



ENTERED

May 5, 1999

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



The Center for  
Environmental  
Resource  
Management

Dear Mr. Pullen :

The Fort Bliss Restoration Advisory Board will be holding its quarterly meeting on May 18, 1999 at 7:00 p.m. at the El Paso Community College—Transmountain Campus in Room 1005 of the Administration Building. Please find enclosed the agenda for the upcoming meeting and the minutes from our last meeting that was held on February 9<sup>th</sup>. I hope to see you there. Thank you.

P.S. There will be refreshments (cookies and punch) served at the meeting. So bring your appetite.

Sincerely,

Ed Gonzalez  
CERM Program Coordinator

HSWA FB, GMB  
File

El Paso, Texas  
79968-0645  
(915) 747-5494  
FAX: (915) 747-5145

# Fort Bliss Restoration Advisory Board Public Meeting Agenda

Location: El Paso County Community College, Trans Mountain Campus,  
Room 1005 Dean's Conference Room, Administrative Building.  
Date: Tuesday, May 18, 1999  
Time: 7:00 pm

Introduction of Board members and meeting participants.

## Old Business

1. Discussion and motion for adoption of minutes from the February 9th 1999 RAB meeting.

### Follow Up:

The following subjects were identified at the last meeting as requiring additional information.

1. Identity of the federal magistrate and description of the legal consequences for trespassers on Castner Range.
2. Identification of the access point to Castner Range that is most frequently used by trespassers.
3. Determination of what agency has legal authority and what laws pertain to parking in the Right of Way of Trans Mountain Road.
4. Examples of warning signs required by Army regulation on Ranges.
5. Viability of using Military Police to conduct day long sweeps at irregular intervals on Castner Range.

## New Business

1. Facilitator-led discussion regarding the incidence of trespassing by the public and livestock on Castner Range: Input 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  
Bowen Ranch  
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



**Fort Bliss Restoration Advisory Board  
Minutes  
Meeting on February 9, 1999  
El Paso Community College—Transmountain Campus**

No. of Attendants: 43  
No. of Attendants Signed In: 40

**RAB Members Present**

Dr. Robert Lenhart	Board
V.W. Howard	Board
Charles Galt	Board
David Dodge	Board
Mark Arthur	Board
Russell Smith	Board
Col. Ben Hobson	Board
Marianne Thaeler	Board

**RAB Members Absent**

Steve Pullen	Board
Dorline Wonciar	Board
Jim Bates	Board
Michael Nivison	Board

**Participants**

Raul E. Gonzalez	Staff
Kelly Blough	Staff
Lee Carroll	TRADOC
Lessa Whatmough	Fort Bliss Staff Judge Advocate
Ron Groves	TX Dept. of Transportation
Marcia Wheatley	Citizen
Robert E. Fulton	Citizen
Beverly Post	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Sarah Alder-Schaller	Malcolm Pirney, Inc.
Fred Bourger	Citizen
Joel Giblin	Citizen
Marguerite Davis	EP Archeological Society
Stan Stack	Citizen
John Green	Citizen
Alex Woelper	Citizen
Ravi Komoyatosyula	Citizen
John Nuñez	Citizen
Inga Groff	League of Woman Voters

Joe Groff	Chihuahuan Desert Wildlife Refuge
John Sproul	Audubon Society
Marla Binzel	Texas A&M Research Center
Juan Benavidez	El Paso Water Utilities
Marc Thompson	Wilderness Park Museum
Karen Hadden	Citizen
Rosemary Staley	EP Dept. of Planning, Research & Development
Scott Cutler	Citizen
Bill Sargent	Corps of Engineers-Huntsville, Alabama
Julie Jacobs	New Mexico Environmental Department

## **I. Call To Order**

Russell Smith called the meeting to order at approximately 7:05 PM. Col. Ben Hobson introduced himself and welcomed everyone to the RAB meeting. Col. Hobson introduced Russell Smith. Russell Smith welcomed everyone once more and asked everyone to introduce himself or herself.

Before RAB business began, Russell Smith introduced Julie Jacobs of the New Mexico Environmental Department. Ms. Jacobs brought a "Ground Water Modeling Demonstration" display, which resembles an ant farm, to show the audience how contaminants seep through the soil and ultimately pollute the groundwater. A red dye represented the contaminant factor in the display.

## **II. Old Business**

Minutes for the November 17<sup>th</sup> 1999 RAB meeting in NMSU were presented for approval. Marianne Thaeler cited an error and requested an amendment to a statement regarding the possibility of giving speakers gifts and/or certificates. Russell Smith requested a motion to correct the error and moved for the approval of the minutes. Marianne Thaeler seconded the motion. Motion carried and the minutes were approved.

The next topic was the Holloman AFB sewage lagoons. Marianne Thaeler wanted to know if the dead birds in Holloman AFB were contaminated with heavy metals from McGregor Range. Kelly Blough reviewed a report about the lagoons. The report confirmed that in the 1970s there were dead birds that were contaminated. However, the report was vague and unclear, and thus Kelly Blough is further investigating the issue.

Marianne Thaeler remarked that she had heard autopsies were conducted on birds and that high contamination was found. A professor from Las Cruces had brought this issue to everyone's attention in the RAB meeting held in Alamogordo, New Mexico. Kelly Blough said the issue will be further investigated.

The next issue concerned the Air Force Guidebook that was introduced in the previous RAB meeting in Las Cruces. Lee Carroll commented that the Guidebook is currently being reviewed by the Army and that the Army will soon publish its own in the next few months.

would not have the necessary training to safely get rid of the material. Therefore, volunteers would not be used to help with the Castner Range cleanup. A comment about how a university professor, Dr. Philip Goodell, a geologist from the University of Texas at El Paso, had conducted (Celebrate the Mountains) annual field trips into Castner Range materialized. Dr. Goodell conducts these field trips because of the interesting rock formations that exist within the restricted property. Mr. Blough said that Dr. Goodell has already been informed that trespassing is not allowed on Castner Range due to dangers that are present. A second question concerning the total cost of the cleanup arose. Kelly Blough estimated that the cleanup will cost approximately \$15 million within a 5-year period. In other words, 2-3 million dollars per year. Russell Smith asked how much of the \$15 million has been appropriated. Mr. Blough answered that no money has been appropriated at this point in time.

Marcia Wheatley suggested placing poles with mock video cameras situated on top to discourage trespassing. Next to the poles, signs will warn violators that they have been videotaped and will be prosecuted. Hopefully, this will successfully dissuade further trespassing. Two questions followed this point. One was "how much money is available for barriers", and the other was "what is the time frame for barrier installation" Kelly Blough answered that the erection of barriers can be as soon as a few months, particularly late spring or early summer. As for the question of how much money it will cost to erect barriers, Mr. Blough answered that it depends on what type of barrier will be used.

Ron Hillin of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department suggested that he could "lend" several concrete barriers to Fort Bliss and that the only cost incurred would be those of the transportation. The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department will be receiving concrete barriers from the Texas Department of Transportation and some of those barriers could be lent to Fort Bliss. The concrete barriers are 30' long and cost approximately \$750 each. It was estimated that access points near the museum would require roughly 6-8 barriers to effectively curb vehicular traffic. Russell Smith added that if all feasible suggestions are combined, which includes the concrete barriers from the Wilderness Park, then trespassing on Castner Range could be curbed significantly. David Dodge asked whether anyone knew which access point was the most used by the trespassers. Mr. Blough responded by saying that there is no hard data that will give a satisfactory answer to that question. A comment from the audience surfaced regarding the aesthetic quality of concrete barriers. It was her opinion that concrete barriers are unsightly and that the boulders are better suited to serve as barriers. In addition, boulders have less problems with natural erosion.

Marianne Thaeler wanted to know what set of laws can be enacted to stop the illegal traffic on Castner Range. She wanted to know if the laws were federal, state, or military in nature. She also wanted to know if these laws have been enforced. And if they have been enforced, have they been effective in the past. In short, she wanted to pinpoint where the problem lies in the system. These set of questions prompted Russell Smith to add that there are still many questions that need answers. He would like for someone to research and find out who the federal magistrate is and what laws are responsible for the governing of Transmountain Road. At this point, someone commented that the Texas

Department of Public Safety is responsible for patrolling Transmountain Road. Since the Franklins Park is a State park, the DPS is responsible for all law enforcement in the area. Somebody had concurred with this comment, but nonetheless the issue will still be researched.

Marianne Thaeler wanted to know what measures are taken when violators are caught. Are they ticketed? Who tickets them? How much is the fine for the violation? Kelly Blough responded by saying that he would have answers in the next RAB meeting.

Russell Smith summed up what has been said throughout the meeting: 1) replace damaged signs and erect new signs with clearer messages, 2) and more aggressive law enforcement. David Dodge added his thoughts about what should be done at Castner Range: 1) have an aggressive campaign to publicize the dangers and consequences of trespassing on Castner Range, 2) erect barriers that are inexpensive and effective and that blend in with the surrounding environment, 3) research who or what agency is responsible for the area in terms of law enforcement. Russell Smith moved for the RAB to approve Mr. Dodge's recommendations. Marianne Thaeler seconded the motion. Motion carried and Mr. Dodge's recommendations were approved. Ms. Marguerite Davis wanted to know what "natural" means. David Dodge responded that the term "natural" could be decided later.

A member of the Wilderness Park Museum expressed concern about the cattle that have been seen wandering around the northern section of Castner Range. He mentioned that thousands of dollars worth of damage has already occurred. He was specifically dismayed at the fact that the cattle were eating the natural foliage at the Range and that they can potentially cause a fatal accident if they traverse onto Transmountain Road. Kelly Blough responded by saying that the northern section of the Range had a barbed wire fence, but that over time the fence has deteriorated and is no longer an effective measure to keep human or livestock traffic from entering the Range. Mr. Benavides, from the El Paso Water Utilities, mentioned that he would contact Mr. James Bowen, a local rancher who owns the cattle, to erect a fence along the northern section of the Range to resolve this problem. Mr. Blough suggested in fairness to Mr. Bowen, who was invited to the meeting but did not attend, that Mr. Benavides not call Mr. Bowen at this time. Instead, Mr. Bowen would be invited to attend the next RAB meeting so that he can give input. Russell Smith agreed that it was important Mr. Bowen to be present at the next RAB meeting.

Another member of the audience wanted to know how the military handles cattle when they are trespassing on federal land. Col. Ben Hobson responded by saying they are held captive and then the owners are contacted. The owners will then be responsible for transporting them back to their lands. It was then asked whether the cattle are fed while in captivity. Col. Hobson answered that they are but that most of the time the ranchers take their cattle within hours after they have been contacted. Russell Smith then recommended that the issue of cattle should be addressed extensively in the next RAB meeting.

Marianne Thaeler attended a meeting in San Francisco, CA entitled the Defense Environmental Task Force. There were approximately 30 individuals who attended from various parts of the nation. One of the topics of conversation dealt with problems with "institutional controls". Everyone was asked to give examples of problems that their RABs had to address. Ms. Thaeler provided the example of our problem with trespassing on Castner Range. She had asked about the possible legal problems that might arise as a result of trespassing. The answer to her question was that she should check with the appropriate State agencies about state laws regarding this issue. If they have more problems regarding this issue, it was recommended that the public should address this issue to the state government through lobbying.

It was agreed that all parties regarding the cattle issue, including Mr. James Bowen, should meet before the next RAB meeting in order to find a solution to livestock trespassing. Col. Hobson requested once more that the El Paso Water Utilities should not call Mr. James Bowen until everyone has had a chance to meet. He mentioned that representatives from the Wilderness Park Museum should also be involved and present at the meeting. Russell Smith then thanked everyone for his or her attendance and insightful comments, which made this meeting a most productive one and that he hopes to see everyone soon.

Individuals excused themselves and proceeded to view the "Ground Modeling Demonstration Display" brought by Julie Jacobs.

**Meeting Adjourn—8:45 PM**

**Next Meeting:**

Tuesday, May 18, 1999

7:00 PM

El Paso Community College—Transmountain Campus

Room 1005—Administration Building