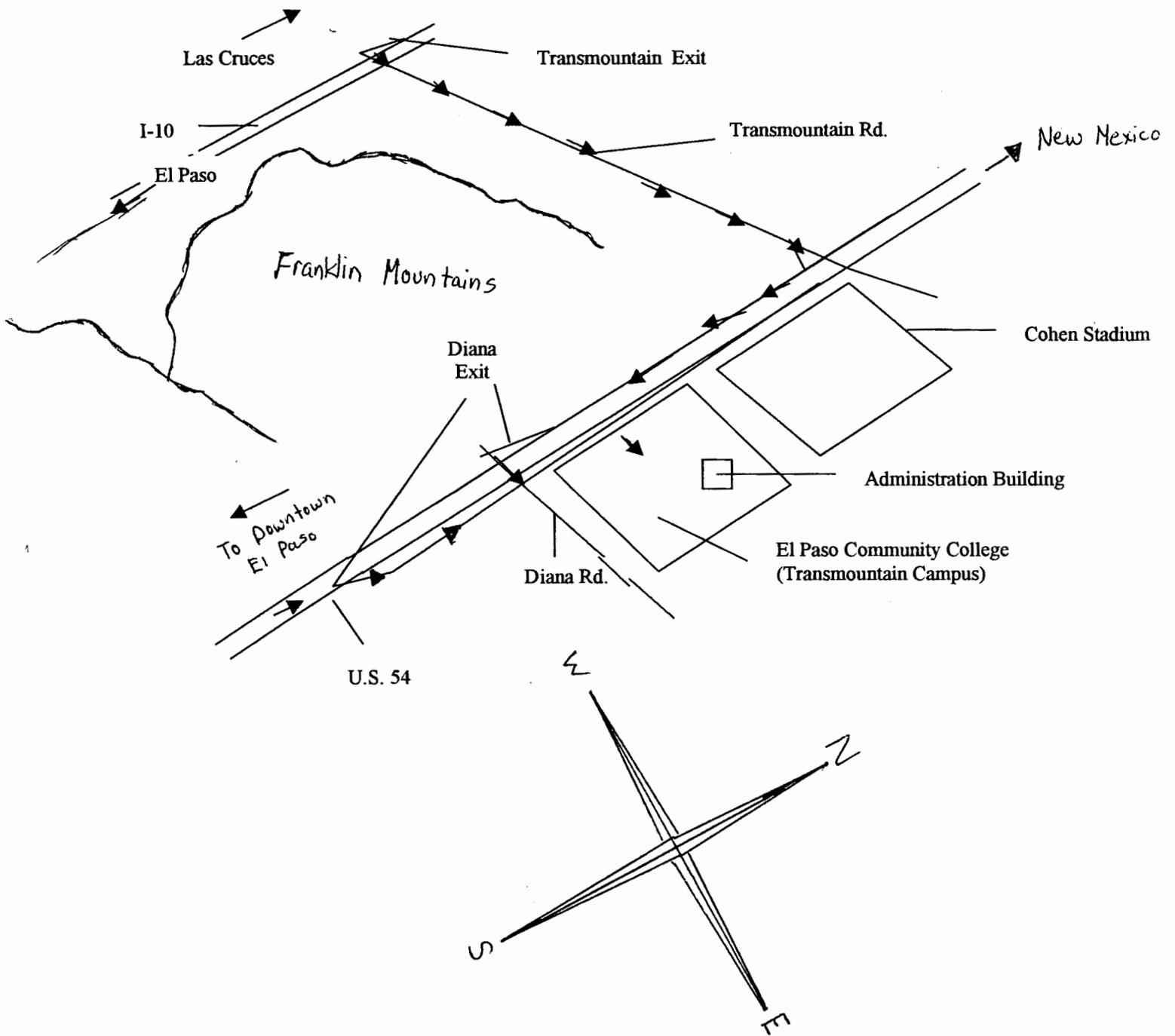
1. Group discussion regarding the incidence of trespassing by the public on Castner Range. Kelly Blough will display the results of an inventory of commonly used access points on Castner range. Within a limited budget, Fort Bliss would like to erect barriers at specific locations to discourage trespassing by motor vehicles. Feedback from the RAB, invited stakeholders, and the general public is encouraged. Representatives from the following agencies have been invited to participate:

Texas Department of Transportation  
Texas Parks and Wildlife  
El Paso Water Utilities  
City of El Paso, Department of Planning, Research and Development  
Wilderness Park Museum  
Border Patrol Museum  
Texas Office of Attorney General

2. Open discussion and question and answer.
3. Selection of next meeting date, location, and topics. The following are potential topics for future meetings.
  - A. Presentation on basic hydrogeology focused on regional groundwater resources.
  - B. Update on preliminary ecological risk assessment at New Mexico sewage lagoons.
4. Adjourn

Directions are attached. For more information call Ed Gonzalez at (915) 747-8699 or Kelly Blough at (915) 568-7979.

**DIRECTIONS To Fort Bliss RAB Meeting**  
**February 9, 1999—7:00 pm**



**Fort Bliss Restoration Advisory Board**  
**Minutes**  
**November 17, 1998**  
**7:00 pm—Corbett Center, NMSU, Las Cruces, NM**

**No. of Attendants:** 29  
**No. of Attendants Signed In:** 23

**Restoration Advisory Board Members Present**

Russell Smith	Community Co-Chair
Charles Galt	Board Member
Marianne Thaeler	Board Past Community Co-Chair
Robert Lenhart	Board Member
Dorline Wonciar	Board Member
Steve Pullen	Board Member (NMED)
Jim Bates	Board Member

**Restoration Advisory Board Members Absent**

Col. Ben Hobson	Military Co-Chair
V.W. Howard, Jr.	Board Member
David Dodge	Board Member
Michael Nivison	Board Member
Mark Arthur	Board Member (TNRCC)

**Support Staff and Audience**

Raul E. Gonzalez	Staff (UTEP CERM)
Jerry Larson	U.S. Geological Survey
Janet K. Wagner	J.K. Wagner & Associates
Sheri Bone	U.S. Army Corps of Engineer
Karen Wilson	U.S. Army Environmental Center
Dominique Edwards	U.S. Army Environmental Center
Billie Young	HQ Dept. of the Army
Lee Carroll	HQ TRADOC
Kelly Blough	Fort Bliss IRP Manager
Inga Groff	League of Women Voters
Joe Groff	Chihuahuan Desert Wildlife Rescue
Julie Jacobs	New Mexico Environmental Department
Jennifer Parker	New Mexico Environmental Department
Edward Nickerson	USGS
John Sproul	El Paso Audubon Society
Richard Smith	U.S. Army Corps of Engineer
Fred Bourger	Citizen
Mike Seidensticker	Citizen

I. Call To Order

Russell Smith called the meeting to order at approximately 7:10 pm. The attendance list is above. Members of the audience introduced themselves. Russell Smith expressed his apologies for Col. Hobson's absence.

## II. Introduction

Minutes for the August 4, 1998 public meeting were presented for approval. Russell Smith so moved and Marianne Thaeler seconded the motion. Motion carried and the minutes were approved.

## III. Old Business

Kelly Blough introduced Jim Bowman, who took the place of the scheduled speaker, Keith Landreth, of the Fort Bliss Directorate of the Environment. Mr. Bowman gave a presentation on the integration of cultural resources in the cleanup process and how archeological sites within federal lands are protected during cleanup of unexploded ordnance or hazardous waste.

## IV. Presentation by Jim Bowman—Fort Bliss

David Bowman began his presentation by providing a listing of 12 Cultural Resource Laws and Regulations. He then proceeded to show us a list of the Cultural Resources Regulatory Authorities that Fort Bliss would have to answer to if any archeological remains were to be found on Fort Bliss lands (or any other Texas or New Mexico installation). They are:

- Texas Historical Commission (SHPO)
- State of New Mexico, Office of Cultural Affairs, Historic Preservation Division (SHPO)
- Advisory Council on Historic Preservation - Western Region
- Advisory Council on Historic Preservation - Washington, D.C.
- Bureau of Land Management (McGregor Range Withdrawal)

He then proceeded to show us an overhead on what the role of the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation is:

- Advise the President and U.S. Congress
- Oversee review of Federal undertakings
- Advise and assist Federal agencies

He also showed the role of the State Historic Preservation Officer, which is:

- Administer historic preservation program in the state
- Assist in review of Federal undertakings
- Public education
- Nominations to the National Register

- State Inventory and State Plan
- Advice and Assistance

He then provided a flowchart of the steps taken when an archeological site has been discovered.

Dorline Wonciar asked whether an old Native American village had been discovered in Castner Range. She had heard that an old village had been discovered and wasn't sure if the reports had been accurate. David Bowman answered that no Native American village had been discovered in that area. Julie Jacobs asked if the flowchart could be projected on the screen again because she was unsure of how the procedures for newly-discovered archeological sites were to be followed.

Mr. Bowman's presentation was complete and Kelly Blough introduced Janet Wagner, of J.K. Wagner and Associates.

#### V. Presentation by Janet Wagner – J.K. Wagner and Associates

Janet Wagner began her presentation by showing a map of the City of El Paso, particularly the Fort Bliss area. She outlined the history of the development of water supplies in the El Paso area. In 1899 wells were drilled near the current site of Fort Bliss by the first El Paso Water Company. In the 1920's the wells were abandoned but not plugged. The Army acquired some of the property where the wells were located in the 1940's. In 1981, a USGS study was conducted of the overall quality of El Paso's drinking water. The study indicated that there were elevated levels of total dissolved solids (TDS) and nitrates present in the water in the area of the Old Mesa Well Field. The USGS report concluded that the wells which were no longer in use were not properly plugged, or closed.

#### Background

In 1854, the population of El Paso was three hundred. The common source of drinking water was the Rio Grande. People would construct ditches to carry drinking water from the Rio Grande to their homes. In 1880, the population of the city was 800. By 1890, due to the coming of the railroad, the city of El Paso grew to 10,000 people. Because of the tremendous growth of the city, the municipality sought to hire a water engineer to satiate the city's growing demand for water. No longer were the citizens of El Paso willing to accept "ditch" water as their source of drinking water. Thus, the city decided to hire Mr. Sylvester Watts, an engineer from St. Louis, Missouri to resolve the problem.

Mr. Watts convinced the City of El Paso to create a franchise to construct a waterworks. The franchise was granted and Mr. Watts promised to have clean water pumped into the homes of El Pasoans. When the delivery system of the *El Paso Water Co.* was complete, many citizens were discouraged with the quality and quantity of the water being delivered. The design of the system was flawed. It pumped water out of the river to a settling basin. The water being delivered was too muddy for drinking or other domestic uses and the water pressure was too weak. Fish ranging from 2" to 7" in length were

commonly seen in the settling basin. If one wanted to have a bucketful of water by morning, one had to open the faucet completely the night before. Wagons peddling water from Deming, NM were making good money because El Pasoans did not have good, drinking water. Soon, El Pasoans were looking for other engineers to solve their water problems.

At the turn of the century, Mr. Watts was fired and, once again, engineers from St. Louis, Missouri were hired to solve El Paso's water problems. This time, the new engineers decided to drill wells on the mesa and not near the Rio Grande. In 1903, the *International Water Co.* was formed.

At this time, demand for water was great but the supply was still insufficient. The wells were now running on pumps fueled by gasoline. Tremendous volumes of gasoline were needed to keep the pumps running. To satiate the city's growing demand for water, more wells were being drilled. This measure still did not adequately address the water shortage. In the mayoral election of 1905, J.J. Stewart, one of the candidates, promised that the city would take over the waterworks system. Stewart lost the election, but the water issue remained hot. In the mayoral race of 1908-09, the water issue surfaced once again. One candidate advocated the city taking over the waterworks system. This time, the city bought out the waterworks system as the candidate who promised the water takeover was victorious.

Once again, to satiate the city's demand for water, the city began drilling more wells. In 1917, the city discovered other areas of the city that contained good quality water underneath. Even more exciting to the city was the new technology of turbine engines that could be used to pump more water for drinking (See Figure 1). Finally, the city's water demand was being satisfied by this new technology. At this time, many of the old wells that were drilled in the past twenty years were abandoned because they were no longer useful. The federal government (Ft. Bliss) bought the land where these wells were located in 1940s and 50s, presumably unaware of their existence.

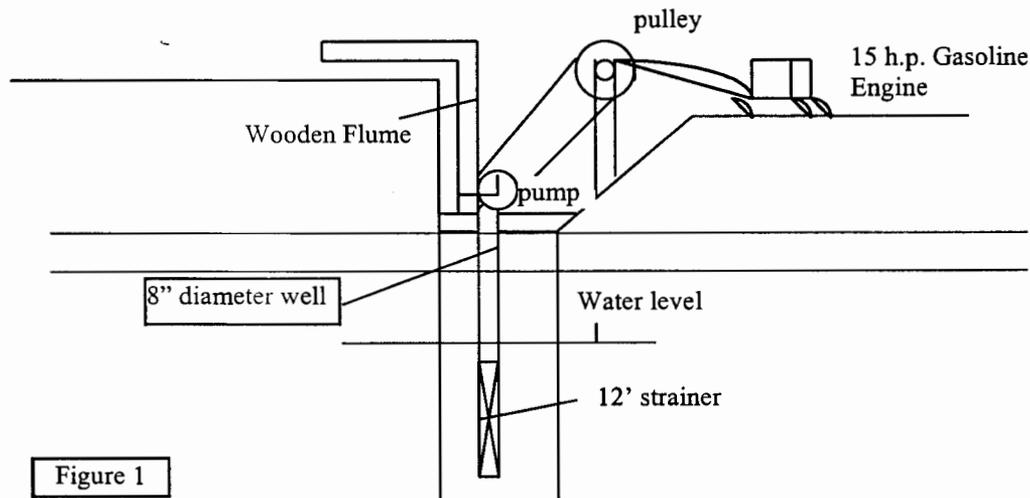


Figure 1

A question was asked about the old well shafts that were abandoned. The member of the audience wanted to know if the shafts had metal casings. Janet Wager responded that the wells she had seen did indeed have metal casings. This lead her to believe that most of the abandoned wells have metal casings in them.

An audience member asked Ms. Wagner at what time did Ft. Bliss acquire the site where the wells are located. Ms. Wagner said that the north portion of the site was acquired in 1941 and the west portion in 1957. Another audience member asked Ms. Wagner where she acquired her information. Ms. Wagner said that she found information at the County Courthouse, UTEP, UT-Austin, land surveying companies, state agencies, local surveying companies, federal agencies, and other sources.

#### North Mesa Well Field Site (FTBL-080)

Currently, 8 wells have been located at this site on Fort Bliss. The depth of the storm water retention pond which is located in the same area is approximately 15 feet below grade. Marianne Thaeler asked whether the wells that were found were properly capped. The answer was that the wells were not capped at all. Another question was about the existence of the other wells. The individual wanted to know why the other wells have not been found. Ms. Wagner replied that it is her belief that the wells were paved over when Fred Wilson Rd. was constructed.

Another person wanted Ms. Wagner to give an accurate physical description of the 8 wells that were found. Ms. Wagner replied that the wells were simply open holes in the ground, 8 inches in diameter, with mangled metal casings in them. The person wanted to know what were the intentions of Fort Bliss concerning these wells. Kelly Blough responded by saying that Ft. Bliss was working in coordination with state agencies to locate, assess and resolve improperly abandoned wells at several sites on Fort Bliss. In other words, every issue needs to be addressed one by one. A member of the audience wanted to know how Fort Bliss handled the abandonment of wells it had installed in the

past. Fort Bliss has worked with the TNRCC in the past to properly plug abandon wells as required by law.

A comment about the safety of these open shafts surfaced. A member of the audience commented that a small child could possibly fall into one of the shafts. To leave these shafts unplugged is a very dangerous thing to do.

Marianne Thaeler recommended that the Ft. Bliss Restoration Advisory Board go on record advocating proper plugging and abandonment practices for all wells within its boundaries. Russell Smith agreed with Marianne Thaeler. He asked the board members if they approved. The board agreed. Russell Smith so moved and Marianne Thaeler seconded the motion. Motion carried and the recommendation that Fort Bliss properly plug all abandoned wells was officially sanctioned.

Another question regarding the wells that Ms. Wagner had located surfaced. A member of the audience wanted to know what has happened to the wells now that they have been discovered. Ms. Wagner said that nothing has happened because it has only been approximately 2 weeks since the wells have been discovered. Russell Smith commented that he would like the newly discovered wells properly plugged for safety purposes. He asked the members of the board if they had any objections. They did not. Russell Smith wanted this recommendation recorded in the minutes.

## VI. New Business

Marianne Thaeler asked if anyone had researched the contaminated lagoons in Holloman AFB in Alamogordo, New Mexico. She mentioned that she had heard that dead birds were found and analyzed and that she would like to get a copy of the report. Kelly Blough added that he was aware of an existing report on the lagoons and that he would see if he could locate a copy. He also mentioned that this could be a future topic in a RAB meeting sometime in the spring of 1999.

Inga Groff, a member of the audience, passed out flyers regarding a program called "Mission Possible", an upcoming environmental meeting to call attention to successful environmental efforts in the El Paso/Las Cruces/Juarez region. Russell Smith added that he encourages everyone and anyone to spread the word about RAB meetings. He wants everyone to be environmentally aware of problems in the region.

Marianne Thaeler commented that after reviewing the Castner Range report, she noticed that there was no buffer zone separating the unexploded ordnance in Castner Range and the new housing units that were developed in the perimeter of the Range. This, in her view, can have grave consequences. She recommended that perhaps in the next meeting someone from the Texas Attorney General Office can give a presentation that addresses this issue.

Kelly Blough mentioned that a decision had been made to formally solicit public comment on the draft OE Characterization Report for Castner Range. Ms. Thaeler asked

what the schedule was for this and Mr. Blough responded that some revisions and another round of internal review was need before public meetings would be held.

Steve Pullen of NMED mentioned that the Air Force has produced a guidebook on institutional controls that has been used by various RABs for information. Ft. Bliss RAB members expressed interest in reviewing the guidebook to see if it can be helpful. Kelly Blough said he would review the guidebook for possible future use.

John Sproul, a member of the audience, wanted to know what procedures Fort Bliss follows to keep cattle out of Castner Range. Kelly Blough responded that Fort Bliss occasionally herds the cattle off the Range as it does elsewhere on Fort Bliss but that the installation had limited resources for this activity. A member of the audience identified himself as a realtor and explained that Texas law placed the responsibility for fencing on the party that was trying to keep out cattle and not the owner of the cattle.

Russell Smith expressed his thoughts by saying Castner Range should be a topic in the next meeting. He noticed there was high interest in this topic and that many questions still remain unanswered. He suggested that the RAB members review the Castner alternatives report and submit topics for discussion before the next RAB meeting. He also wanted the next agenda to be ready at least 1 month prior to the next meeting. The board agreed.

Marianne Thaeler mentioned to Kelly Blough that the RAB was not allowed to give speakers or presenters certificates for their participation in RAB meetings. Kelly Blough had mentioned that perhaps it was a good idea to give presenters a small gift or certificate, if possible, for their much-appreciated participation.

There was a comment by Mr. Steve Pullen (NMED) on the Fact Sheet that was available at the meeting. Mr. Pullen noticed that money allocated to Fort Bliss was decreasing significantly every year. Kelly Blough responded by saying that the Fact Sheet was in need of an revision. The Fort Bliss Restoration Program would be receiving more money. The fact sheet did not reflect the projected \$600,000 allocated to the Fort Bliss Restoration Program in fiscal year 99. The individual was also concerned that the money supply for environmental cleanup will not be enough to complete some of the projects underway in New Mexico. He wanted someone to clarify the budget process.

Lee Carroll of TRADOC responded that the entire DOD budget has been slashed across the board and thus, every installation has suffered budget cutbacks. He said that every project that has begun will eventually be completed, however it might take more time that was expected. Nonetheless, he emphasized that all projects that have begun will certainly be completed. He also emphasized that those projects that are considered "critical" will continue to receive funding as DoD resources permit..

Marianne Thaeler commented that the local newspapers have reported that Congress has awarded the DOD more money than was requested for missile defense. If this is the case, she wanted to know if it was possible to re-allocate the money to provide more funds to

environmental projects. The answer was "No". It is up to the Congress, and only the Congress, to re-allocate money.

#### VII. Next Meeting

It was agreed that the next RAB meeting will be held in El Paso Community College (Transmountain Campus) on February 9, 1999 at 7:00 pm. The location will be at the Dean's Conference Room in the Administration Building Room 1005.