

# PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AND EDUCATION SUBCOMMITTEE GALVESTON BAY COUNCIL

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## Meeting Minutes Thursday, April 4, 2019 10:00AM -12:00PM

Subcommittee Chair: Amanda Brown, Community Member/Environmental Education

Subcommittee Vice Chair: Kathy Janhsen, Houston-Galveston Area Council, Senior Education Coordinator

Galveston Bay Estuary Program (GBEP) Representative: Cynthia Clevenger

### ***Call to Order, Introductions***

Attendees: Erin Kinney (HARC), Kelli Ondracek (City of Houston Parks and Recreation Department (HPARD)), T'Noya Thompson (Galveston Bay Foundation (GBF)), Cindy Wilems (GBF), Brenda Weiser (University of Houston-Clear Lake (UHCL)), Ted Driscoll (GBF), Kendall Guidroz (Houston-Galveston Area Council (H-GAC)), Marsha Towns (Student Conservation Association (SCA)), Lisa Marshall (GBEP), Mary Stiles (GBEP), Lindsey Lippert (GBEP), Christian Rines (GBEP), Patricia Thompson (GBEP), Cynthia Clevenger (GBEP).

By phone: Sarah Bernhardt (Bayou Preservation Association), Becki Begley (H-GAC), Joanie Steinhaus and Theresa Morris (Turtle Island Restoration Network (TIRN))

### ***Meeting Minutes***

*Implementing PPE section of the revised Galveston Bay Plan, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition*

Cynthia Clevenger informed members that the revised plan was approved by the TCEQ Commissioners on March 27, 2019. PPE members then lead a discussion on implementing the Engage Communities Action Plan of the revised plan. Members expressed the need to tackle the 2-5 year outputs such as developing a list of stewardship programs in the region; identifying underserved communities/geographies; creating a list of K-12 education programs in the region; conducting gap analysis to identify K-12 education needs; and convening K-12 leaders in the region to create a plan of action to support K-12 education programs.

When reaching underserved communities, Cindy Wilems and Brenda Weiser said by fitting the local environmental education messaging and materials into classroom lesson plans, students will learn environmental stewardship, and those messages will be carried back to their homes and their communities. Funding for programs can be difficult. Schools do not always have bus funds for field trips. One school bus can cost \$350, according to Ms. Wilems. When developing programs, members expressed the need to understand where students come from with their experiences with nature and outdoors and develop programming with that in mind. Also, teachers are not always familiar with nature and outdoors as well.

Engaging faith-based organizations, community centers, and after school programs are also opportunities for outreach and education. Lisa Marshall shared some of the information she garnered from the recent National Estuary Program meeting in Washing D.C. from the EPA's Office of Environmental Justice (OEJ). For more information and resources, visit <https://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice>. (Note: the OEJ offers workshops that may be of interest for the PPE.)

When it comes to tracking implementation of the Engage Communities Action Plan, Erin Kinney suggested the yearly PPE project proposal sheet be updated to include a section that asks the how the targeted community, school or group was selected to capture the underrepresented communities. Also, Ms. Kinney suggested a section that asks how other partners are being engaged in the proposed project? There was also a suggestion that once a project is funded, in the final project report, the contractor add the Action Plans that were implemented for the project to track implementation of the Galveston Bay Plan, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition.

### *Staying connected in-between PPE meetings*

Members discussed how to stay connected as a group in-between the quarterly meetings. There is a desire to share information and projects with one another. T'Noya Thompson said she'd like to share information on the Report Card such as the Champion Program. GBF's education team is combining the Report Card and Hip to Habitat program for area schools. For more information on this program, see the Report Card [website](#).

Members discussed ways to promote outreach/education projects that take place in the region. These projects highlight the partnership efforts of several groups working together to leverage resources and funding.

Kelli Ondracek shared information about the City of Houston's Complete Communities that is, in part, providing park and green space amenities for some of the city's communities. Kelli and Mary Stiles are also a part of the Cities Connecting Children to Nature initiative. This program was granted funds through the City of Houston HPARD and created an action plan to increase usage of park spaces.

Ms. Towns also shared the importance of partnerships. The SCA has been involved in water-based resiliency and nature-based efforts with the City of Houston HPARD with riparian buffer projects on Sims Bayou at Milby, Carlton, Reveille, and Stuart Parks. They are also working with HPARD on Sylvian Rodriquez, White Oak, and Blackhawk Parks which are funded through GBEP. These are all examples of partnerships between TCEQ/GBEP, HPARD and SCA with additional non-government agencies, and nonprofits such as Houston Audubon. SCA is also partnering with the National Wildlife Federation (NWF) and Houston ISD through a Resiliency Ambassadors program that builds Best Management Practice projects like bio-swales and rain gardens on five Houston ISD secondary campuses. Students for each school, with guidance from NWF and SCA, designed and built these projects. GBF also had a role in providing support in implementation. Ms. Towns presented these efforts at the Public Lands Alliance in Denver, CO in March 2019.

Ms. Ondracek said a benefit of being a part of PPE is advocating for each other. For example, they City of Houston is in the process of updating its tree ordinance which will include all native tree list. PPE members are welcome to contact the city and provide support for the ordinance. Kelli will provide additional information on how to do that.

Ms. Clevenger also reminded members that the Galveston Bay Council can advocate on their behalf and everyone was encouraged to come to a Council meeting. If they have something they'd like to share with the Council or present something to the Council, let Ms. Clevenger or Ms. Marshall know. GBEP would like to see more coordination and communication between the

subcommittees and the Council. Subcommittee coordinators give updates at the quarterly Council meetings, but it would be good to hear from subcommittee members as well.

Joanie Steinhaus and Theresa Morris with TIRN shared with members the projects they are doing with students in Galveston. Oppe Elementary's 4<sup>th</sup> grade class is learning about microplastics. They are collecting and analyzing data from samples collected on the bay and beaches in Galveston. Through a partnership with Moody Gardens, students get to participate in activities and process their samples at Moody. TIRN always incorporates watershed science in their programming to encourage a broad view of marine debris. Students also learn how microplastics influences the food web. TIRN is also actively involved with students at Ball High School in Galveston. These older students are also collecting and analyzing microplastics data. All these efforts also feed into TIRN's participation in a large Gulf-wide microplastics data collection.

Ms. Thompson shared a leadership training course she completed where one of the exercises was to work within small groups with other trainees and engage in discussions such as "How do you define leadership? How do you engage and connect with the public?" This was an effort to dig deeper into personal leadership styles but to also connect that to the larger effort of engaging the stakeholders they were working with on their projects. This could be something that PPE does. It would help members get to know each other better and could feed into larger partnership efforts.

### *Back the Bay update*

Members talked about updating the Back the Bay website, moving it from a campaign-type website to a resource for both the public and partners. Ms. Clevenger said that she'd like to propose a portion of GBEP funds go toward a website refresh and this could be further discussed at the June and September project planning meetings for each subcommittee. Kendal Guidroz suggested that there could be a public-facing part of the website, and then have a partner login like they do with the [Texas Stream Team Community Forum](#) website. Ms. Weiser said that once the website is ready, there needs to be a way to promote it. Members talked about some of the traditional media outlets like billboards.

### ***Round table***

[Vision Galveston](#) is an effort by the city to reach out to island residents about their vision for Galveston and what matters to them. PPE members were encouraged to learn more about this effort. GBF is hosting a brown bag talk with a leader from Vision Galveston at the GBF office on April 5, 2019 at noon. The single use plastics is one issue that could be addressed through this effort as well, and members were encouraged to provide comments. They will be holding workshops to get feedback.

Ms. Weiser said if anyone wants to give a presentation on a project, the [Harris County Department of Education](#) is always looking for presenters. Contact Lisa Felske at 713-696-1891.

Ms. Thompson announced that the next [Galveston Bay Report Card](#) will be released on August 28<sup>th</sup> at Moody Gardens. Contact her if you'd like more information.

The [North American Prairie Conference](#) will be held at UHCL June 2-5, 2019. The deadline to submit a proposal to present is April 22, 2019.

The [Texas Association for Environmental Education](#) has their fall conference September 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> in Galveston.

The [North American Association for Environmental Education](#) conference will be in Lexington, KT October 16-19, 2019.

The next State of the Bay Symposium will be in January 2020. Venue is TBD. Ms. Clevenger is working on the call for presentations that will be sent out by the end in May. The symposium will focus on success, challenges/lessons learned and planning for the future. Erin Kinney suggested a type of panel discussion that she's seen called a "fish bowl" panel. This is where a group of people have a discussion amongst themselves and the audience watches the discussion. Ms. Thompson and Ms. Weiser mentioned a potential key note speaker for the symposium, [Judy Braus](#),

Ms. Kinney let members know that HARC has a [People in Nature Speaker Series](#). There will be a featured speaker on May 1<sup>st</sup> featuring Jigar Shah, president and co-founder of Generate Capital.

**The next meeting: TBD (It was scheduled for Tuesday, June 11. Cynthia and Lisa will be at the Gulf of Mexico Alliance All Hands Meeting that week. A Doodle Poll for the next meeting.)**