

Report of the Stakeholder VISPO Sub-Work Group

To: EAHCP Stakeholder Committee

From: VISPO Sub-Work Group

At their May 28, 2014 meeting, the Edwards Aquifer Habitat Conservation Plan (EAHCP) Stakeholder Committee formed an Aquifer Storage and Recovery (ASR) and Voluntary Irrigation Suspension Program (VISPO) Work Group. This Work Group, Chaired by Myron Hess, was designed to be split into two separate Sub-Work Groups in order to provide independent recommendations to the specific programs.

The ASR/VISPO Work Group first met on June 17, 2014 and the Sub-Work Groups met every two-weeks from July 1st thru July 31st. The full Work Group reconvened and held the final meeting on August 12, 2014.

At the first meeting, all work group members stated their involvement and affiliation to outside water leasing and marketing initiatives and programs. Such statements, were not considered as a disqualifier for participation but rather noted to the full group as a transparent disclosure. The membership of the VISPO Work Group, consisted of Adam Yablonski (Vice-Chair), Rick Illgner, Radar Gilleland, Ray Joy Pfannsteil, Bruce Alexander, and Myron Hess.

The Edwards Aquifer Habitat Conservation Plan (EAHCP) calls for the VISPO program to enroll 40,000 acre-feet of permitted irrigation rights for suspension when the water level at the J-17 index well is at or below 635 feet on October 1. The purpose of the 2014 Stakeholder Committee VISPO Sub-Work Group was to make recommendations on achievable methods to secure the acquisition of the remaining \approx 16,000 acre-feet of forbearance agreements. Their goal was to acquire these agreements into VISPO prior to the time that J17 levels triggered forbearance.

These recommendations will be presented to the Stakeholder Committee on the morning of August 21, 2014. Upon approval, the recommendations will then be considered by the Implementing Committee. Ultimately, after appropriate committee approval, the recommendation report developed by the Work Group will be provided to the Edwards Aquifer Authority for potential implementation.

The following recommendations of the VISPO Sub-Work Group have been compiled through the work group sessions. These proposed strategies are to be reported back to the full Stakeholder Committee and to the Implementing Committee on August 21, 2014.

Recommendation 1: Distribution of a VISPO marketing piece
Showcasing Mr. Meador from Hayes County

Purpose:

- Continued education of public.
- Provide example to resolve conflict between land owner and tenant in a contractual relationship.
- Use two-sided full page mailing to permit holders.
- Post piece on EAHCP.org website.
- Make media contacts for additional coverage.
- Buy ads in small newspapers.

Rationale:

- No Impact. Currently ASR is using a marketing campaign with some success and in late summer of 2013, VISPO used a similar marketing piece with overwhelming success.

Funding:

- No funding impact; any cost would be absorbed by the EAA or be covered by existing EAHCP VISPO funding.

Relation to other Recommendations:

- None. After hearing the recommendation/idea at the July 1 VISPO Workgroup Meeting, the EAA has initiated discussions with Mr. Meador and Boggess Communications to prepare the piece.

Pros:

- Provides additional information to the public.
- Could create a buzz and interest about the program.
- Simple and easy to execute; no logistical hurdles.

Cons:

- N/A

Timeline

July:	Interview Mr. Meador; develop piece
August 1:	Mailing
August:	Continue to seek other media for additional coverage

Recommendation 2: Extend VISPO enrollment past October 1 - If VISPO triggers

Purpose:

- Extends period of enrollment.

Rationale:

- Allow for enrollment of additional water to be forborn the following year.

Funding:

- Currently there is allocated funding to support the full enrollment of the VISPO program.

Relation to other Recommendations:

- Potentially VISPO Recommendation #3. If both were formally recommended, VISPO Recommendation #2 and #3 could be combined.

Pros:

- Year round enrollment.
- Increase in amount of water forborn in a triggered year.

Cons:

- Potentially creates a “wait and see” mentality for the permit holder.

Timeline

Sept 15 – Sept 31:	Inform permit holders that enrollment will continue.
Oct 1 – November 31:	Accept enrollment; obtain need documentation
December 9:	Present all to EAA Board for approval

Recommendation 3: Extend VISPO enrolment past October 1 - if VISPO *does not* trigger

Purpose:

- Extends period of enrollment.

Rationale:

- Allow for enrollment of additional water into the VISPO program that could be forborn in future years.
- Minimum lease term is 5 years.

Funding:

- Currently there is allocated funding to support the full enrollment of the VISPO program. However, it could be considered as a negative to pay the standby payment for water in a year that you know VISPO will not trigger.

Relation to other Recommendations:

- Potentially VISPO Recommendation #2. If both were formally recommended, VISPO Recommendation #2 and #3 could be combined.

Pros:

- Year-round enrollment.
- Increase in amount of water potentially forborn in years 2-5 of the 5 year lease.

Cons:

- Potentially creates a “wait and see” mentality for the permit holder
- Pays for a year of standby, knowing that VISPO will not trigger that year.

Timeline

September 18	Ask IC if appropriate to implement this recommendation, based on current conditions and current enrollment
Sept 19 – Sept 31:	Inform permit holders that enrollment will continue.
Oct 1 – November 31:	Accept enrollment; obtain need documentation
December 9:	Present all to EAA Board for approval