

Weather Modification Advisory Committee

Meeting of August 7, 2009
North Campus Building – 1st Floor Public Meeting Room
1106 Clayton Lane, Austin, Texas

Summary of Minutes

Presiding Officer, Frank Reilly called the meeting to order at 10:01 a.m.

Presiding Officer, Frank Reilly moved to agenda item B., Roll Call and Certification of Quorum. Committee members James Nance, Everett Deschner, Gary Foster, and Frank Riley were present. Committee member Don Parrish was absent. A quorum was present.

Presiding Officer, Frank Reilly moved to agenda item C., Approval of Minutes – Meeting of April 6, 2009. Committee member, James Nance, made a motion to approve the minutes as presented. Committee member, Everett Deschner seconded the motion. The motion passed with a unanimous vote in favor.

Presiding Officer, Frank Reilly moved to agenda item D., Public Comment. There was no public comment.

Presiding Officer, Frank Reilly moved to agenda item E.1., Staff Reports, Executive Office. Bill Kuntz, Executive Director, stated that a provision in the Legislative Appropriations bill sponsored by Representative Tracy King, which would have funded TDLR for its weather modification program, failed to pass. George Bomar will be assisting on other agency projects.

Presiding Officer, Frank Reilly moved to agenda item E.2.a., Staff Reports, Compliance Division – George Bomar, Program Specialists, reported the status of rain enhancement operations around Texas. Todd Flanagan, meteorologist with the South Texas Weather Modification Association, reported that a drought had intensified in the region over the course of the summer due to only 3-15 inches of rain for the year. He said his project has had normal operations, in terms of flights and flares used, in spite of the dominance of the drought. Stephanie Beall, meteorologist with the Southwest Texas Rain-Enhancement Association, reported that her area had also been affected by drought, but the project had conducted a normal amount of operations with 34 seeding missions in 22 days and 11 recon missions. Robert Rhodes, meteorologist with the West Texas Weather Modification Association reported a busy season with a high number of missions (37 operational days) and a high success rate. Mr. Rhodes reported higher than normal seeding in July.

Presiding Officer, Frank Reilly moved to agenda item E.2.b., Staff Reports, Compliance Division – Mr. Bomar reported that the Trans Pecos project requested an additional permit for rain enhancement. No public hearing requests were filed. The permit met all requirements and staff issued a new 4-year permit to increase the target area to 8 million acres. The permit is valid through July 2013 and includes Pecos County. Bomar said staff has received several phone calls from citizens living between Austin and San Antonio inquiring about cloud seeding in the area. The Edwards Aquifer Association has redefined its target area to include counties immediately along the Balcones Escarpment.

Presiding Officer, Frank Reilly moved to agenda item E.2.c., Staff Reports, Compliance Division – Archie Ruiz addressed the committee on recent research in suppressing hail including how the technology is currently being studied for food preservation. Mr. Ruiz is seeking funding for the research for weather purposes. Mr. Ruiz explained the process for creating hail through sound waves and answered question from the Committee regarding the support for this research. Mr. Deschner requested to review the papers in support of hail suppression. Mr. Ruiz agreed to provide the study and have the study noted in the minutes for the record: “If cannons cannot fight hail, what else?” by Jon Wieringa and Iwan Holleman. Mr. Bomar talked about the first weather modification initiative in the 1800’s in Post, Texas. He addressed the role of the person listed on the permits performing the primary duties.

Presiding Officer, Frank Reilly moved to agenda item E.2.d., Staff Reports, Compliance Division – Bill Gates is supporting technology to prevent hurricanes. Mr. Gates is supporting a project that is designed to explore the potential to prevent or diminish hurricanes.

Presiding Officer, Frank Reilly moved to agenda item E.2.e.(1), Staff Reports, Compliance Division – George Bomar, Program Specialist reported on the status of Agricultural Water Enhancement Program (AWEP) funding proposals. He reported that while a number of projects did get funded, the one proposed to continue rain-enhancement research using milled salts now stored in West Texas failed to make the list.

Presiding Officer, Frank Reilly moved to agenda item E.2.e.(2), Staff Report, Compliance Division – George Bomar, Program Specialists reported on SB 601, sponsored by Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison to establish a national weather modification research initiative. The bill reached the floor of the Senate but failed to garner a vote before the late-summer recess.

Presiding Officer, Frank Reilly moved to agenda item F., Consideration of applications for a weather modification license amendment. George Bomar, Program Specialist reported that no applications for amending licenses had been submitted.

Presiding Officer, Frank Reilly moved to agenda item G., George Bomar reported eight applications for rain enhancement licenses for state fiscal year 2010, which begins on September 1, 2009. Six applicants are using traditional cloud seeding and two others involved hail suppression using hail cannons. The application from the SOAR project requested that the personnel identified on its license be changed to reflect the names of David Newsome and Richard Stone, both of whom are experienced meteorologists. The Committee then engaged in discussion on permit requirements and licensing requirements. Archie Ruiz addressed questions on his involvement with the two hail cannon projects. It was noted that any Committee review and recommendation may need to address the hail suppression activity separate from rain enhancements work. Committee member, Nance made a motion to recommend approval of requests by Belding Farms and Color Spot, Inc. for license renewal. Committee member, Foster seconded the motion. The motion passed by a vote of 3-1, with Committee member, Deschner voting against. Committee member, Deschner made a motion to recommend approval of six rain enhancement permits. Committee member, Nance seconded the motion. The motion passed with a unanimous vote in favor.

Presiding Officer, Frank Reilly moved to agenda item H., Recommendations for agenda items for the next meeting. The Committee placed possible rule change to consider hail cannon technologies and applications for license and permit renewals on the next agenda.

Presiding Officer, Frank Reilly moved to agenda item I., Discussion of date, time, and location of next Committee meeting. The Committee decided to meet on January 29, 2010, 10:00 a.m. in Austin, Texas.

Presiding Officer, Frank Reilly moved to agenda item J., Adjournment. Presiding Officer, Frank Reilly adjourned the meeting at 11:17 a.m.

Frank Reilly, Presiding Officer
Weather Modification Advisory Committee